

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*The Golden Age, which a blind tradition has hitherto placed in the Past, is Before us.*—SAINT-SIMON.

## Taking God for a Walk.

"I want all the other arrangements to go on as before—although it is not permitted to us to carry with us our Divine Master."—Archbishop Bourne to the Eucharistic Congress, in the Albert Hall, Saturday evening, September 12.

THE Catholic Church, with its usual arrogance, decided to have a party procession in London on Sunday afternoon, and to do this in flat defiance of the law of the land. Instead of applying to the Home Office for the necessary authorisation, it appears that the organisers went direct to the Chief Commissioner of Police, who is a subordinate officer, and fixed the matter up with him. We understand that this gentleman is a religious bigot, who would sanction almost anything in the name of "the faith." But the nice little arrangement came to grief. At the last moment it was quashed by the Government.

Mr. Asquith has been blamed by partisan critics for his method of dealing with Archbishop Bourne. We confess that we cannot endorse this censure. It must be remembered that Mr. Asquith was away on his holiday, and he seems to have acted as soon as he received information of what was really going on. In making private representations to the Archbishop, first of all through a Catholic member of the Ministry, he was gentlemanly and considerate. The Archbishop took advantage of the situation to force the Prime Minister's hands—as though the head of the Government were asking a favor of the head of the Catholic Church in England, instead of giving him an opportunity of putting himself with a good grace on the right side of the law. Dr. Bourne played his cards cleverly, but there is such a thing as being "too clever by half," and he nearly succeeded in overreaching himself. Mr. Asquith's final telegram—still polite and conciliatory, but firm—made the Archbishop see that the contemplated procession would in all probability be prevented. At that point he had no alternative but to retire from a false position with as much grace as was still possible. He affected to defer to the wishes of the Prime Minister. But everybody knows that this was a diplomatic expression for something very different.

For our own part, while we are not supernatural sticklers for the law, we do not see why Catholics, any more than other people, should break it with impunity. Catholic and other journals argue that the law of 1829 is "obsolete." Well, the Blasphemy Laws are far older, yet the Catholic (and other) journals did not find that these laws were "obsolete" last February. Mr. Justice Phillimore, whose Christian piety is well known, said that he did not know what was meant by a law being obsolete. And a multitude of journals, sacred and profane, told Freethinkers that the law was the law, and that while it existed they would have to put up with it—or take the consequences.

We are for giving Catholics fair play. No less and no more. This was our attitude in the late "Separation" trouble in France. It is our attitude on the

present occasion. Catholics have a right to organise their own Church, and to carry on their own religious worship in their own way. But no one has a right to do what he pleases in the public thoroughfares. Regulation is inevitable in such situations. Processions are one thing; acts of worship are quite another; they are more liable to provoke breaches of the peace; and the carrying of the Mass in the streets, in a country like England, is very likely to lead to riot and bloodshed. For it is the nature of religious quarrels to reach the very depths of bitterness. Statesmen have always recognised the explosive character of religion. That is why, in all ages, they have endeavored to bring it under secular control, by making it give hostages for its good behavior.

The carrying of the Mass in the streets might lead to a terrible row in a few minutes. Not only because it is a challenge to Protestant fanaticism. A Freethinker might be on the pavement as the "Host" passed by, and he might smile at it, or even laugh at it—which he has as much right to do as the Catholic has to pull a long, adoring face. That laugh, even that smile, might lead to an assault; for the Catholic regards the holy wafer as very God of very God, and is maddened by the slightest sign of disrespect to his fetish.

The rule for Catholics should also be the rule for Freethinkers. Both should be free to say and do what they like in their own buildings or in open spaces set aside for the purpose. But not in the streets. We would not let Catholics carry the Mass through the streets; neither would we let Atheists carry banners in the streets with "Down with God" or "Death to Christ" on them. This is not a question of toleration; it is a question of public peace and order; and no party has any right to complain if the law is the same for all.

We repeat that, to a Catholic, the holy wafer is very God of very God. This is supported by the extract, at the head of this article, from Archbishop Bourne's announcement to the faithful that the Mass procession was "off." They were going to "carry their Divine Master" with them. The holy wafer, in the Eucharist, becomes the actual body of Christ—and Christ is the second person of the Godhead. To the Freethinker, of course, this is shockingly "blasphemous." Carrying the Deity round the streets, taking God out for a walk, seems worthy of the pantomime. The very "heathen," whom Protestants and Catholics alike send missionaries to, would shrink from such abject superstition. A Buddhist monk, a Brahminic priest, would regard it with loathing and contempt. The truth is that Christianity is far more superstitious than the great "heathen" religions of Asia.

These superstitionists, who gravely talk of carrying God with them in a public procession, are dupes at the bottom of the scale and charlatans at the top. Here in England, where they have to sing smaller than elsewhere, they invoke the spirit of freedom. But every sensible man knows what that means. Let them get the upper hand, and they would soon extinguish freedom in blood. We have the warrant of history for it. We must therefore be on our guard, and never let the sword of Freethought rust in its sheath.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?

To champion the character of Christians against the aspersions of other Christians is not a usual feature of the *Freethinker*. Not that there is not very often necessity; but so much has to be done to defend Freethought and Freethinkers against the aspersions and misrepresentations of the pious that space and time compels one to leave Christians to look after themselves. And this they do more or less satisfactorily. Having always been at it, they have become tolerably proficient in the art. Ever since there have been Christians, a large part of their polemical energy has been dissipated in making attacks upon the character of fellow-believers, or defending assaults upon their own. This work still occupies a large portion of the time of Christian writers and speakers; nor is there likely to be for some time any great falling-off in either aspect of the occupation.

With the ordinary attacks of Christians on one another I am not now concerned. My interest is with an attack that is presented as a defence, with an insult that is given in the form of a compliment. There is a story told of one man who informed another that he had just been defending his character against the aspersions of a mutual acquaintance. "Why," he indignantly exclaimed, "he said that you were not fit to black his boots." "Oh," said the aspersed one, "and what did you say?" "Why, I said you were." And for this defence he was expected to be thankful. The defence I purpose dealing with, although not identical in form with the foregoing, belongs to the same class.

This particular defence turns upon the incentives that people have to remain moral. When the Freethinker argues that Christianity should not be accepted because it is not true, the Christian retorts that a rejection of Christianity necessarily jeopardises morality. Now, if Freethought and immorality and Christianity and morality went hand in hand, there would at least be a *prima facie* case for the plea. But this is obviously not the case. Freethinkers are not all monuments of vice, and Christians are not all paragons of virtue. We need not discuss the number of each that fall below a given standard of conduct, nor need we discuss how many of each in proportion to numbers betray moral shortcomings. It is enough that, taking the world as it goes, it is impossible to say of any man by merely noting his conformity with accepted ethical rules that he is a Christian or a Freethinker. To find out what he is we have to enter on an altogether different line of inquiry.

Now, the Christian of the type I am dealing with asserts that his morality is an outcome of his religious beliefs: and if we are to take his assertions seriously, some very curious conclusions follow. If he is married, we have to set on one side love of wife as having any great influence; if he is a father, affection for his children must be set on one side; as a friend, we must set on one side any feeling of loyalty; as a member of society, we have to set on one side all feelings of duty. If we admit these things we diminish the ethical importance of his religious beliefs. If affection for wife and children, loyalty to friends, and duty to society are admitted to be factors in determining morality, then it may happen that these may be strong enough to serve in the absence of religious beliefs. This kind of defender of the faith argues that he is only as decent as he is because he believes in God and a future life, and would be much worse than he is if he did not so believe. I am stating the case bluntly, so that it may be faced clearly.

Now it will scarcely be denied that Christians, or even religious people generally, are not alone in the practice of moral virtues. Freethinkers do care for their wives and families, they are loyal to their friends, and they carry out their duty to society. I will not say to a greater extent than professing Christians; it is enough that they are not, on the

whole, worse than them in these respects. Why should they be so? The Christian says that he could not act properly unless he believed that there was an over-looking providence and a future life in which the deeds of this world met with their due reward and punishment. Is this true? Is it true that the Freethinker can do alone what the Christian cannot do without external coercion? Or to put the same thing in another way, is the Christian so much worse, morally, than the Freethinker that his natural feelings and affections will not secure the performance of the normal functions of life with a tolerable degree of decency and efficiency? As a Freethinker, I believe that the average Christian is really better than his champions declare him to be, better than he often says he is himself. As a Freethinker, I believe that the Christian fulfils his moral obligations because his nature prompts him to do so, and that if he threw overboard the whole of his Christian beliefs he would not proceed to illtreat his wife, starve his children, rob his neighbor, or betray his friends. He is really a much better fellow than he thinks he is; his conduct rests on a much better and deeper foundation than he thinks is the case; and I decline to believe that he is the pitiful would-be criminal that so many preachers have told us he is?

What are we to believe? Are we to believe that the Freethinker is so much richer in natural feelings and affections than the professing Christian, and possesses a feeling of duty so much stronger than the Christian that he can get along well enough without something that is to others an absolute necessity? I do not say that he is, but it is certain that those Christians who put forward the plea I have indicated infer as much. Moreover, if I were to say so, Christians would strongly resent the imputation. But when a Christian speaker says so, his fellow believers accept his unflattering delineation of their character as though he were paying them the highest of compliments. Of course, it may be that every Christian regards this external coercion as being necessary to keep other Christians in order, and that each of them is thus engaged in playing the hypocrite for the moral benefit of someone else. Put bluntly, I have never met a Christian who believed that the only reason he had for acting properly was the fear that God was watching him, and that there was a future life in which he would be either rewarded or punished. His fear was for others, once the almighty policeman was dismissed, and others were just as fearful about him. The people whose sole means of living was taking in each others' washing has many analogies in the world of ethics.

The Freethinker is not less mindful of his moral obligations than is the Christian. This is the stubborn fact facing the Christian. The Jew, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Parsee, are as moral as is the Christian; the Christian is as moral as they. The morality of each may assume serious superficial differences, but fundamentally there is little difference between them. To deny this is little short of knavery; to ascribe the features they have in common to the one thing in which they differ, is downright stupidity. Moreover, the Christian, in dealing with the morality of non-Christian peoples, is not slow to attribute it to a perfectly natural cause. In a quite reasonable manner he will point out how the operation of the normal natural affections, together with the play of social forces, are enough to account for the morality displayed by these people. The only power he will acknowledge, that is exerted by non-Christian creeds, is that of distorting or obstructing the expression of the moral feelings.

