

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FÖÖTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Man is properly the ONLY object that interests man.—*  
GOETHE.

## The Boston Trouble.

FOR some time past we have referred in the paragraph department of the *Freethinker* to the Atheistic propaganda carried on at Boston by Mr. Joseph Bates, a young man with whom we had no personal acquaintance, and who was, indeed, only known to us through his correspondence on this matter. Many of our readers will recollect that Mr. Bates was chased through the streets by an orthodox crowd at first, but he returned to his "pitch" in the Marketplace, as he said he would, and he "held the fort" there until the Christian fanatics were worn out and, let us hope, a little ashamed of themselves. The natural result of their bigoted tactics was an excellent advertisement for the Atheist, whose meetings grew larger and larger, his reception more and more cordial, and his lectures more persuasive and influential. But at this point a fresh trouble arose. Mr. Bates was assaulted by a pious hooligan, and he took out a summons against the culprit. This appears to have annoyed the local bigots, and especially those in high places. Accordingly it was arranged—*beautifully* arranged—that the action for assault should fail, and that the Atheist should at the same time be prosecuted for obstruction. Instead, therefore, of obtaining justice before the Boston bench, Mr. Bates suffered another outrage. No punishment whatever was meted out to his assailant, but the Atheist himself was packed off to Lincoln Gaol for a fortnight.

We repeat that the comedy in the Boston "court of justice" was *arranged*. Five weeks were allowed to elapse between the issuing of the summons against Mr. Bates's assailant and its hearing, yet the police had apparently been "unable" to serve the summons upon the defendant, and the case was tried in his absence. We do not wish to press the fact that Benjamin Batchelor had a brother in the police force, but it may have had something to do with their reluctance to see him convicted. Anyhow, the case was tried in the defendant's absence, although his presence was absolutely essential to the ends of justice. The summons was dismissed by the magistrates chiefly on the ground that "the identification of Batchelor was very doubtful." But that was simply because he was not in court. Had he been there, the witnesses could have said, "Yes, that was the man I saw grip Mr. Bates by the throat and tear his mackintosh in two." If the case had been adjourned until Batchelor could be brought before the bench, there would have been no difficulty about his "identification." His absence should have gone against him; instead of that, it went against the

plaintiff; which is surely the very topsy-turveydom of justice.

Having treated Mr. Bates in that extraordinary fashion, the Boston magistrates proceeded straight away to hear the summons against him for "obstruction." They soon found him guilty, although we hear that they were not unanimous, and fined him five shillings. But that was the smallest part of the bill run up against him. The police had chosen to employ counsel, while Mr. Bates conducted his own case, in which he was perhaps ill-advised; and on the top of that five-shilling fine he was ordered to pay £3 7s. 6d. costs. This was a very pretty bill to present to a working compositor. We think Mr. Bates was perfectly justified in refusing to pay it, and leaving the magistrates to deal with him as they pleased, without offering them any assistance in their travesty of judicial procedure.

Now comes a very curious point. The counsel, Mr. E. Waite, who appeared on behalf of Batchelor, also appeared for the police against Mr. Bates. We may put it that this legal gentleman fired off a double-barrelled gun, and it would be interesting to know who paid for both discharges of powder and shot.

In opening the case against Mr. Bates—we are not specially concerned with the companion case against a Socialist speaker, Harold Catling—Mr. Waite could not conceal the character of the animus on the part of the prosecution. "He did not wish to say anything," he remarked, "with regard to the sort of addresses given at these meetings, but a more serious charge might have been brought against the defendants than had been done." This is what the legal gentleman calls "saying nothing" about the matter of Mr. Bates's addresses. It was really saying a great deal. It was a deliberate effort to create prejudice against the defendant. We suppose the "more serious charge" was one of "blasphemy." But it seems that neither Mr. Waite nor his employers understand the "blasphemy" laws. There is no allegation of outrageous language against Mr. Bates. He appears to have spoken disrespectfully of the police, and also of General Booth, but this is not (or at least not yet) "blasphemy." According to Mr. Justice Phillimore's judgment in the Boulter case, following Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's judgment twenty-five years before, the crime of "blasphemy" is one of manner, not of matter. Mr. Bates has a perfect right to attack any and every part of the Christian faith. If the bigots of Boston think otherwise, and act upon their assumption, they may be taught a very disagreeable (though necessary) lesson.

The actual charge against Mr. Bates was one of "obstruction." This is always a difficult charge to answer. So much depends upon the spirit which prevails in court. Legally there is no right of public meeting in the streets or other thoroughfares;

and, technically, two people might be guilty of "obstruction" by standing still on a pavement and refusing to "move on." We have no doubt that, from this strict point of view, Mr. Bates was guilty of "obstruction." But he was only doing what the Salvation Army, and Unionists, and other bodies do with impunity. The sensible thing to do would be to stop all meetings in the Market-place, including those of the Salvation Army, and to let them all be held in the more commodious Bargate. But the police, with the magistrates to assist them, must not be allowed to carry out local regulations with partiality. They must not be permitted to discriminate in favor of Christians and against Free-thinkers.

We are indebted for much of our information to Miss Vance, the National Secular Society's general secretary, who was sent down to Boston by the President to discover the real facts of the situation. She went to work with her usual energy and good sense. She interviewed all sorts of people, including the Mayor and the Chief Constable, and she held a meeting in the evening which was reported in the local press. She also arranged, with the President's concurrence, for Mr. Wishart to go over to Boston. He held two meetings there on Sunday, and a strong resolution was carried against the prosecution and imprisonment of Mr. Bates. We may add that Mr. Bates is not a member of the National Secular Society. The action taken by the Society in this matter is entirely one of principle.

Incidentally, Miss Vance ascertained that Mr. Bates bore an excellent personal character. Everybody spoke well of him from that point of view. She also found a general feeling of indignation against the treatment of the Atheist. Persons who had no sympathy with his views regarded his treatment by the magistrates as a disgrace to the town. We are glad to see that the Unitarian minister, the Rev. W. Stoddart, has written a strong and striking letter of protest to the *Guardian*. This gentleman (we are so glad to be able to use the word without irony) points out that at the very time that Mr. Bates was causing "obstruction" a Unionist speaker was doing the very same thing. "But the Unionist speaker," Mr. Stoddart says, "was not summoned for obstruction. No, it was all an arranged affair, a trumped-up case against Bates, the Atheist, instigated by religious bigotry." This appears to be the general opinion in Boston.

Mr. Bates is to be released from Lincoln Gaol on Thursday (Oct. 8). He will have a public reception at Boston in the evening, and Miss Vance is going down again on behalf of the N. S. S. She will see him and talk with him, and further action will depend upon the result. We have no desire to encourage any unnecessary conflict with the police. We recognise that their duties are sometimes difficult, and that they are the proper guardians of peace and order. All we insist upon is that they shall act impartially. If they prosecute Mr. Bates for "obstruction," while other speakers cause "obstruction" without let or hindrance, they will be carrying on a crusade against Atheism. This is no part of their legitimate work, and their action will be resisted. Mr. Bates will have every assistance, financial and otherwise, that the Freethought party can render him, as long as he has to fight against Christian persecution. He (and his persecutors) may rely upon that.

G. W. FOOTE,

## Moral Instruction and Religion.

THE promoters of the First International Moral Education Congress may be fairly congratulated upon the success of their endeavors. The Congress was well attended by visitors from various parts of the world, and many of the papers presented were of more than ordinary interest. Many of these suffered considerably from their, I presume, enforced brevity, which obviously prevented writers stating their views as completely as they otherwise might have done. If I may indicate a general fault of the bulky report presented to the Congress, I should say it was that many clear and fundamental issues that might have been raised were not raised, nor, so far as I could gather from both observation and report, was this defect remedied during the discussion. Subsequent Congresses will no doubt tend to remedy this defect, and by degrees the Congress will probably be driven to take up a definite attitude on certain fundamental questions. However, in a first attempt one ought not to expect too much; time will be the best test of the value of the Congress, as it will be the best test of the value of direct moral instruction itself.

On the third day of the Congress the subject for discussion was "The Relation of Religious Education to Moral Education," and on behalf of the N. S. S. Mr. Foote and myself duly put in an appearance. The meeting was a fairly large one, and it gained at least solemnity from the presence of a large number of clergymen, including several bishops. Clerical uniforms were plentifully sprinkled among the audience, and there was an extra large—and expensive—assortment on the platform. This might have said a deal for their interest in moral education but for one fact. The subject of the relation of religious to moral education finished with the morning sitting. When the Congress resumed in the afternoon, for the discussion of Systematic Moral Instruction, the number of the clergy present had dwindled to, so far as I could see, two. Their interest had been purely professional, and it was professionalism naked and unashamed. The morning session represented the point of danger, and they rallied in full force. Systematic moral instruction they left to look after itself. Those who have the interest of the Congress at heart will do well to be on their guard against its capture or domination by the "black army."

The chairman of the morning session was the Rev. Dr. Gow, headmaster of Westminster School. In his opening speech he remarked that the writers of the various papers had mistaken the object of the Committee. This, he explained (I am inclined to believe he was a little in error), was not that there should be any discussion of whether religion was or was not necessary to moral instruction, but that, taking religious instruction for granted, the papers should discuss the best way of giving moral instruction on a religious basis. He had further hoped that the discussion would have limited itself to speakers telling the Congress the influence religious instruction had exerted on them. Evidently what he desired was a nice little experience meeting; and, to do him justice, he did his best to secure it. However, he decided that the wider scope of the question should not be ruled out of order, although it would be a most disastrous thing if the impression got abroad that that Congress was in any way inimical to religious instruction in schools. His own belief was, as a matter of course, that there was no book so important in education as the Bible; from it the children could learn that there once existed a people whose whole thought and time was given to morality. The Bible was a book on morality, and nothing else. Dr. Gow will hardly better these last two statements, even though he lives to be as old as Methuselah.