That religious beliefs do distort men's natural feelings I should be the last to deny. Moreover, it is a statement the truth of which is borne out by the whole history of religion. The fact that vices have been labelled as virtues and virtues classed as vices, that people have hated each other when they might otherwise have lived in amity, and that states-

men and moralists have always found religion to be the most perturbing of forces, are truths that do not admit of serious question. And in face of the Christian claim of the superior moral influence of his creed, there is the curious fact that it has left less of a distinctive moral impress on its adherents than has been the case with many other creeds. Mohammedanism has at least succeeded in keeping its followers free from the curse of alcoholism. Hinduism has succeeded in inducing its adherents to refrain from inflicting cruelty upon animals; Buddhism has managed to successfully inculcate tolerance. Other religions have also managed to develop specific moral qualities—even where their expression would not immediately command our approval. But what particular virtue is there by which Christians, as a whole, are clearly marked off from the followers of other creeds and religions? I know of none, nor does, I think, anyone else.

At any rate, in relation to the morality of non-Christians the follower of Christ is on the horns of a dilemma. Either he must admit that his analysis of the moral forces is wrong, and that religion is not *the* moral determinant in the life of man, or he must assert, inferentially, that non-Christians are the innate moral superiors of Christians, since they are able to maintain a standard of conduct admittedly as good as that of Christians—sometimes better—and without any of the adventitious aids and extraneous incentives which the Christian believes is essential to his own right conduct. I have tried to place the issue plainly; if I did not know Christians so well, I might expect them to meet it with an equally plain reply.

C. COHEN.

### Sin.

THE chief charge which the Old Theology constantly brings against the New is that it makes light of sin, and the chief charge which both urge against Freethought is that it does not recognise sin at all. Between making light of and denying sin there is surely not much to choose. The New Theologians angrily resent the accusation because of its alleged groundlessness, while Freethinkers are indignant not at the indictment in itself, but at the false inferences maliciously drawn therefrom. Now, in order to discuss the charge intelligently it is indispensable that we should understand what exactly is meant by the term "sin." In his *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge says that "the most momentous question a man can ask is, Have I a Savior?" The great man admits, however, that for the individual there is a prior inquiry, namely, "Have I any need of a Savior?" Then comes the further admission that "for him who needs none, there is none, as long as he feels no need." According to the New Testament Jesus was so named because he would "save his people from their sins." To feel the need of a Savior, therefore, is to be conscious of sin or sins. The Shorter Catechism defines sin as "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." The first sinner was Adam, who violated the covenant of life into which his Maker had graciously entered with him. Now, this "covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." According to that definition, we are all sinners by nature, and, of necessity, we have never been anything else. With this definition of Original Sin the Thirty-Nine Articles are in substantial agreement; and this is true, indeed, of the entire orthodox Church, Catholic as well as Protestant. There is a complete consensus of teaching that, ever since the Fall, "we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God," but are of our own nature "inclined to evil."

With sin as thus defined the New Theologians do verily make light by denying its existence altogether.

And yet they maintain that they have as profound a sense of sin as their orthodox revilers glory in, although their doctrine of God makes sin a logical impossibility. If God be all that is (even though he be *infinitely more*, as Mr. Campbell absurdly declares), how can there be "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, his law"? Are we to suppose that God also is a sinner, as Sir Oliver Lodge more than half hints? Surely, Dr. Warschauer assumes that mankind are separate or distinct from God when he says that "in the experience of sin we are not expressing but suppressing—victoriously asserting our will against—the Divine Will," which, of course, is a virtual denial of the Divine Immanence. "However flawless may appear the theory," the reverend gentleman continues, "that we are one with God, in practice we know that we are not." That is to say, in some of his aspects God is out of harmony with himself, or sins against himself, or sets himself at naught.

The truth about the New Theologians seems to be that their philosophy and their theology are fundamentally at variance. Philosophically, they are Monists, while theologically they are bound to be Dualists. In other words, their theology is ruined by their Christianity, while their Christianity is all but annihilated by their philosophy. Of necessity, the one logically destroys the other. Sin implies a Dualism; and it was upon this assumed Dualism that Christianity as a redemptive religion was originally built up. In its existing forms it could not have been erected upon any other foundation.

Of the two Theologies, the Old is preferable to the New, the Catholic to the Protestant; but Secularism opposes all theologies alike, on the ground that they are based on assumptions which, not only cannot be verified, but at the same time are inconsistent with and contradict the grim and tragic facts of life. The Universe, as known to us, is too crowded with imperfections, failures, sufferings, and sorrows to be the product of an omnipotent and ideal Being; the one could never for a moment tolerate the other. An infinite Person would not demean himself by making creatures inferior to himself, who would be a source of perpetual worry and disappointment to him. An absolutely holy Father could not beget unholy children, or children capable of becoming unholy. Any doctrine of sin is a refutation of every doctrine of God. Taking man as they find him, therefore, Freethinkers have no choice but to avow themselves Atheists; and their contention is that Atheism is the only logical and practically satisfactory philosophy. But if there be no God, sin, in the theological sense, vanishes forever; and all the heated controversies of the past about the sacrificial, atoning work of Christ, about the love and justice of heaven, and about the terms of salvation, are seen to have been utterly absurd.

God and sin cannot be harmonised because the one excludes the other. If this statement is declared blasphemous, we reply that we make it for the purpose of avoiding blasphemy. We hold that the rankest of all blasphemies is that which places side by side two mutually destructive beliefs, the one in an absolutely good and loving deity, and the other in a fallen, essentially depraved and corrupt humanity. Because we cannot help believing in humanity, and are unable to regard it as fallen, depraved, and corrupt by nature, we find ourselves obliged to repudiate all belief in a supernatural Maker and Sovereign of the Universe. "O you are simply rude to God," some Christian apologist objects. "No," we reply, "it is in order *not* to be rude to God that we refuse to believe in him."

It is quite true that Freethinkers do not believe in sin as expounded by any school of theology. It is quite true that they acknowledge no "transgression of the law of God," no "disobedience of the Divine command," no "violation of God's will, either in purpose or conduct." It is quite true that they decline to fall on their knees and sorrowfully confess, "We are nothing but miserable sinners in thy sight, O God." But it is the direct opposite of true

to represent them as being morally indifferent and socially callous. It is impossible to sin against a being who does not exist; but even on the assumption that God does exist, we hold that man, being the work of his own hands, cannot be guilty of sin against him, because whatever a man does is due to the exercise of faculties bestowed upon him by his Maker. This ought to be self-evident, and is so to all except the theologians. But the denial of sin in the theological sense should not be construed as if it were synonymous with, or even led up to, anything like repudiation of moral obligations and social duties. What Secularists teach is, not that morality does not count, but that it is the only thing that really does count in human life. Their view of man is, not that he is fallen, depraved, corrupt, and on the high road to perdition, but that he is weak, imperfect, undeveloped, rising but slowly, yet truly rising, in the scale of social worth and efficiency; and that, on the whole, he has never stood higher than he stands to-day, perhaps never quite so high.

What the divines seem incapable of realising is the undoubted fact that religion and morality are essentially distinct. Surely they cannot help observing that in numerous instances religion, often in a form most intense, does exist apart from morality, nor have they any excuse for not knowing that it has been scientifically proved that every religion was originally non-ethical. But while too prejudiced to acknowledge such incontrovertible facts they do not hesitate to assert that Atheism and vice are related as cause and effect. Times without number has this assertion been philosophically as well as historically discredited, but they continue to repeat it with no abatement of dogmatic confidence and cocksureness. They persistently shut their eyes to the truth that some of earth's best and noblest sons and daughters have always been, and still are, unbelievers in the supernatural, whose unbelief in another world only served to intensify their devotion to this, and whose entire lack of love to God did but increase the volume and improve the quality of their love to man.

The habit of acknowledging inborn sinfulness and depravity is in itself degrading and demoralising. It engenders insincerity and deceit. It tends to make a man proud and haughty and pharisaical. To confess vague sinfulness is a very different thing from owning up to specific acts of sin, such as lying, cheating, self-seeking, and slander. Those who say to God, "We are but miserable sinners in thy sight," are often the very people who are unsympathetic and overbearing in their treatment of the morally weak and socially unfortunate neighbor, and who, in their relation to non-Christians and anti-Christians, are extremely bigoted and bitter and unjust. The spirit of sweet charity is not in them. Like the Under-Secretary of State, quoted by John Stuart Mill in his *On Liberty*, they maintain "the doctrine that all who do not believe in the divinity of Christ are beyond the pale of toleration"; and they can justify both their attitude and conduct from the Word of God. All sin is against God, and that is wholly forgiven them the moment they put their trust in the finished work of Christ. Once they are in the Beloved, their sins are no longer reckoned against them. They have nothing to fear either in this world or in the next. We firmly declare that such a faith militates against the growth of the social spirit, and makes those who cherish it narrow-minded and selfish. What is wanted is a universal recognition of the essential soundness of human nature, and of the adequacy for all practical purposes of the resources naturally resident within itself.

J. T. LLOYD.

Obedience is our universal duty and destiny; wherein whoso will not bend must break: too early and too thoroughly we cannot be trained to know that Would, in this world of ours, is as mere zero to Should, and for most part as the smallest of fractions even to Shall.—*Carlyle.*

## His Tender Mercies.

WHEN the little darling four-year-old who has been the light and joy of a happy household, with his dimpled cheeks and laughing eyes, is suddenly cut off by some fell disease, and his beautiful childish form is stilled in death; when his fond parents are prostrated with grief at their irreparable loss, conscious of an aching void in the heart that can never be filled; when the dismal hearse bears his lifeless little body to the cold, cold tomb, leaving the home that once thrilled with joyous animation at the sound of his laughter in darkness and despair.....Write me down *Atheist.*

When the young man in his teens of whom his parents expected great things, on whose education they had expended the savings of years, is slowly wasting away before their eyes, shortly to be laid in a consumptive's grave; when the promise of the life that now is has been falsified and the promise of that which is to come has failed to give hope; when the morning of life has been overcast by the threatening clouds of death, and an unspeakable numbness takes possession of the soul of those who will witness the last flicker of life's candle.....Write me down *Atheist.*

When the father of a young family is stricken down in his prime and finds life slipping from his grasp; when his partner in matrimony is left to fight life's battle alone without his aid and sympathy; when the children are prematurely thrown into the struggle for existence, to be the bread-winners for a widowed mother; when their rosy prospects for the future are changed to a darkened horizon of foreboding trouble; when the playtime of their life is suddenly cut short by the stress of immediate needs.....Write me down *Atheist.*