The time allotted to each speaker was seven minutes. By the time the chairman and the second speaker, the Rev. Dr. Lyttleton, had finished, nearly three-quarters of an hour had elapsed. To do the chairman justice, it must be pointed out that the

laymen were kept fairly up to time, the exceptions being the two noted, the Bishop of Southwark and the Bishop of Hereford. Subsequently the time of speakers was cut down to five minutes. The chairman was, I fancy, desirous of keeping the speeches as far as possible to those who were not antagonistic to religious instruction; but if this was so he was in a measure checked by the action of Mrs. Bridges Adams. Just as the session was drawing to a close this lady rose and protested that delegates of various bodies, with important and representative views on the subject, had not been given a chance of addressing the meeting. The chairman declined to give her precedence over others, and called on another lady, and yet another, neither of whom answered to their names. Then Mrs. Bridges Adams' turn came, and the meeting was given the plain truth that while the speakers were discussing how to give religious instruction, the country was gradually coming round to the view that Secular Education was the only safe and just policy. At all events, the Trades Union Congress, representing the largest organised labor vote of the country, had definitely decided in favor of Secular Education by a practically unanimous vote.

Another speech that deserves notice was that of Mr. John Russell, head-master of the Hampstead School of the King Alfred School Society. He told the meeting that for twenty-five years he had neither received nor sought any assistance in his scholastic duties from religion. Other people might believe in the value of religion; he respected their views, but he could not understand them. He did not believe in a personal God, and declined to use in his school any appeal to religion or any religious observance. The speeches of Mrs. Adams and of Mr. Russell were obviously unpalatable to the clerical gentlemen on the platform, and in each case the chairman put up a bishop to counteract the impression produced. However, the good, or, as they would have said, the evil, was done, and the speeches produced more effect than any two others that were delivered.

A curious feature worth noting in connection with these two speeches was their treatment by our free and enlightened press. I saw five morning papers, but only the *Times* mentioned that of Mrs. Bridges Adams, which also gave a fair report of Mr. Russell's speech. The others gave a watered-down version of the last named, but the most remarkable, and the most contemptible, was that of the *Morning Leader*. This unofficial organ of the Nonconformist Conscience converted Mr. Russell's speech into a tribute of admiration to Christianity for its supreme power in the formation of character. Whether moral instruction is needed in our schools or not, there is evidently very grave need for it in newspaper offices.

The Rev. Edward Lyttleton, head-master of Eton, who, as regards both manner and matter, impressed me more favorably than any other clergyman who addressed the meeting, made one statement—repeated later by another advocate of religious instruction—the full significance of which, I fancy, he failed to perceive. He said that when we come to deal with a nature that is morally backward or deficient he knew of nothing that could develop the qualities desired excepting the cultivation of the feeling that the boy or girl was a member of a community to which he or she bore certain organic and inescapable relations. He then went on to explain how this feeling was developed in his own school, and concluded by saying that when by this means we had developed a sense of duty and moral responsibility we could then build upon this basis the religious instruction desired.

Personally, I can see no serious fault with this statement of the case; but there is more in it than meets the eye. In the first place, there is the admission that religion, as such, is not effective in developing character, and this surrenders a really vital position. On the positive side it is an assertion that morality is, in its essentials, social; and

this is all that the Secularist asserts. The moral nature is to be developed, not by any species of divine illumination, nor by the inculcation of specific religious beliefs, but by developing those social instincts which are possessed by every normal human being. The school is made a substitute for the larger social life, into which the individual will one day enter, and the fulfilment of duty towards other social units prepared for by the cultivation of a sense of duty towards the school and its inmates. No fault can be found with this, so far as it goes, and it rests morality upon a social and non-religious basis.

Finally, it is upon this developing social sense that Dr. Lyttleton would build religion. Well, if religion is to be successfully taught it must be taught upon this basis, and no other. Historically, religion has always rested upon the social feelings. God is only man writ large, the qualities ascribed to deity are those that have been considered socially valuable, and heaven has never been anything more than a rejuvenated earth. Historically, religion has been little more than an exploitation of the social feelings, and Dr. Lyttleton's proposal is simply that we shall first of all develop these as fully as possible, and then reinterpret them in terms of an old-world supernaturalism. And this gives rise to the further question as to the necessity of the operation. Does morality gain by being arbitrarily associated with a set of beliefs that are, at best, unprovable, and, at worst, false? With this question, as well as with the contents of the printed papers, I will deal in a succeeding article.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued)

### What is Truth?

SUCH is the question Pontius Pilate is reported in one Gospel to have asked Jesus during his trial. Pilate was a Pagan, and, being such, had no knowledge of the truth. When Jesus claimed to know the truth, and to have no other mission in life than to bear witness unto the truth, and when he stated that all who were of the truth were scholars at his feet, Pilate turned to him and said, "What is truth?" The commentators are by no means unanimous as to the motive that prompted such a question. Some maintain that it was the result of indifferentism; others, that it sprang from scepticism; and others, that it was simply an expression of the scoffing and ironical mood in which the judge found himself. The only point on which there seems to be agreement is that Pilate, being a Roman, "had no ear for truth." Whatever the motive of the procurator may have been in propounding, if he ever did propound, such a riddle, it is indisputable that the most difficult thing to find on earth is the truth. We do not mean truth in the abstract, for in reality there is no such thing but truth in the concrete. Whatever the object of contemplation may be, there are no two people who will give the same account of it, unless, indeed, they have already mechanically arranged to subscribe to the same description, prepared, it may be, by a third party. The truth concerning a great many things is not discoverable. Such is the case in relation to the alleged Founder of Christianity. It is impossible to determine in what sense and degree, if in any, Jesus may be taken as historical, because in the only existing biographical references to him fact and fiction are so inextricably interwoven that no critical ingenuity can ever separate them. Such is also the case as regards Christianity itself. Of definitions of it there is no end, and concerning these nothing is more entertaining than the sublime ease with which they all destroy one another.