When the homeward-bound vessel after many months' absence is nearing the port where the sailor's wife is affectionately awaiting his return,—when in sight of the shore in a sudden squall she goes down with all hands lost to the bottom of the sea; when the sailor with his thoughts toward her who has been his guiding star under foreign skies is engulfed in the angry waters; when the lass whom he courted and wed mourns the bitter cruelty of the sea; when their children, who at eventide have prayed to him who they have been taught holds the waters in the hollow of his hands for their daddy's safe return, and the only answer to their prayers is that they shall never see his face again; when joy at the sailor's return is changed to unutterable grief at his loss.....Write me down *Atheist.*

When a colliery district is suddenly panic-stricken at the report of an explosion, and an indescribable scene of confusion and sorrow and grief is witnessed at the pit's mouth; when hundreds of men are entombed in a burning mine with little hope of escape, and wives with sorrowful hearts are tearfully awaiting tidings of their husbands, mothers searching for their sons, and sisters for their brothers; when human lives are risked and lost in noble efforts to save them from a fearful fate, and when the heroic efforts at rescue are only rewarded by the recovery of charred and lifeless bodies, to be mournfully gazed upon by eyes bedimmed with tears; when whole families are practically wiped out of existence, and nearly every house is a house of mourning; when the women-folk are left to face the long years of a saddened life alone.....Write me down *Atheist.*

When the volcano after a long period of inactivity suddenly shows signs of life and belches forth mountains of molten lava, devastating the country for miles around; when the heavens become darkened with the smoke of its vomiting, and the surrounding earth a sheet of liquid fire; when the inhabitants of the peaceful valley at the mountain's base are compelled to fly like hunted animals for their lives; when little children at their play, appalled at the awful spectacle of hell let loose, huddle together in sympathy for mutual protection, and are burnt to death by the falling fiery lava; when the sucking babe is killed at its mother's breast, and the only

son in his father's arms; when heaven shows no pity, and their miserable plight is beyond human aid..... Write me down *Atheist*.

When the thunderstorm bursts with ominous fury, and the rain descends in torrents; when the lightning flashes with startling brilliancy, and the electric fluid plays havoc with property and with life; when the church steeple is levelled to the ground, and subjected to the same humiliating treatment as the factory chimney; when the elements in their diabolical play make a target of the house of God, and play battledore and shuttlecock with human dwellings; when man and beast may at any moment be shrivelled to a heap of ashes, and the venerable oak be rent in twain; when the cosmic forces are blind to human feeling and ethical demands, and account a man's life as of no more value than a sparrow's..... Write me down *Atheist*.

When the dreaded earthquake with cannibal ferocity swallows thousands of human beings at one gulp, mercilessly crushing in its capacious jaws the quivering bodies of its shrieking victims; when frantic with terror they are quickly doomed to a horrible death—buried alive without warning and without ceremony; when those who escape with life survive only to go raving mad with fright at the shock and the scene of terrible destruction and desolation around them; when humanity stands aghast at the awful wreckage and loss of life, and the sky looks serenely down on the scene of havoc as if nothing had happened..... Write me down *Atheist*.

When the Scriptures bear witness that no man hath seen God at any time, and none knoweth of his whereabouts nor hath any evidence of his existence; when prayer in all ages has been a farce, and sacrifice and worship has been wasted effort; when faith in heaven's good intentions has been a delusion, and reliance on God's help has been a snare; when man has been left to work out his own intellectual and social salvation; when the God-idea has ever been like a millstone round his neck, hindering his development and his progress..... Write me down in large capital letters **ATHEIST**.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

### Correspondence.

#### THE MORAL EDUCATION CONGRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As I am a member of the Executive of the Moral Education Congress, I may be allowed to make one or two observations on your note in last week's issue. I have not seen the letter of Lady Grove which you quote from, but I can undertake to say that the expressions you refer to do not accurately represent the mind of the promoters. The Congress as a body will "expound" nothing. It sets out with a deep appreciation of the importance of moral training, and it invites expressions of thought on the subject from persons of all schools and creeds. It is neither for nor against theology. Its documents (of which I have a full copy before me) will include papers which insist upon the value of the religious (theological) factor, and papers which counsel the separation of moral instruction from theology. French contributions on the secular basis are accorded the same courtesy as essays by Anglicans or Catholics. Nothing in the Congress syllabus nor in the proceedings of the Executive can be construed to imply any reflection upon the secular system of moral instruction pursued in French State-schools.

F. J. GOULD.

### Acid Drops.

If the Catholics are not increasing in number in England, they are increasing in influence, and certainly in "cheek." Fifty years ago, they never dreamed that they would some day have processions in the streets of London; much less that they would try to have a sort of international procession carrying the Mass along through the best-known thoroughfares in the metropolis of the British Empire. Charles Bradlaugh used to remind Freethinkers that their final fight, and the greatest of all, would be with the Catholic Church; and he seems to have been right in that as he was in most other things.

The procession that tried to carry the Mass along—that is to say, baked flour and water, which priestly hocus-pocus turned into the very body of Christ—that is to say, God—was in connection with the Eucharistic Congress, which was attended by delegates from all parts of the Catholic world. Cardinal Vincent Vannutelli came as the Pope's Legate—an official who hasn't been seen in England before for centuries. This gentleman was met by a surging crowd of his co-religionists at Charing Cross Station. Dukes knelt to kiss his hand. He wore on his breast a massive cross of gold incrustated with precious stones. But what he wore was nothing to what he said. "I cannot tell you," he said, "how glad I am to be here, in the land of liberty, tolerance, and free institutions." That is how these priests talk in free countries, where they cannot rule the roost, and especially where their Church is in a minority. But where their Church is in a majority, and where they can rule the roost, they do all they know to kill liberty, to banish tolerance, and to destroy free institutions. See how they act in Spain and Austria; see how they used to act in Italy; see how they acted in France until they became intolerable and the nation rose and put an end to their innings. Why, even in Malta, which is a British possession, the Catholics called upon the British government the other day to put a stop to Protestant meetings as an affront to Holy Mother Church. Cardinal Vannutelli loves liberty as a shark loves a shipwrecked sailor.

Cardinal Vannutelli, the Pope's Legate, was received at Westminster Cathedral on Wednesday evening in fine style. Archbishop Bourne, with the Bishops and Chapter of the Cathedral, moved down the centre aisle to the great door to await him. After a while there was a great blare of trumpets; God's representative's representative was coming. The blare of trumpets was followed by loud and long cheers as the Cardinal entered the holy edifice. He was conducted slowly up the aisle, his scarlet figure being illuminated by candles carried in front, and the crowded congregation bending their knees as he passed. Outside the Cathedral, as the *Daily News* reporter said, the Pope's Legate was received as a king; inside, he was received as a god.

There was some pretty strong talk at the Catholic Congress about the King's Coronation Oath as far as it was a plain-spoken repudiation of the Catholic faith. Lord Llandaff called it an "outrageous formula." The Duke of Norfolk called it "a most blasphemous and outrageous collection of words and phrases, shocking to the ears of any decent man." Whew! What must the poor King's feelings have been when he uttered those awful words! Yet he survived it, and looks jolly. We should like to know his private opinion of the whole business—on both sides.

Some of our readers will have noticed how gingerly, when not approvingly, the English newspapers deal with the Roman Catholic Church. The reason of this is not far to seek. Everything in Catholic organisation is thought out and done methodically. The press is "worked" by getting Catholics in the editorial offices, who work for all they are worth to promote Catholic interests. If the worst comes to the worst, they contrive to minimise hostile criticism. This is one of the most dangerous features of religious reaction in England. We may add that the wealth of the Religious Orders banished from France is being used to push Catholicism on business lines in this country.

Catholic priests whipped up their working-class forces to fight the Secular Education policy of the Trade Union Congress. But the result was a miserable failure. The card vote for Secular Education, on the motion of Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P., was 1,433,000, against 131,000. It was pointed out that Secular Education in the State schools opposed no man's religion, but gave equal rights to all. Mr. Sexton, however, was as vicious as—a Roman Catholic. He

We cannot be reminded too often of the necessity of an inward life. Two of the conditions of its development are meditation and solitude. When the noise of the world is stilled, and the dust of the human conflict is dissipated, the inward voice awakes, and the eyes of the soul discern all things more clearly. We must often retire into solitude, the more so as we are only alone there in appearance; for it is there that we encounter those whom I shall call our invisible allies: our comforting memories, and those loved figures who encourage and sustain us.—*Charles Wagner*.

said that "Atheists were tacking themselves on to the Secular Education business"—as though Christians were the only people who had a right to move in public affairs. But that was not the end of Mr. Sexton's malicious piety. "When St. Patrick," he said, "banished all venomous reptiles from Ireland and drove them into the sea, they were not all drowned. Some of them seem to have found their way across the Channel and found a home in the bodies of men like these Atheists." All right, Mr. Sexton. We understand you. You are like the rest of your co-religionists. You are a Socialist—at least, you say so; but we know what rights Atheists would enjoy under a Socialism of your pattern. You are a bitter bigot, and a tool of the priests, whether you know it or not. But you are not going to kill Secular Education. It will flourish on the ruins of priest-craft.

There was some very plain talk at the Trade Union Congress about Salvation Army "sweating." A strong resolution on the subject was proposed and seconded and warmly supported. No doubt it would have been carried, but it was withdrawn to please the "front benchmen" who advised that the matter should be left in the hands of the Parliamentary Committee. We suppose this was done out of consideration for General Booth, who was said by one or two of the speakers not to be personally to blame. But the Salvation Army is an autocracy, and the autocrat cannot escape responsibility in that way.

General Booth's letter on the subject to the Parliamentary Committee shows the double game played by the Salvation Army. In official publications they both praise up and run down the workmen at the Hanbury-street shelter. They run these workmen down when they want to justify the gross "sweating." They praise them up when they want to get plenty of paying work for them to do. On one side, the shelter is full of wastrels; on the other side, it is full of competent hands. And one or the other side is presented to the public according to circumstances.

The difficulty in this country of exposing trickery and quackery, or worse, when associated with religion, is well illustrated in the case of the Salvation Army and sweating. The charges brought forward by the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and by Mr. Manson are of the most specific and detailed description. They ask for an independent inquiry into the state of affairs, and are content to abide by the result. The Army refuses an inquiry and meets all charges with ineffective blank denials or with impudent offers to pray for those who make the charges. The *Church Times* forms an honorable exception to the religious press, which either remains silent or repeats, as though it were its own, the Army's estimate of its own value. The *Christian World*, for example, in noting the meeting of protest held in Trafalgar Square, asserts that the real grievance of the meeting was that it supported the "capitalistic system." It also asserts that all the charges brought forward at the meeting have been "made before and answered before." Now neither of these statements is true. Whatever the objection of some people may be, the real objection is that the Salvation Army sweats on the one side and undersells on the other. If anyone will read the chapter in the cheap edition of Mr. Manson's book dealing with Hanbury-street, he cannot doubt that these charges are proved up to the hilt. And these charges have not been answered before. They have been denied, which is quite a different matter. But the Army refuses to allow an inquiry and declines to give the information repeatedly asked for. If the Army's operations were not carried on in the name of Christianity the *Christian World* would probably be quite ready to call for an inquiry.

We are surprised that the *Christian Commonwealth*, with its much professed interest in the downtrodden and the oppressed, does not show more concern in the doings of the Army than it does.

At the Trades Union Congress it was pointed out that it was not only in regard to joinery that the Salvation Army was guilty of sweating. One delegate asserted that in West London the Army was undercutting laundrywomen. The Army will, as a matter of course, issue the usual official denial, and, as usual, refuse all information on the subject.

The *War Cry* shows that the Salvation Army managers are losing their temper. They have been "nursing their wrath to keep it warm," and now it boils over, to the detriment of the old conspiracy of silence. Our contemporary refers to the criticism of its "sweating" policy

as "false statements and malignant opposition from a blaspheming mob misled by political agitators." This is not bad—for a beginning.

While the autocrat of the Salvation Army was denounced at the Trade Union Congress as a "sweater" he was being hailed as a Savior of Society in South Africa. Distance lends enchantment to the view.

Our glorious free press has been giving attention to the Hull "ghost." The fool-crop, as Heine said, is perennial.

Tolstoy's eightieth birthday was not celebrated with any great enthusiasm in Russia. Had it not been for the foolish action of the Government, and the still more foolish action of the Holy Synod, it would have attracted very little attention. The fact is, there are three Tolstoys, and few admire the whole trinity. There is Tolstoy the artist, Tolstoy the anarchist, and Tolstoy the neo-Christian ascetic. We might add that Tolstoy's power as a writer in the second and third characters, while it cannot be denied, is largely owing to an immense seriousness which is the other side of an almost total lack of humor. Shakespeare's face, it has been said, wears a "wise smile." You never see it on the face of Tolstoy.

Tolstoy, in his old age, preaches a religion for eunuchs. Marriage is only a concession to human weakness; all sexual relations are in themselves sinful. To understand this we have only to regard it as the natural reaction from the debauchery of his younger days. Tourgeniev described Tolstoy, in the old days when he contributed to the *St. Petersburg Contemporary*, as living a life of "Sprees, gipsy-girls, and cards all night long; and then he sleeps like a corpse till two in the afternoon." Tolstoy's anti-sexual religion in his old age reminds us of Shakespeare's line that "We are all virtuous in the ebbing of the blood."

According to the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*, the Summer School of Progressive Theology which has just been held at Aberystwyth, was an unqualified success. Both the spirit and the manners of all who took part in it were perfect, and the editor sends his report thus: "Praise the Lord for the new spirit that is stirring men's hearts and minds, and influencing their lives." That means, if it means anything, that the "new spirit" is the Lord's gift. But there is a larger number of Christians who praise the Lord for the old "spirit," which has been in the Church for countless ages. Now, outsiders don't quite see how two conflicting spirits can proceed from the same God, and are of opinion that God, if he exists, must feel rather queer when thanked, with equal fervor, for both. Can Mr. Dawson throw any light on this puzzling point?

The Rev. John McNeill has settled down once more—for a while. Beginning a year's ministry at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge-road, a Sunday or two ago, he told the people that an Edinburgh judge had recently "sentenced three lawyers to longer and shorter terms of imprisonment for fraudulently doing away with people's money," and that these three men were Church members. They had a great abundance of unctuous piety, but no honesty; plenty of religion, but no morality. What an eloquent comment on the transforming power of the Cross!

Christ Church folks have strange times before them. Mr. McNeill warns them that from him they will hear nothing about politics, nothing about science, nothing about social schemes, nothing about theology, old or new, and nothing about citizenship. He will talk to them only about God, Christ, the Day of Judgment, heaven and hell—about all things outside the sphere of man's life as a citizen of this world.

Recently, the Rev. Dr. Warschauer talked a lot of nonsense about evolution. For one thing, he called it "a time-process," by which he could only mean that it has had a beginning and shall have an end. Science, however, is absolutely ignorant of either a beginning or an end to it. Our solar system began to be, and is even now on its way to dissolution; but of the process by which it came and is going we can only predicate that it is eternal. The nebulae, which astronomers have actually discovered, are but the dissolved materials of old systems preparing for the formation of new ones. Why, the eternity of the universe is a scientific commonplace.

Dr. Warschauer trotted out another error and claimed it as truth. He said that "nothing is ever evolved that was

not first involved"; as if matter, in its original state, were a soil into which a carefully-arranged collection of seeds had been dropped by its Maker—the seeds of life, consciousness, intelligence, and personality. Such seems to be the New Theology theory of the universe. But it has not the shadow of a scientific basis or proof. In reality, life, consciousness, intelligence, and personality are but so many passing phases assumed by matter under specific conditions on our globe; and by the very laws that brought them into being they are doomed to extinction. To postulate Infinite and Eternal Consciousness as their cause is only to attempt to solve one mystery by the introduction of a greater.

Intelligence is a product, an effect; but it does not at all follow that the producer or cause is another intelligence. Nothing could be more ridiculous than the idea of an infinite intelligence producing a finite one.

An unknown man committed suicide in a public lavatory in the Strand, and the coroner's jury returned the simple verdict of "suicide." According to the late Dr. Talmage and the present Dr. Torrey, every person who commits suicide belongs to the Atheistic fraternity; but this one, like so many others—pretty nearly all, in fact—was a religionist, and probably a Christian. On his shirt cuff he had written some farewell words, including these to his wife: "Good-bye, dearie. God bless you and our bairns."

"Deserted Wives: a Crying City Evil," was the subject of a sermon by the Rev. D. E. Sherwood Gunson, in St. David's (Ramshorn) Church, Glasgow, a report of which appeared in the local *News*. The preacher lamented that "In the second city of the Empire, in a Christian city, twenty-five men a month were arrested for the most heartless desertion of wives and children." We cannot say that we are surprised at this in a "Christian city," and we do not understand the reverend gentleman's astonishment. It was natural, however, from a professional point of view, that he should throw the blame for this state of affairs upon anything but his own Church. Presbyterian religion is forced upon the children in all the elementary schools in Scotland, and, if it is what it pretends to be, it ought to keep them straight through the whole course of their lives. But it doesn't. And why? It is all the fault of "infidelity," the preacher says. Perhaps intemperance has something to do with it, but "infidelity" must bear most of the blame. This is what he said:—

"What is the cause of this serious state of matters? It is, in the first instance, the result of an insidious and persistent anti-religion crusade which has been going on for a generation past. In the press and from the platform the work of the Church has been derided, the old religious principles scoffed at, and a crude materialism preached in place of a spiritual view of existence. The poison has done its work. Thousands have listened to the luring voices, and to-day possess no religious principles whatever. Religion gone, marriage is thought of as a passing convenience to be lightly entered into and as lightly got rid of."

There was more of the same sort, but we spare our readers and save our space. We are glad, of course, to see the preacher's admission that the Freethought crusade in Glasgow has been active and successful. But when he attributes to it the evil he laments he is talking the most flagrant absurdity. If his contention means anything, it means that the men who desert their wives and families—at any rate, in Glasgow—are Freethinkers. This is easily said, and still more easily suggested. But where is the proof? We challenge the reverend gentleman to produce it. Let him give the names and addresses of the Freethinkers who have been arrested in Glasgow for deserting their wives and children. If he cannot do this, he is simply a vulgar slanderer, who ought to sit in a pew instead of occupying a pulpit. We challenge him, also, to state what Freethought party, or what Freethought advocate, treats marriage as a passing convenience.

Mr. Gunson's theory that civil marriage is not marriage at all, and that true marriage is only celebrated in churches, is a very convenient one for the preachers who find it ministers to their authority and profit. Unfortunately—for the preachers—people are more and more coming to the view that the man of God's intervention is a trade affair, and that his interest in the marriage ceremony is purely commercial. Besides, he utters stuff at weddings which makes the bride blush and the bridegroom look down his nose, and puts forward a doctrine of husband and wife's relations which is founded first on the foolish old story of the Creation and the Fall, and secondly on the coarse teachings of St. Paul. Civil marriage is at least decent as well as economical.

The Rev. Dr. Cadman, of Brooklyn, is said to have

"trounced Huxley with all Dr. Parker's old zest—referring to the Agnostic scientist as a man who mistook a rumbling in his own brain for a world movement." That is an accurate description of the Christian man of God. In his own head, and nowhere else, Christianity, for three hundred years a dying religion, is yet the desire of all nations, a world-movement, when two-thirds of the world know nothing about it.

Dr. Parkes Cadman, who has been officiating at Whitefield's Tabernacle for the past month, believes—so he says—in the advance of scientific truth. The British Association will no doubt feel profoundly grateful for his support. What his conception of scientific truth is he does not say, but we gather that it is the preacher's conception, because he expressed "a profound belief" that before long God and immortality will become scientific beliefs. As a statement of personal opinion Dr. Cadman's belief would no doubt be interesting to the world, if the world were only interested in Dr. Cadman. As a probable forecast of the future of scientific thought, the belief is simply ridiculous. Science does not progress by going backward, and both the belief in a God and in personal immortality, however they may have been prolonged into a later period, belong essentially to a pre-scientific age. Science possesses no instrument of research by means of which it could give any real validity to either idea. Indeed, the more scientific methods are perfected, and the greater scientific knowledge grows, the more unbelievable do both become. The fact of immortality becomes more incredible, the existence of God becomes not only more incredible also, but is seen to be quite useless. That there is a personal intelligence directing the course of natural forces is to-day a thesis that cannot be even stated scientifically. The unfortunate thing is that many men of science use the word "God" in so loose a sense—or even in no sense at all—that preachers like Dr. Cadman are able to use their words in support of beliefs they would be the first to repudiate. Still, Dr. Cadman is entitled to have a "profound belief" on this or on any other subject. It may cheer up Whitefield's, but we do not expect it will have any other effect.