Another marvellous fact is that no school of theology will accept as true any characterisation of itself presented by an outsider. The other Sunday morn-

ing the Rev. John J. Pool, evidently a New Theologian, went to hear the Rev. John McNeill, an Old Theologian of the most orthodox type. Mr. McNeill will have none of the New Theology, and he denounces it in his own extravagant and irresponsible style. It is well known that this evangelical divine has never been distinguished for good taste and refined manners. He often seems to take special delight in using coarse, offensive language, in holding up to ridicule whatever he does not like, and in heaping scornful abuse on the heads of those with whom he does not agree. One is not surprised, therefore, to find him charging the New Theology with "denying God's Word," with "spending a lot of ingenuity in raising difficulties where God had made none," and with "handling the Ark in other than the way of God's revelations." Whereupon Mr. Pool oracularly declares that "the sad part of it is that he knows absolutely nothing about what he is denouncing." But Mr. Pool is surely somewhat unjust to his brother-in-the-Lord. Is it not true that, from Mr. McNeill's point of view, the New Theology is guilty of all he lays to its charge? To admit that the Bible is in error on many subjects, that its history is unreliable, that its science is entirely wrong, and that at best it is only a collection of the opinions of men more or less good, is surely to rob it of any title to be regarded as in any special sense God's Word. Mr. McNeill does know a great deal about the New Theology, and, as he sees it, it is very little better than no theology at all. He doubtless "showed shocking bad taste when he described Matthew Arnold as a liar because the poet once said of Jesus:—

'He is dead. Far hence he lies in the lone Syrian town,  
And on his grave, with shining eyes, the Syrian stars look down.'

'Matthew,' exclaimed the preacher, 'you are a liar; Christ sitteth at the right hand of God in highest heaven'; but, incontrovertibly, to a man who verily believes in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Matthew Arnold, who rejected all miracles, could not strictly be characterised as anything but a liar. The fact is that, from both the orthodox and the Secularist point of view, the New Theology is a denial of the Word of God, the guilt of sin, the deity of Jesus, the Atonement, and almost every other cardinal doctrine of grace.

The Old Theology also deals in precisely the same manner with the New. Every orthodox divine in the land accuses Mr. Campbell of miserably caricaturing the dogmas he condemns, of setting up men of straw for the sole purpose of enjoying the pleasure of knocking them down, and of wasting his energy in annihilating what never existed. Such a charge implies that all who repudiate orthodoxy are incapable of understanding it, and always guilty of misrepresentation. The same charge is levelled at Freethinkers. They are told that the Christianity they attack never existed except in their own diseased imagination. To understand religion a man must be religious. Theology can be accurately delineated only by a theologian. Such is the claim continually set up by men like Principals Fairbairn and Forsyth. It is an utterly false claim. There are subjects on which only experts are competent to speak. A man who has never studied biology has no right to adjudicate on biological problems. A person ignorant of physics is not entitled to pose as an authority on the various changes in the moods or qualities of so-called dead matter. These are subjects on which only experts are qualified to offer an opinion; but theology is not one of them. The theologian knows no more about God than the man in the street. He may discourse at length and with a great show of learning about the various and contradictory hypotheses and speculations concerning God and his relations to the Universe; but he is perfectly well aware that however ingenious and interesting such theories may be, not one of them is susceptible of the slightest verification. They are all metaphysical assumptions, or inferences, of which any man of sense is as capable of judging as the

ripest theological scholar that ever lived. The truth about the gods is as accessible to the Atheist as to the Deist or Theist; and no book-learning is of the least assistance in the search, except in so far as it traces the various stages in the evolution of the idea of God.

Indeed, theology can be misrepresented only through sheer ignorance of its intellectual and emotional contents. Once an accurate knowledge of those contents has been acquired, its possessor is as competent to discuss and form opinions about them as the most erudite theological professor in the most ancient University. Theology is only a department of metaphysics, and the theologian occupies exactly the same position as the metaphysician. The one enjoys no advantage whatever over the other, both being hopelessly lost in the mist of speculation and absolutely unverifiable assumptions.

What is truth? What is the ultimate reality? No one has ever found out. The theologian has as truly failed to discover it as his cousin the metaphysician. Both have travelled far beyond any existing data, and in consequence have begotten and filled the earth with appalling delusions and hidden snares. What the world is now learning is that the theologian has always been an impostor, occupying an utterly false position, and acting the part of a prodigious hypocrite. The truth about him is at last leaking out, and he stands completely discredited. Men no longer listen to him, or even take his existence into account. His "Thus saith the Lord" has lost its power either to charm or to terrify, because it is known to be nothing but an empty phrase, with no reality at the back of it. To whom then shall we go for the beautiful words of life? Not to the priest of whatever name, not to the self-styled mouthpiece of an absent deity, but to the faithful student of Nature and her laws, to the chemist, the psychologist, the sociologist, who sits patiently at Nature's feet, and listens to her every word, seeking to understand it and put it in its proper place. The scientist does not pretend to know much, but what he does know is sure and of practical use. What the truth of the Universe is he cannot even guess; but he has come across a few true facts which he believes are but so many facets of the truth, and these he places at the disposal of all earnest and docile minds, saying, "Employ them as finger-posts along the road of life, directing you which way to go and what to do in certain crises."