How to misunderstand scientific teaching in the interests of religion has been well shown during the past week by the comments upon the Presidential Address at the British Association. Professor Darwin pointed out the fact that plants possessed the power of developing reactions that were suspiciously like habits and memory in the animal world. Of course, the real significance of his charming and brilliant address was that it gave sentience a thoroughly materialistic basis, and supported the conclusion that the difference between "mental" and "physical" is a difference of degree or of classification only. But on this a religious contemporary ponderously remarks that there is a general tendency to find the foreshadowings of "spiritual, or rather psychic, life throughout the whole of the organic and even of the inorganic universe," the inference being that it is the "spiritual" that underlies the "material." This is, of course, putting the cart before the horse; and not so long ago Darwin's pronouncement would have been denounced as Atheistic. In science the superior does not antedate the inferior, but succeeds it.

Professor Darwin also remarked that "Natural Selection passes on its pupils from one set of conditions to other and more elaborate tests, insisting that they shall endlessly repeat what they have learned and forcing them to learn something new." No one but those whose bias or interest prompts them to a misunderstanding will take such language as being anything more than figurative. We do not predicate a sense of humor in the sun because we speak of the "smile" of the sunshine, or attribute consciousness to the sea because we speak of it as being angry or calm. But the religious organ from which we have already quoted gravely remarks, by way of explanatory comment, "This means that the natural process can only be understood in the light of purposiveness." And in the same thoroughly unscientific manner it speaks of "the resistless determination in nature to do better things."

"Purposiveness" is the very last thing that either Professor Darwin or his great father would think of attributing to the "natural process." There is no more purpose in the action of natural selection than there is in the fact that when a handful of pebbles and twigs are thrown into a stream the one sinks while the other floats. Purpose can only be looked for when we are dealing with what are admittedly the results of intelligent action, and then only under certain conditions. But to argue purpose because means and ends are related (as though they could ever be otherwise) is in the highest degree absurd. And to speak of nature's "resistless" purpose to produce higher forms

is simply ridiculous. Nature has no such purpose, and if it had it is certainly not resistless. The myriads of animate forms born that are unable to maintain themselves alive, the existence of low and degraded forms, proves this beyond question. Nor is it true that nature punishes with "pain and ultimate extinction" those creatures that will not come into complete line with efficiency. We wonder whether our contemporary has ever heard of degraded forms in the plant and animal world? What would it make of the whale, a degraded land mammal, of the blind fish of Kentucky, or of many other forms that might be named? Forms that depart from the average type in a lower direction stand as good a chance of surviving as those who vary in a higher—probably a better. Nature is no more careful of a "high" type than it is of a "low" one; and, as a matter of fact, the lower types are often far more persistent under natural conditions than are the higher ones. It is depressing to have to point out these simple considerations at this time of day, but they serve their purpose of illustrating the chronic unscientific nature of religious thinking.

"It is quite time that we told the sceptic and doubter," says a religious weekly, "with well-founded emphasis that there are very few personages in the whole of history concerning whom we have anything like as good a knowledge as of Jesus." We cannot say whether it is or is not time that the sceptic was told this; so much depends upon the purpose we have in view; all we are certain of is that it is not true. Here is a personage concerning whom whether he ever really existed or not is a matter of dispute. It is uncertain, taking certain things for granted, as to when he was born, and how he was born. What he said, how he said it, and where he said it. Whether he said what he is reported to have said is doubted by many of the ablest Christian critics. His life as recorded recapitulates moral maxims that were commonplaces long before he is said to have been born, and legends and miracles that are met with in scores of other and earlier creeds than Christianity. Yet we are solemnly told that we know more of his life than we do of any other personage in history! And this comes from a journal that prides itself on its devotion to scholarly, advanced, and fearless criticism! Prodigious!

The Scottish Christian and Social Union has been fore-gathering under the presidency of the Rev. Professor George Adam Smith, and talking about the Labor movement, which is "threatening to change the face of the country." It was felt that this movement must be "leavened by the Church," because "the Church knew something which the leaders of the Socialists did not—namely, that the new social fabric must be made out of the imperishable truth contained in Christ's religion." All this soft talk shows that the clergy are attending to business. "There's nothing like leather."

The increase of murder and other violent crimes in great cities is only what might be expected. The vaster the population, and the less people know of each other, the easier it is for ruffians to act unseen and remain undetected. There is really no need for the *Law Journal* to smell a mystery in this very simple matter. Our legal contemporary remarks that Sir Fitzjames Stephen used to say that it was the fear of hell which in the end kept people from crime, and that the fear of hell seems to be waning. We do not recollect that Sir Fitzjames Stephen ever said anything so foolish. It is one of the established points of criminology that the worst prisoners are the most religious. The fear of hell does not keep them from abominable crimes. It influences the wrong persons; sensitive souls like Cowper, incapable of injuring a fellow being.

The Essex County Football Association has resolved that—"No person who takes part in Sunday football within the United Kingdom, either as a player or official, shall be recognised by this Association." Prodigious! There has been nothing like it since the famous meeting of the three tailors of Tooley-street.

The Rev. T. Mardy Rees says that "hundreds to-day refuse to enter the house of God because it makes them think." True; it "makes them think," and thinking opens their eyes, and with open eyes they see what an infinite farce supernatural religion is; and then they never darken the door of church or chapel.

University College, Gower-street, London, was established by men who believed in Secular Education. Religion was excluded from its precincts, and it was adorned by eminent professors of freethinking tendencies, such as Professor Clifford, who was perhaps the first mathematician in Europe, and whose atheistic articles in the leading monthlies gave

so much alarm to the orthodox world. But a change has come over the scene since then. Money and "respectability" have changed the character of the place. It has been transmogrified into London University, sending a member to parliament. And now we see that religion has been dragged in and half established. An examination is provided for a certificate in religious knowledge; by and bye, we suppose, there will be a chair of divinity; and eventually religion will be one of the compulsory subjects.

The pious fanatic Gregori, who shot Dreyfus in the Pantheon during the Zola ceremony, says he does not hate the ex-prisoner of the Devil's Island, but rather pities him. He did not fire at Dreyfus, but at Dreyfusism! And to think that there are influential men in France who countenance such imbecility! Political passion, stimulated by religious bigotry, seems capable of anything.

Mr. Robert Blatchford speaks of "Our Mother Nature." Failing or refusing to see that this is metaphorical language, the *Christian Commonwealth* says it is on all fours with the Christian's "Our Father God." What nonsense! One expression is poetical, the other is literal. It is absurd to suppose that Mr. Blatchford considers Nature to be "alive and conscious." Many poets, including Shelley, Tennyson, and Meredith, have spoken of "Mother Earth." Does it follow that they thought the earth was alive and conscious?

The sea-serpent has turned up again. It reappears regularly during the silly season. There must be a specially pious influence at work in August and September. Perhaps it is owing to the leisure most people enjoy then, which gives them time to think over the Biblical stories they learnt in their childhood, such as Eve's serpent, Balaam's talking ass, and Jonah's whale that took him for the three days' submarine excursion.

"O God, we leave all men, all institutions, concerns, policies, and purposes with thee," prayed a servant of the Lord recently. But the prayer was a black lie. Not a word of it was seriously meant. God's people are all busybodies and intermeddlers, who never allow him any discretion whatever. He has never the slightest chance to show his hand at all, or to do anything on his own initiative. It is only in prayer, however, that they are humble and unassuming, and even then they are everlastingly giving information and issuing instructions.

The prayer went on: "The great men of the earth can do nothing permanently against thy Cross." How grateful the Lord must be for that assurance! And yet, either that piece of information is false, or the Lord is impotent, or both, for the fact stares us in the face that the Cross has not conquered!

"If this life, compared to that which is to come, is a dream and a vision," exclaims a man of God, "it will not be in vain if it finds its summary in Jesus, and if we awaken in His likeness." Dreams are true while they last; but afterwards—? The religious life is a dream, and some people enjoy it; but when the dream breaks up, then comes the eye-opener, or—the sweet silence of eternal unconsciousness. Blessed are they who awaken in time to learn how joyous and jubilant healthy life is.

The age is going straight to the Devil. The English nation is on the brink of destruction. A Baptist preacher says so. The visible sign of this fast-coming doom is the growing "irreverence in churches and the lack of dignity in public worship." We can scarcely believe it, but with tears in his eyes this sky-pilot assures us that now at church "there was the popular cough, the passing of sweets, and the exchange of notes." How unspeakably shocking!

"Pastor" Housley, of the Oak Bank Orphanage, Salford, who has just got into trouble with the Magistrates for running that pious institution on fraudulent lines, pleaded through his counsel that he was following the financial policy of General Booth, especially in the matter of collecting in the streets. Booth's street-cadgers (against the law) are everywhere. Housley's get him prosecuted and fined. He has not been to Buckingham Palace.

He who does not know how to pardon, and who does not recognise that he himself often has need of it, is either a hypocrite or possesses a hard heart.—*Charles Wagner.*



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 20, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 7.30, "The Present Position of God."

September 27, Queen's (Minor) Hall.

October 4. Glasgow; 11, Leicester; 18, Manchester; 25, Stanley Hall, London.

### To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £223 18s. 6d. Received since.—Edward Oliver, £2 2s.; A. H. Deacon, 2s.; George Dixon, £2 2s.; D. D. B. (second sub.), £2 2s.; S. Holmes, £1 1s.; D. J. D., £5; T. C. Riglin, 1s.; William May, 10s.; L. Devereux, 2s. 6d.; A. Secularist (10 more weeks), 5s.; Rank-and-Filer, 2s. 6d.; J. Charter, 7s. 6d.; R. T. Nichols (2nd sub.), £2; Birmingham Friend, £1 1s.; W. Lawrence, £1 1s.; G. Gompertz, 5s.; Joseph Bryce, 5s.; Camberwell, 10s.; S. Eales, 2s. 6d.

JACOB (Plymouth).—Mr. W. T. Lee debated in the Co-operative Hall both with Mr. Foote and with the late Charles Watts. Glad you like the *Freethinker* more every week, after reading it for fifteen years. We have not exactly dropped the "Profane Jokes" for they appear occasionally, though not under that heading.

DAVID ALLAN.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

A. H. WOOD.—You would have to proceed against the local head of the Salvation Army under the law of nuisance, and you would probably lose, for it is a general opinion in religious and law-and-order circles now that the "Army" can do no wrong. If the "Army" people play musical instruments in the street to your annoyance, you can have them moved on.

J. BLAND.—Sorry it was overlooked.

J. P. BURT.—We do not know of any subscribers in your town. Most of our readers get the paper through newsagents, and cannot be traced in that way. Pleased to hear that you have exchanged the Baptist faith for Freethought. We have not seen *Infallible Proofs* by the Rev. Dr. Pierson.