If that is true it follows that Gorgias the Sophist was wrong when he said, "What is truth but what we believe to be truth?" Truth is what we *know* to be truth. What Plato meant by truth was some transcendental phantom which he maintained we could know if we could "sublimate our minds to their original purity," while other philosophers held that man's understanding is not capable of ascertaining what truth in that sense is. The scientist is seeking, not for a transcendental phantom, but for as much truth about the world as his investigations entitle him to appropriate and utilise. In other words, the only truth within our grasp is just what a thoroughly scientific treatment of the facts of life reveals to us. "What is truth?" is therefore a foolish, fruitless question, the only profitable inquiry being, What can we learn, and how, about the world in which we live? What are the laws which we must observe in order to attain to completeness of life? And the only answer worth considering *must* come from Science. It is knowledge, not belief, knowledge translated into obedience that is the sole condition of man's salvation.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Fear and Need.

BY LOUISA HARDING.

PROFESSOR GEORGE B. FOSTER, of the University of Chicago, is in trouble with the saints again. He has been letting the cat out of the bag in an article in the May number of the *American Journal of*

Theology, in which he predicts the collapse of the Christian faith, and the rise of a new one. He considers religion, in one form or another, indispensable, since it is founded upon "fear and need," and these are things liable to last while there are human societies. "If we turn to primitive religions," says the Professor of Theology, "we see men living a life of fear and need. Overpowering ferocious beasts, storms, earthquakes, hunger, sickness, death—these horrors menace him. Then there is his ignorance of to-morrow, and of the issue of his undertakings and struggles.....And it is against these two things that the soul creates help for itself in religion."

What a beautiful foundation for this mainstay of the "soul"! Fear—the most injurious and harmful emotion that man has; and need, which causes the religiously inclined to fall upon his knees during the volcanic eruption, and the resolute man to take to his heels—with all odds certainly in favor of the latter man. "Do not try," said the wise Horace, "to know what the future has in store for you and me. Leave the Babylonian soothsayers alone, and make what you can of the present time." Not so the devout; he visits the shrine of Apollo and enables the fat priest to make a living out of his necessary "ignorance of to-morrow."

No wonder that the Church folk are making renewed suggestions for ousting the heretical professor from the University of John. Nevertheless, the basis which he gives for piety is quite correct. It is fear which leads men and women to make unnecessary sacrifices of their happiness; to cast their little children into the Ganges, and give their grown sons and daughters to the Minotaur; to tear their flesh with iron hooks; to permit the heavy "sacred" car to grind them underneath its wheels; to tax themselves into poverty that the "chosen of the Lord" may live in palaces, and to fall on their knees in honor of the atrocious Hebrew deity. If it is true, as Professor Foster claims, that mortality among the mass of the people has never flourished except in connection with a (stereotyped) religion, the explanation lies in the fact that the working man has heretofore been too ignorant to realise that ghostly fathers could not stop earthquakes or act as advance agents for mansions in the skies. "Be meek and poor," says the spiritual adviser, "and in the next world you shall have all the good things you enable me to enjoy here." The Church has taught the virtues because it was to its material advantages so to do, while it maintained an agreeable monopoly of the vices for itself. Such clericals as William Qualey harangues the working man upon the merit of contentment with poverty, and expound the very comfortable doctrine that those who deserve financial rewards will obtain the same; but if St. James' Methodist Episcopal Church did not pay this gentleman very well for his eloquent (and worthless) bunkum, it is pretty safe to wager that the supply of rhetoric would soon run out.

Fear and need; and if we add a third factor, the desire to get-rich-quick (or saved-quick)—there is a truly interesting foundation for morality, *plus* superstition and graft, which is assuredly what is, and always has been, known as "religion." Religion does not mean, by any stretch of the imagination, that which gives value to life, as suggested by Professor Foster; otherwise there would be no attempt to distinguish between it and philosophy. There are, perhaps, no gods to reward us in the future. Very well; how does that disturb the value of to-day?

—To-Morrow (Chicago.)

Dr. Farrar is erroneous in supposing that the Atheist or Agnostic is bound to "account for the existence of matter and force." Accounting for them can only mean explaining how they began, and the Atheist or Agnostic is not aware that they had a beginning. The "source of life" is a question that biology must solve. Until it does, the "infidel" waits for information. No light is shed upon the problem by supernatural explanations.—G. W. Foote, "Ingersollim Defended Against Archdeacon Farrar."

## Acid Drops.

The *Daily Chronicle* "special correspondent" at Bridgewater unblushingly relates that he followed Messiah Smyth-Pigott's motor-car for miles and defeated all the reverend gentleman's efforts to shake him off. Such an act is sheer vulgar insolence. The excuse is that the Messiah is a religious impostor. But are there so few of that species in London that all these tricks must be played to "expose" one at Spaxton? There are plenty of religious impostors amongst the religious sects which the *Chronicle* chiefly represents. Why not give them a turn? As to Smyth-Pigott's "immorality," we suggest that it is not such a peculiar phenomenon in Christian England as to call for columns of indignation.