J. PINNOCK.—You understand, of course, that there must be no publication of the lecture, or any part of it, without the lecturer's consent. The quotation from Danton was *De l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace!*—"Daring, and still daring, and ever daring!"

F. J. VOISEY.—Why did you expect the *Westminster* to insert your letter? You are not the editor of a Christian paper, like the gentleman whose letter was inserted.

R. BLACK.—Thanks for photo. It is a sturdy Scotch face. See our paragraph on the cutting.

R. F. HAMLIN.—Shall be sent. Pleased to hear from one who has lately made the acquaintance of the *Freethinker*, and appreciates it so much, and regards the day of its arrival as the red-letter day of the week.

D. D. B., responding to our last week's appeal, writes: "Men like you are wanted in these dark days of Eucharistic superstition, and it is a privilege to supply the sinews of war whilst keeping one's head out of danger."

S. HOLMES writes: "Enclosed please find cheque to help you climb that hill you mention in this week's *Freethinker*. I sincerely hope you will, by this time next week, have received 99 similar subscriptions."

H. STOKES.—All the questions you ask about the last hours of Rousseau and Thomas Paine are founded on Christian falsehoods. Dr. Conway's standard *Life of Paine* should be in your local Free Library. Consult it there. We went into the whole matter in our exposure of Dr. Torrey's libels on Paine and Ingersoll in 1905. Mr. W. T. Stead, in the *Review of Reviews*, also showed that Paine's "immorality" and the "French woman" story were mere orthodox fiction. See also our *Infidel Death-Beds*.

J. BROUGH.—Pleased to hear from you again. Thanks for cuttings; also for reference to Post Office charges.

J. McVIE (Edinburgh), who looks forward to hearing Mr. Foote at Glasgow, wishes the present address of his friend, Mr. Alex. Taylor, M.A., who is somewhere in that city.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

H. BLACK.—We had already written on the Trade Union Congress vote. Thanks all the same—also for your good wishes.

P. ROSS.—We fear we must agree to differ.

A. V. TAPLING.—Glad to hear some Grimsby "saints" mean to go over and hold a protest meeting at Boston if Mr. Bates is sent to prison. We are sending on your letter to him.

D. J. D. writes: "Pleased to hear you are taking over the *Freethinker*, and also pleased to be able to fulfil my promise made when answering the Directors' circular. I only regret that I do not see my way to give more."

C. W. STYRING.—Mr. Reader Harris's reply to your letter is that of a thorough humbug. Bradlaugh's fight in the "Fruits of Philosophy" case was in 1877. You see, that is not twenty-four years ago.

G. BEDBOROUGH.—Thanks for the hint. The N. S. S. has not applied for the Sunday use of Council schoolrooms in London. It has been thought too much a waste of time; but "you never can tell." Glad you "enjoyed" Mr. Foote's lecture "very much."

G. DIXON.—We have looked at p. 70 of the pamphlet you enclose. To call that "incontestable" testimony is playing with words. Discussion is useless unless the rules of evidence are the same on both sides.

G. R. BALLARD.—You probably refer to the "libellous" biography of Bradlaugh, who took legal proceedings against those responsible for it. All copies were ordered to be destroyed, but some crept into circulation. We decline to consider statements made in such a publication.

W. LAWRENCE.—Thanks for very good wishes.

H. WISHART.—No lecture-notices from you, Tuesday morning.

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's second Queen's Hall lecture on "General Booth and the Woman Question" was followed with the closest attention and enthusiastically applauded. Mr. F. A. Davies made, as usual, an excellent chairman. This evening (Sept 20) Mr. Foote's subject will be "The Present Position of God." The lecture will be a review of Theism up to date, with some reference to the "New Theology."

A hooligan crowd, largely composed of lads, headed and instigated by a Christian man of God, have been doing their utmost for some time to break up the Freethought meetings at Parliament Hill Fields. We appeal to local Freethinkers to support the N. S. S. Branch platform this afternoon (Sept. 20). Miss Vance will be in attendance, as usual; and she may be relied upon to supply the necessary direction of affairs.

The district "saints" hope to be able to get Mr. Foote down for Sunday lectures in a good hall at Nelson during the winter. With a view to this object, a meeting will be held to-day (Sept. 20) at 8 p.m. at Mr. Holroyd's *café*, Market-street. Freethinkers in Nelson, Burnley, Colne, etc., are invited to attend.

Mr. Lloyd opens the new lecture season in the Manchester Secular Hall next Sunday (Sept. 27). South Lancashire "saints" will please note. We should be glad to hear that Mr. Lloyd had good meetings on this occasion.

Mr. W. R. Titterton, in last week's *New Age*, in the course of an article entitled "A Plea for Youth," wrote as follows:—

"A little while ago one of our philosophers said he was opposed to modern doubt because it is dangerous. Now I am opposed to modern doubt because it is safe. All regulations are safe; the Conservative Party knows (or once knew) that. It is belief that it is dangerous. It is belief that takes us into unknown regions, launches us upon perilous voyages (but the *Freethinker* is more an organ of belief, you must understand, than the *Christian World*). Life is a perpetual danger, a perpetual delight; death is the only safety."

We quite agree that the *Freethinker* is more an organ of belief than the *Christian World*. We have always denied that our principles are negative. They are quite positive. We take up a negative attitude towards Christianity, but we challenge its falsehoods in the interest of what we believe to be truth.

## Mark Twain on Christian Science.

*Christian Science*, by Mark Twain. (Harpers.)

FOR a whole generation Mark Twain has filled the world with laughter, mirth always generous, often springing—as true humor must always spring—from the source of tears. Yet the majority of readers merely regard Mark Twain as a funny fellow. The world has hardly discovered beneath his quaint drollery one of the sanest writers of our time, a satirist who reserves all his scorn for the mean and the ignoble. The incident of his failure—which, like Scott's, was the work of others—raises him to the rank of the heroes. Every new revelation of his character has only brought him closer to the hearts of his admirers. And now this prince of jesters is coming into his kingdom. The creator of *Huckleberry Finn* must be welcomed as the most eminent man of letters in America. In a recent work, Mark Twain has criticised "Christian Science." And Mark is just the right man to tackle "Christian Science" and its venerable founder, Mary Baker Glover Eddy. The high-priestess of this newest and most successful form of religiosity might reasonably have cherished the illusion that she had surmounted all obstacles and defeated all opponents. If she did, Mark Twain, with that unspeakable twinkle in his eye, that irresistible drawl in his voice, that unutterable gravity of manner, had but to come upon the scene to prove Mrs. Eddy absolutely mistaken. The reader will read Mark's account of "Christian Science" and laugh himself into a hiccough. Only by the skin of his teeth will he escape an apoplexy.

Mark Twain does not attempt a serious examination of the doctrines of "Christian Science." Probably he thinks it would be useless. He only laughs at them. But in that searching humor, in that burning satire, the nonsensical dogmas of the new gospel blacken and die, and Mrs. Eddy is shown forth as a laughing-stock. Mark deals with "Christian Science" in his own inimitable way and burlesques the Abracadabra, piously repeated by believers, in the following characteristic fashion:—

"I have no pain; there's no such thing as pain! I have no disease; there's no such thing as disease! Nothing is real but Mind; all is Mind, All-Good-Good-Good, Life, Soul, Liver, Bones, one of a series; ante and pass the buck!"

In another passage Mark is as pitiless as Heine:—

"There is an account of the restoration to perfect health, in a single night, of a fatally-injured horse, by the application of Christian Science. I can stand a good deal, but I recognise that the ice is getting thin here. That horse had as many as fifty claims; how could he demonstrate over them? Could he do the All-Good, Good-Good, Good, Gracious, Liver, Bones, Truth, all down but nine, set them up on the other alley? Could he intone the Scientific Statement of Being? Now could he? Wouldn't it give him a relapse? Let us draw the line at horses. Horses and furniture."

This is genuine fun, and more effective than reams of argument. For words are Mrs. Eddy's stock-in-trade. Her pomp of court, her priesthood, are words, mere words! There are hundreds of pages of them in her book, which she calls *A Key to the Scriptures*. To a reader familiar with the sober use of metaphysical and scientific terms, her explanations and her definitions are delirious jargon. They are the bastard offspring of a riotous imagination playing upon resonant polysyllables. For example, here is one of Mrs. Eddy's own definitions:—

"Matter, mythology, mortality; another name for mortal mind; illusion; intelligence, substance, and life in non-intelligence and mortality; life resulting in death, and death in life; sensation in the sensationless; mind originating in matter; the opposite of truth; the opposite of God; that of which immortal mind takes no cognisance; that which mortal mind sees, feels, tastes, and smells in belief."

The author of this nonsense has been hailed as a teacher "second only to" Christ. It is proper, therefore, that this newest of new Bibles should have reached its two hundredth edition. It has

been enthusiastically received by thousands of half-educated religionists, deceived by this fraudulent imitation of learning. Mark Twain is himself impressed by this immense popularity. He devotes the larger part of his book to Mrs. Eddy and what he facetiously calls her "make-up." He evidently considers her a very remarkable woman. What chiefly impresses him in Mrs. Eddy is her extraordinary capacity for business. No American millionaire has ever kept a keener eye or a tighter fist on money—the only material thing in existence which "Christian Science" allows to be real. As Mark says, "She has never allowed a dollar that had no friends to get by her alive." Mrs. Eddy is, in short, a religious "boss," and it is in that character that Mark Twain deals with her. She is absolute. She makes the laws; all that the rest do is obey them.

When a person joins Mrs. Eddy's Church he must leave his thinker at home. Leave it permanently. To make sure that it will not go off some time or other when he is not watching, it will be safest for him to spike it. If he should forget himself and think just once, the by-law provides that he shall be fired out—instantly—for ever—no return. It is fitting that Mrs. Eddy should give to her disciples a form of prayer and a confession of faith which bears a marked resemblance to the Lord's Prayer. The religious "boss" struts in borrowed plumes, and charges \$300 for a dozen lessons. She derives an enormous income from the compulsory sale of her books among her disciples. Mark Twain's analysis of all this is the most telling part of his book. The exposure of the purely business side of her "religion" will impress the public quite as much as Mark's relentless mockery of its dogmas.

Mark Twain reckons that "Christian Science" will have an immense future in England, no less than in the United States. He may be right about America, but we venture to hope that he is mistaken about this country. Englishmen never were enamored of Mrs. Eddy's religion, and Mark Twain's thunderbolt will, at least, effectually settle Mrs. Eddy's claim to deification. His humorous and delightful book is eminently qualified to diminish, rather than to increase, the number of her adherents.

M.

## The Reasons Why.

*Some of the Causes which Produce and Maintain the Freethought Movement.*

BY DR. JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS,  
*Minister of the Church of This World, in Kansas City.*

WHY does not the Freethought movement die? Why is it persistent, potent, unassailable? Because it marks an epoch. It is one with the spirit of the age. It is allied with the progress and achievement of man. It represents the hope and purpose, the ideal and striving of the brain and heart. It is not bound by localities, nor limited by sections. It is of the age and race. It is not dependent upon individuals or congregations. They may come and go, assemble and disperse, die and be forgotten. Intellect lives, reason ceases not. Other watchers will climb into the towers to wait for light; other hearts will thrill with new visions; other lips burn with prophetic words. All men living are beneficiaries of Freethought. Some are its agents or instruments, but none are vitally necessary. The Freethought movement was not created by any man, or coterie of men, or school, or class, or sect, or nationality. It is part of the evolution of man. The school-house in country, in village, and in town, the universities in ocean-parted lands, the printing press with "wheels and bars that almost seem to think," the discoverer in almost every field of human effort, science in each and every department of knowledge, and great Nature with mysteries that attract and

baffle, that invite and deny—these are the unordained preachers of Rationalism and Freethought.

Why does Rationalism seek public utterance? Why does it have its speakers and teachers, and the congregation where it is heard? Because, in the evolution of an idea, the living voice is an inevitable instrument. The messenger, the reformer, the apostle, the prophet, were not self-appointed, nor by man appointed. They were the victims of a resistless law. They did not, could not, choose. They were compelled, fated, doomed to their mission. "Woe is me," said one of them long ago, "woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." Such is the compelling law. A man possesses an idea. If perchance that idea commands his reason, enlists his heart, and inflames his passion, then the idea possesses the man. Thenceforth his way is determined for him; he does not choose; the idea becomes mandatory and masters him. The idea may be right or wrong. Sincerity is no criterion of truth. A man is effective in any field in the proportion that he is mastered by his convictions. If he work, or speak, or preach, or teach for favor, for votes, for popularity, for applause, for any material gain or good, he is simply a play-actor, a time-server, a merchandiser bartering honor and conscience. For, after all, the first duty of a man in this world is to save himself, to save his honor and his self-respect, and to keep on good terms with his conscience.

The Freethought movement and its utterance being natural incidents in the evolution of man, the question is asked, and fairly, too, what is its work? How does it serve? What is the certificate of its usefulness? The Bible speaks of the foolishness of preaching. Honesty compels us to endorse some of the scriptural teachings.

First, to voice the convictions of the men and the women who are not afraid. It is the instinct of every conviction to get itself a hearing. Every man sincere and intelligent enough to have convictions, claims, and rightly, too, an audience for them. Hence, the representative, the instrument, the voice of the people who believe. There are in the present generation not a few men and women who, for the sake of intellectual liberty, have suffered deeply and long. Men and women who have had the courage and hardihood to publicly disavow doctrines and dogmas that had become offensive to reason and abhorrent to the heart. Men and women who have been threatened with pursuit until their "garments should be rags and their children crying for bread." There is a tendency upon the part of the old organizations to cling to men and women with an unyielding grasp, and, when at last they must let go, to threaten to follow them to the very gates of death, and say to them, "God will do the rest."

Second, the mission of the Freethought pulpit is to speak for those who are afraid; to encourage and help, as far as may be, that great and increasing host who, if they dared, would come out from the darkness of the dogmas of the sixteenth century into the glorious light and liberty of the mind unbound. I know full well that there is a great and mighty host. There are countless numbers who applaud in their hearts the doctrines of intellectual freedom, who yet sit in the shadow and darkness of the old teachings. The orthodox pulpit preaches to those in the church of its own faith and belief. The arguments are known beforehand. The conclusions can be anticipated. The Freethought pulpit speaks to those within, and the great numbers without. They divided the Church of old into the visible and the invisible. The visible were the men and women and children that made up the congregations upon earth. The invisible Church was the host of the glorified, the redeemed, in the world beyond. The Freethought congregation is made up also of the visible and the invisible. The visible are those who stand up to be counted, who make no apologies, who fear nothing from gods or men. The invisible comprise that host who wish they could, but dare not; who long to come, who feel the chains upon their brain, but cannot break nor throw them off; who

sit in the darkness and look towards the light, but have not the courage nor the strength to rise and face and greet the day.

Third, the Freethought pulpit stands for a perpetual protest against the doctrines of despair. There never has been a religion that has one word of hope to say concerning this world, or man, or God. The world is a failure from the old standpoint. God made it, and it escaped from his control. It became intolerably wicked in his sight. It was the home of a curse, the birthplace of sin, rebellion, and disobedience. He visited it with storm and earthquake, he scourged it with plague and pestilence, he terrified it by prodigies and untimely night—all to no purpose. And then he whelmed it with a flood. But waters could not wash clean this sinful world, and they say that at last, having despaired of this product of his own creative energy, having despaired of ever bringing it into harmony with his will and making it fulfil his purpose; he will take from its multitude of inhabitants here and there an elect, a chosen one, and commit all the rest, with the round and rolling globe, to the grinding millstones of fire and flame, and, having reduced it to gas and imponderable dust, will disperse it fast and far in the mapless spaces of the universe. Thus has the old religion despaired of the world, of the world they say God made, of the beautiful creation he ordained. Nothing but a flood that failed and a holocaust at the end. Against this teaching the Freethought pulpit is a protest. It believes in the world, believes in its progress, believes in its evolution, believes in the inherent and essential wholesomeness from its centre to circumference.

Fourth, the Freethought platform stands for the philosophy of hope, for optimism, for relief—if you will, for faith. It does not rest its faith upon a miracle, or a revelation, or a Bible, or a priesthood, or a church. It does not rest its faith upon what speakers, or teachers, or preachers say, but upon what the intelligent know now to be the process of the world, a process of evolution and development. There is a chance for everything. Long, long ago, Nature took this plastic world and shaped it into a globe. By means we know not and cannot guess, she developed or introduced life. She worked as fast as she wanted to. She chose her own time. She had, apparently, all the eternities at her command; and, in process of time and development, produced a being who had brain enough to peer into her mysteries and find out a little about what she had done, and how she had done it. There is no reason to believe that she placed upon the earth a perfect being. Everything is unfinished, incomplete. The human body is not complete. The physical organism of man is a long way from perfection, partly through his ignorance and transgression of natural law, and partly due to the fact that Nature is not through with him yet. The heart of man is enlarging, but it is not yet broad enough to take within the ample arms of its sympathy all its fellow creatures. The genius of man has burned and glowed, but only here and there in the past was reached the extreme brilliancy of the few chosen great. The heart, the brain, the genius, the intelligence of men, are yet within the care of Nature. On the moral side there is confessed imperfection, but think of a preacher, think of a church that will stand by the side of a human failure, a man or woman overcome in the temptations of life, down in the strife, trampled by the heedless throng, and say: "Now life is ended; out, brief candle; spirit, pursue thy way into darkness and everlasting night." Think of that! It is not Nature, it is not rational, it is not reverent; 'tis scarcely decent. The Freethought platform will give Nature all the time it wants, and God, too, all the time he chooses to take, but it will cling passionately and resistlessly to the hope that when he is done, when Nature is done, when growth is over and completeness attained, there will be not "one soul cast as rubbish to the void."

Fifth, a part of the work of the Freethought pulpit

is to keep the great doctrines of life and destiny in the light. They are in hiding. They are obscured by the Church. No man that has lived twenty-five years that he can remember could find now without difficulty the kind of a sermon that he used to hear when he was a boy. It would be interesting, as a study in psychology, to hear one of the old-fashioned sermons about the rich man in hell, and the poor man in Abraham's bosom. The imagination of man has increased until that doctrine is unpalatable, even in the churches. Men have rebelled against it. Every decent man, every noble woman, though one of them were a believer and the other were not, if they should die and arrive at St. Peter's gate together, and he should open the door for one of them and thrust the other out, even the orthodox Christian would be ashamed to go into heaven and leave his life-love and companion outside. He would turn his back upon heaven, and say to her that had been the crown and glory of his life: "No heaven for me alone; with thee I will sink to sweet Hell." Those doctrines are rarely brought forward. Abraham's bosom is being given a very much-needed rest. It would be interesting to hear an argument made to substantiate the miracles of how the axe swam, how the bush burned, how the staff turned into a snake and swallowed the other snake, the conversational powers of Balaam's ass, how Lot's wife, as they say, "turned to rubber and then turned to salt." Freethinkers congratulate themselves that these unbelievable doctrines are quiescent, that the Church is obviously ashamed of them. We are satisfied—nay, more, pleased and encouraged—that the imagination, the good taste, the intelligence, and the moral sense of the religious world are so much in advance of the doctrines they are supposed to hold.

Sixth, the work of the Freethought platform is, in part, to keep alive a hopeful discontent. The world has not yet attained nor fulfilled its utmost. There are better things ahead for the human race. Evolution, eternal progress, ceaseless power operating in ten thousand subtle and unexpected ways. This is the law of the world and the law of man. If we do not know, we can keep on seeking to know. If we doubt, we can add investigation to our efforts. There can be no discredit, no dishonor in a frank admission of our ignorance and of our inability. The Infinite Being, whatever he may be, surely will not be angry with any one of his children who, in the vast mystery of this coherent and illimitable universe, stands to say: "We do not know whether thou art, nor what thou art; we are children with no language but a cry." If there be a God, if there be a judgment seat, the brave and honest man would rather stand there and confess, "This is the first knowledge I ever had of thy existence, O God," than to stand there and say, "I believed all my life in the five points of Calvinism, and I am happy to be saved by the death of one of you." Better reverent ignorance and patient unbelief; better sincere and profound doubt than the faith which merely repeats and babbles the poor, barbaric story of the centuries long gone by.

The supreme end of the Freethought movement, its highest ambition, its noblest endeavor, is to unite and centralise the best energies of mankind. All particular and peculiar forms of religion may be looked upon as necessary in their place, but the egotism is immeasurable, the effrontery is past computing, of that church that seeks to make its creed, its ceremonies, universal.

There are thousands that believe—daily their numbers increase—that knowledge is more necessary than faith, that intelligence is better than blind belief, that service is more honorable than sacraments, and that to do justice, to be useful and kind, to defend the weak, to resist oppression, to lift up the fallen, to condemn vice, to applaud virtue, to encourage those who fail, put smiles instead of tears on the cheeks of men and women and children; in short, to spread light, liberty, and joy, is religion enough for this world.