Few of these Christians understand their own creed. They are howling at Smyth-Pigott, as they howled at Messiah Prince before him, for saying that the Holy Ghost speaks through him. This is claimed for all the writers in the Bible, who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is also claimed for every Catholic priest and every ordained clergyman of the Church of England, who have all "received the Holy Ghost" and are "full up" with it, like a well-charged magnet. We believe a very large number of Nonconformist ministers would claim the same holy virtue.

Dr. Casartelli (evidently a true-born Englishman) is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford, and we have a word to say about a recent sermon of his at St. Augustine's Church, Manchester. He boasted that, while there were only 40,000 Catholics in Lancashire in 1824, there are now 650,000. Yes, but they were not converted—they were procreated. Most of them are Irish. Besides, arithmetic is not everything. Bishop Casartelli complained that these multiplied Catholics are "getting more and more heedless of the laws of the Church," go in for accursed mixed marriages, display "a great neglect of Sunday Mass all over the country," send their children to non-Catholic schools, and contribute, apparently, more than their fair share of drunkenness and crime. Finally, he dropped tears over the spread of Socialism, which he declared is "against Christianity." This distressed man of God has our sympathy and condolence.

"There is a growing tendency," Mr. Lloyd-George says, "to treat religion as if it were but a stage in the march of humanity towards a higher civilisation." Many a true word is spoken in jest.

Manchester unemployed will be all right now. The local Bishop has issued a special form of prayer for them, in which "Almighty God" is humbly asked of his "great goodness" to "comfort and succor them." Evidently there will be no need of that £50,000 relief fund.

We see there has been a pious competition in the *Church Army Gazette*. It is called an "Advs. Competition," and the prize-winner is Mr. Tazaker, of Bolton. Some of this gentleman's answers are worth noting. Take the following:

"MATCHLESS CLEANSER  
The Blood of Jesus."

This is excellent, and should be a good tip for the proprietors of Sapolio. They might take it as it stands, and simply add "If it fails, try Sapolio." Take another:—

"ACTS LIKE MAGIC  
The Peace of God."

This is excellent too. Certainly the peace of God acts like magic, for it "passes all comprehension." Take another:—

"CHEAP BOOKINGS  
To Heaven."

It might be added, "Hell Free."

Mr. R. J. Campbell's omniscience is now without limits. "I know," he says, "there is a God beyond my consciousness of God." We are sufficiently presumptuous to deny at once his knowledge of "a God beyond his consciousness," and his "consciousness of God"; and we challenge him to prove his possession of either. Let him condescend to tell us *how* he knows that the Universe is finite, and that there is an Infinite that transcends it. Furthermore, is not the reverend gentleman aware that what he calls "consciousness of God" does not exist for those who do not believe in God? Instead of the "consciousness" giving rise to the belief, or the alleged knowledge, it is the belief or alleged knowledge that gives rise to the "consciousness." This is a point which Mr. Campbell discreetly ignores, because it undermines his whole system.

If the Churches are right, God is clearly in the wrong, and may be convicted either of impotence or of culpable neglect. The teaching is that no man can be a true minister of the Gospel unless God himself calls and ordains him; and yet the Rev. Charles Brown, President of the Baptist Union, complains that the right men do not turn up in sufficient numbers, and urges the Churches to take this fact seriously to heart. Has God ceased to call the right men, or have the right men learned to disobey their Heavenly Father's word? There is something wrong somewhere.

We are told that a highly-organised "human soul" is of "far higher value and importance than a star"; but what is the criterion of such "value and importance"? If the human race were blotted out to-morrow, would it be missed? Would not the Universe go on the following day as if nothing had happened? Men are of "value and importance" only to themselves and one another.

In heaven there is said to be a Book of Life, in which occur the name and record of every child of God. The Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod, in a quoted sermon, undertakes to give the gist of that secret document. One would like to know how he managed to get a peep at the contents, or was he simply treating his hearers to an interesting fairy-tale? Of knowledge on the subject he possessed no more than the veriest Secularist.

In the flow of his eloquence a God's spokesman, describing the sufferings of Dives in hell, said: "He was only reaping what he had sown. He had sown to the flesh, and now of the flesh he was reaping corruption." Unfortunately, however, the rich man's flesh had been left behind on the earth, and so to reap anything of it down in the Bottomless Pit would have been a natural impossibility. How much better it would be for such a preacher if he thought twice before speaking once.

The following inspired paragraph appeared in the *Church Times*:—

"PARLIAMENT HILL.—A crowd of certainly not less than 1,500 men gathered on Sunday afternoon, September 20, when the Rev. J. A. Douglas, who has spoken on the Christian Evidence platform every Sunday for the past six months, gave his farewell address. The result of the summer's work has been completely to counteract the secularist propaganda, which, in 1907, held the field on Parliament Hill."