## Melchizedek.

MELCHIZEDEK is the most extraordinary person of whom we have any record. Christ was born and Adam was made, but Melchizedek never began to be and will never cease to exist. If the Bible were not such an intensely serious book without a gleam of humor, except of the unconscious Hibernian kind, we might conclude that Melchizedek was *nobody*, for the description admirably suits that character. But the Bible does not play and must not be played with. All its personages are *bond fide* realities, from the Ancient of Days with white woolly hair on the throne of heaven to the prophet Jonah who took three days' lodging in the belly of a whale.

The name Melchizedek means *king of justice*, being derived from *melec*, a king, and *zedec*, justice. When the gentleman bearing this name is introduced to us in the fourteenth of Genesis, he is king of Salem, which means peace. Salem was a city on the site of Zion. Originally it was called Jebus, then Zadek, then Salem, and finally Jerusalem. So says Rabbi Joseph Ben-Gorion. But other writers, no doubt just as well informed, differ from him; and while the doctors disagree, simple laymen may well hold their judgment in suspense; or, better still, dismiss Jebus, Zadek, Salem, and Jerusalem, to the limbo of learned trivialities. Counting the spots on a leopard, the quills on a porcupine, or the hairs in a cat's whiskers is just as amusing and quite as edifying as most of the problems of divines and commentators.

When Abraham returned from a successful campaign, in which he defeated five kings and their armies with three hundred and eighteen raw recruits, Melchizedek came out to meet him with victuals and drink. These two friends joined in the friendly office of *scratching* each other. They were, in fact, a small mutual admiration society. Abraham, although at other times a rank coward, was on this occasion a bold warrior laden with spoil; and Melchizedek besides being King of Salem, was "the priest of the most high God." "Bully for you, Abraham," said Melchizedek. "Bully for you, Melchizedek," said Abraham. As usual, however, the priest got the best of it, for the patriarch paid him tithes, which were a capital return for his compliments. Genesis is a little confused, indeed; but what scripture is not? "And he gave him tithes of all" is not very clear. It reminds one of the West of England yokel, who gave his evidence on a case of homicide in this way:—

"He had a stick, and he had a stick; and he hit he, and he hit he. And if he'd only hit he as hard as he hit he, he'd a' killed he, and not he he."

But we must not be too hard on Bibles and yokels. So long as we can get a scintillation of their meaning we must be satisfied. Scripture, we may take it, means that the *he* who paid tithes was Abraham, and the *him* who received them was Melchizedek.

Now the book of Genesis is not an early, but a very late portion of the Jewish Scriptures, dating only a few centuries before Christ. And we may depend on it that this little sentence about *tithes*, and perhaps the whole story that leads up to it, was got up by the priests, to give the authority of Abraham's name and the sanction of antiquity to an institution which kept them in luxury at the expense of their neighbors.

Our view of the case is supported by the fact that Melchizedek's name does not appear again in the whole of the Old Testament, except in the hundred and tenth Psalm, where somebody or other (the parsons of course say Christ) is called "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Paul, or whoever wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, works up this hint in fine style. It would puzzle a lunatic, or a fortune-teller, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or God Almighty himself, to say what the seventh of Hebrews means. We give it up as an insoluble conundrum, and we observe that every commentator with a grain of sense and honesty does the same. But there is one luminous flash in the jumble of

metaphysical darkness. Melchizedek is described as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." It will be easy to recognise a gentleman of that description when you meet him. When we do meet him we shall readily acknowledge him as our king and priest, and pay him an income tax of two shillings in the pound; but until then we warn all kings and priests off our doorsteps.

Jewish traditions say that Melchizedek was the son of Shem, and set apart for the purpose of watching and burying Adam's carcass when it was unshipped from the Ark. Some, however, maintain that he was of a celestial race; while other (Christian) speculators have held that he was no less than Jesus Christ himself, who put in an early appearance in Abraham's days to keep the Jewish pot boiling. St. Athanasius tells a long-winded story of Melchizedek and Abraham, which shows what stuff the early Christians believed. According to the Talmud, Melchizedek composed the hundred and tenth Psalm himself; and although he is without end of days, his tomb was shown at Jerusalem in the time of Gemelli Carrere the traveller.

There was an heretical sect called the *Melchizedekians* in the third century. They held that Jesus Christ was, according to Hebrews, only of the order of Melchizedek, and therefore that Melchizedek himself was the more venerable. This heresy revived in Egypt after its suppression elsewhere, and its adherents claimed that Melchizedek was the Holy Ghost. The last time Melchizedek was heard of he was a London costermonger's donkey, but whether this was a real incarnation of the original Melchizedek no one is able to decide, unless the Lord should again, as in the case of Balaam's companion, "open the mouth of the ass" and inform the world of the things that belong unto its peace. G. W. FOOTE.

THE INFINITE UNIVERSE.

Revolving worlds, revolving systems, yea,  
 Revolving firmaments, nor there we end:  
 Systems of firmaments revolving, send  
 Our thoughts across the Infinite astray,  
 Gasping and lost, and terrified, the day  
 Of life, the goodly interests of home  
 Shrivelled to nothing; that unbounded dome  
 Pealing still on, in blind fatality.  
 No rest is there for our souls' winged feet,  
 She must return for shelter to her ark—  
 The body, fair, frail, death-born, incomplete,  
 And let her bring this truth back from the dark,  
 Life is self-centred, man is nature's god;  
 Space, time, are but the walls of his abode.

—William Bell Scott.

NIGHT-FALL.

Kindly watcher by my bed, lift no voice in prayer,  
 Waste not any words on me when the hour is nigh—  
 Let a stream of melody but flow from some sweet player,  
 And meekly will I lay my head and fold my hands to die.  
 Sick am I of idle words, past all reconciling—  
 Words that weary and perplex, and pander and conceal;  
 Wake the sounds that cannot lie, for all their sweet beguiling:  
 The language one need fathom not, but only hear and feel,  
 Let them roll once more to me, and ripple in my hearing  
 Like waves upon some lonely beach, where no craft anchoreth;  
 That I may steep myself therein, and craving nought, nor fearing,  
 Drift on through slumber to a dream, and through a dream to death.

—Sully Prudhomme.

On what ground shall one, that can make Iron swim, come and declare that he can teach Religion? To us, truly, of the Nineteenth Century, such declaration were inept enough; which nevertheless, to our fathers, of the First Century, was full of meaning.—Carlyle.

An Open Letter to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

London, England, 1908.

MY DEAR RELATIVE,—An ancient book tells me that you were the first woman and the mother of humanity. If this be so, you are, necessarily, our first female blood-relation. In fact, you are a relation of my own—true, a most distant one; but still a relation. The fountain of my far-off filial affection is stirred to its profoundest depths and I cannot rest until I have written to you. My affection is not unmixed with admiration. Your "husband" need, however, be under no misapprehension. I am writing, if your biography be accurate, some six thousand summers after your appearance on this earth. I have no portrait which would serve to give me any idea of your loveliness, and Mr. Moses, the gentleman who wrote an account of your life, has, unfortunately, omitted to tell us of your personal appearance. We could so easily have dispensed with Moses's account of his own funeral for a few salient facts about yourself. Whether you were a blonde or a brunette must ever be a conjecture. Even the color of your eyes is lost in the twilight of history. You must, however, have been divinely fair. The Garden of Eden must have been more delightful because of your presence, the earth brighter where you walked. The flowers were never so beautiful till they were held in your hand or twined in your hair. That you were a most exceptional woman is proved by your starting life at full age. It was, doubtless, unpleasant to commence existence by being carved out of Adam's rib whilst he was sleeping; but you will be glad to hear that subsequent operations under chloroform have been of immense service to your suffering children. I can well believe you were a pattern of the domestic virtues; but, pardon me for remarking, your first attempt at cooking was a failure. You not only cooked trouble for Adam about some "apples," but your most distant relatives are still suffering from the annoyance. Permit me to mention that you were scarcely more successful at dressmaking. All the clothes yourself and Adam wore at first were the close of day and the mantle of night. Even "fig-leaves" are no longer in the fashion. This could scarcely annoy you, for you had no washing to do on Mondays. Nor did you have to sew buttons on your husband's shirts, patch his trousers, get his overcoat out of pawn, or even argue with him concerning a long golden hair on his shirt-front. You had, really, much to be thankful for.

One regret I have, however—that Adam and yourself both got into trouble about the time of the first assizes. I shall not pursue this matter, for it led to your poor partner losing his situation in the Garden. It must have caused you worry and brought on financial embarrassment. Doubtless it accounts for the fact of your never being married to Adam. It is a pity that he could never spare that paltry "seven-and-six" for a marriage certificate; because, as a result, the whole human race is illegitimate.

Do not think I am blaming you in any way. It evidently did not shorten Adam's life, for we are told that he lived to the very ripe age of nine hundred and thirty years. I only hope that he was not afflicted with gout or rheumatism during his declining centuries. I trust that he was tolerably well; he was intolerably old.

I would have written earlier, but your address is not in any geography I am acquainted with. Kind regards to Adam and the boys. Probably I shall never meet you, but if you will kindly forward your present address to the Editor of this journal I will get counsel's opinion on that "marriage," and see if there is any way of overcoming a grave ethical difficulty.

I am, Madam, yrs.,

VERDANT GREEN.

THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE.

Woe to him who is possessed by the ideal of an effeminate and enervating existence which is to consist only in strange sights, disturbing sensations and excitement! Moral gangrene has set in, and will devour him slowly, undermining all the living forces that are in him. Before long he will confound the pleasant with well-being, and will come to look upon all privation and effort as a disgrace. From this to selling himself for small riches is but a step. A race of slaves are these frantic runners, chasing after Fortune's chariot to pick up crumbs which fall from it. It is of little consequence whence they spring, what their names are, what their ranks, opinions, beliefs. There is one expression which describes them all: they are the dregs of humanity.—Charles Wagner.

**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.**

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL, Langham-place, London, W.: G. W. Foote, 7.30, "The Present Position of God."

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 3.15, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Noah's Water-Trip."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, F. Vickers, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, R. H. Rosetti, "The Sabbath."

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): Tuesdays and Thursdays, at 8.30, Bible Classes.

**OUTDOOR.**

BOSTON: Bargate Green (near the Cannons), 3, Joseph Bates, "H.R.H. the Devil." Wednesday, September 23, at 8. "The Rights of Free Speech: a Reply to the *Boston Independent* and Others."

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

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street): Sidney Wollen, 3, "Where is now the Prophet Daniel?"

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