This reverend gentleman is good at blowing his own trumpet. Miss Vance, who has been looking after the N. S. S. Branch meetings at Parliament Hill, gives us a very different account of his performances. She describes him as a constant fomenter of disorder. His tactics have more than once led to his being refused a hearing on the Secular platform; his speaking there was such a gross abuse of the opportunity of free discussion. A lot of hooligan lads, evidently under his control, came to the Secular meeting with him and behaved in the most shameful manner. Miss Vance remonstrated with him several times, but he seemed to be lost to all sense of decency. One of the tricks of his hooligan retainers was to keep on clapping their hands, in a manner that must have been rehearsed, while the occupant of the Secular platform was endeavoring to speak. This is how the Rev. J. A. Douglas tries to "counteract the secularist propaganda," and after this explanation we should be glad to know if the *Church Times* is still proud of him.

It is well known that the Israelites carried Jehovah about with them in a little box called the Ark. Once this box, with the national Deity inside, "remained in the house of Obbededom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obbededom and all his house" (2 Sam. vi. 11). "The God of heaven," says Bishop Hall, "pays liberally for his lodging." This made King David jealous of Obbededom, and, in consequence, Obbededom lost his divine lodger, and the liberal payment as well. Such was the Sunday-school lesson for last Sunday, and at least one clergyman had the manliness to confess that it was no fit lesson for children.

General Booth says that he "longs" to found a Salvation Army colony in Rhodesia. "It is," he says, "the dearest scheme of my heart." But hadn't he better do something first for the ridiculous failure at Hadeleigh? And while he is about it he might take a turn at the Hanbury-street Shelter. Booth is getting too much like the gentleman in Scripture whose "eyes are in the ends of the earth."

General Booth's new idea is to found an organisation in the heart of South Africa "to which we can transport men

who have been broken in the old country." This is the same old story. The Canadian emigration scheme was to provide a refuge for those who had been "broken in the old country," but hitherto its main function has been to provide commissions and grants to the Army. We have not the slightest doubt that, provided the profit is forthcoming, General Booth will transport to Rhodesia as readily as to Canada. Perhaps, too, the longing for Rhodesia is not altogether unconnected with the probable cessation of the grants from the Canadian government. This is an aspect of the matter certain to be kept in view by the Army officials. At any rate, the Army emigration work does not transport "rescued" cases, and it certainly does nothing to prevent more being "broken" by the working of our social and industrial system. The Army works hard to give the public the contrary impression, but the fact remains.

Judge Willis told the Baptists that, in his opinion, Catholics had a perfect legal right to carry the Host in a street procession. At the same time, he thanked Mr. Asquith for putting friendly, not legal, pressure upon Archbishop Bourne. By this means a scandal was avoided. But the "scandal" is nothing to us. We are only concerned with public order. And it was very nearly broken, as it was. It is no longer possible to learn the truth now in English papers in matters in which the Catholic Church is interested. It has its minions in all our newspaper offices. The truth about the Westminster procession was told in the American papers. The police had all their work cut out to keep Catholics and Protestants from each other's throats. Once or twice they nearly failed, and riot and bloodshed of a terrible character seemed imminent. It was touch and go.

Rev. Dr. George Alexander Smith, of Glasgow, preaching the "missionary" sermon to the Baptist Union, told some plain truths, although, of course, he did not point out their clear lessons. He said that "the greatest obstacle to the spread of Christianity among Eastern nations had been Mohammedanism." It had driven Christianity out of Asia, Africa, and part of Europe, and held the field ever since, so that "until recently European missionary work had made practically no headway among the Moslem populations." This seems to imply that Christianity is making headway among the Moslem populations now, but it is not doing anything of the kind. But the principal point is this. How did Mohammedanism come to defeat Christianity so decisively, and hold it in check for a thousand years? What becomes of the deity of Christ in presence of such a fact? Were the "everlasting arms" broken by a mortal prophet?

"The followers of Islam," Dr. Smith said, "considered Christianity a prior and less developed religion than their own, and they regarded it with scorn." The followers of Islam are right. Christianity is clogged with all sorts of childish superstitions from which their religion is free. They have no miracles, no tall yarns that reach over the Eiffel Tower, no nasty yarns that creep like snakes in the grass. They worship one God—without a rival and without a partner; and they regard Mohammed, not as an incarnation of the Deity, but merely as a man with a divine message. Dr. Smith and his Baptist hearers are mistaken if they imagine that so simple a faith is going to be displaced by the mass of absurdities called Christianity. No "opportunities" will avail. The time has gone by for it.

Another speaker at the Baptist Union on the "missionary" business was the Rev. J. Ireland Hasler, who has spent some years at Delhi and is now stationed at Bankipore. This gentleman stated that some of the natives said to him: "You have come out here to preach; don't you think you had better preach to those at home?" "Your beggars," said one Indian, "wander about your streets not knowing where to get a morsel of bread to save them from starvation, or where to lay their heads, while close by their countrymen, the great millionaires, are rolling over beds of gold. History and current events teach us that Christians, from their lust for wealth and power, have lost all religion, and become the most irreligious people, and are the oppressors of the weaker races." We do not agree, for our part, that the Christians have lost all religion; we think they still have plenty of that; but all the rest of this indictment is perfectly true. Mr. Hasler called upon the Baptists "to do all they could to give those words the lie"—and the summons was loudly cheered. But this implies that the words are *not* a lie a present, but the sober truth. Here, again, we say that it is too late for the Christians to hope to undo the bad impression they have made upon the Hindu mind. Besides, how are they going to change their characters in a hurry? The thing is impossible. The East is sick and tired of them.

At the same meeting the Rev. G. A. Smith dealt with Mohammedanism. Dr. Smith said that the recent bloodless revolution in Turkey (would the revolution have been "bloodless" in a Christian country?) had created a new atmosphere, and this gave an opportunity for the introduction of the Christian faith. Doubtless the plea may be good to raise subscriptions from some; the better informed know that, although the revolution may give missionaries greater freedom of movement, educated Mohammedans are not at all likely to give up the errors of their own religion in order to embrace those of Christianity. Freedom and intellectual development in Turkey will have precisely the same result that they have in other countries, the disintegration of superstition and the growth of more rational views of man and nature.

When Christians are obliged to acknowledge that Buddhism has a larger number of adherents than any other religion, they exclaim, "But it has completely ceased to be in the very land that gave it birth." True; and Christianity has done precisely the same thing. In his missionary sermon before the Baptist Union, Professor George Adam Smith not only admitted, but gave a vivid sketch of, "the early conquests of Islam which wiped out the Christendom of Arabia, Asia, North Africa, and parts of Europe." Dr. Smith made the further admission that "for twelve centuries Christendom had failed to react upon Islam except by means of the sword." Thus we see that the fortunes and misfortunes of Christianity, like those of every other religion, are determined by purely mundane causes, and can be satisfactorily accounted for without any reference to the so-called Higher Powers.

Professor Smith pointed out the defects of Mohammedanism, such as "its treatment of women, its demoralising effect on public government, its tolerance of slavery, its lack of moral as distinct from purely missionary zeal, and its contempt for modern science." But surely the reverend gentleman has not forgotten the history of his own Faith? Every one of those defects has characterised Christianity all through the ages. Christianity tolerated slavery and condemned modern science as long as it dared. It abolished the former and became friendly to the latter only when compelled to do so by the force of a public opinion it had done nothing to create and everything to suppress.

The Liverpool Free Church Council has issued the report of a special commissioner, Mr. W. J. Rowland, who has been investigating the Free Church life of that city. We quote the following summary of church (or chapel) attendance from the friendly *Daily News* :—

"The population of the area of inquiry was 741,976. The number of sittings provided by the Free Churches was 115,820. A census of church attendance was taken, with voluntary and official workers, and it was found that 20,668 were present at morning worship and 45,545 in the evening. Presenting the figures in another way, 18 per cent. of the available sittings were occupied in the morning and 38½ per cent. in the evening. These proportions compare unfavorably with those of the 1902 census, and show that the decline in church attendance steadily continues."

The *Daily News* says that this report ought to be in the hands of all Free Churchmen. Yes, and others.

The Baptist mind was naturally exercised over the Education Bill. Two Education Bills have been dropped already, and the third hangs fire. Dr. Clifford told the Baptist Congress that he hoped the Government would stand firm, and do something in earnest for its "best ally"—the Nonconformists. Principal Rawdon declared that "the Nonconformists had been patient long enough," but "the time had come when they should emphatically say that unless the party now in power was prepared to deal honestly and clearly with them they would have to look to some other party whose greater courage and persistence would press this matter forward to its proper issue." In other words, these people are Nonconformists first and Liberals afterwards—a fact of which the Government should take due note. For the rest, however, Principal Rawdon's speech was sufficiently foolish. What "other party" is going to press forward a Nonconformist Education Bill? Not the Conservative party, which is pledged to a Church policy; and certainly not the Labor party, which is pledged to Secular Education. If the Nonconformists cannot get an Education Bill to suit them from the Liberals, they have lost the game; and it is pretty clear that the Liberals cannot possibly carry their present Bill, or any Bill like it.

The Rev. John Gardner, of Hull, has no need to pray for a good conceit of himself. He is the salt of the earth and

the light of the world—in his own opinion. Materialists, if in power, would ruin the State in no time. The only hope of a city, its very best asset, is in its churches and its preachers. If that be so, then all our cities are doomed indeed, for they are rapidly turning their backs upon their churches and ministers. It looks as if the wicked Materialists are about to have their innings at last. Then Mr. Gardner will be disillusioned.

About three thousand years ago God is said to have issued the command, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man" (Lev. xix. 32). In the eighth year of the twentieth century of his Beloved Son's reign on earth, "Edward VII. and the British nation, through Parliament," have just discovered that ancient precept and resolved to obey it by giving the old man of seventy the paltry sum of five shillings a week. As it is a man of God who makes the statement, it must be true, though its truth is creditable neither to God nor to his people.

Ireland became Christian about the middle of the fifth century, and ever since it has literally teemed with churches and parsons. Yet in this year of grace we read, in connection with the Irish Evangelical Society, that at last Ireland is "free and willing to receive the Gospel," and that "the religious condition of the people is deplorable." Poor, unfortunate Ireland, thou hast suffered much at the hands of many spiritual quacks, and, alas, thy sufferings are about to be multiplied!

"Yes, it is only too true," said a specially-sainted servant of the Lord, "that materialism and ungodliness are apparently triumphant everywhere, but we mustn't give way to despair. It was the same in Israel under the prophets. The bulk of the people were utterly heedless of God and his claims, living alone for selfish and sinful ends; but there was always 'a very small remnant,' but for which the nation would have been as Sodom and like unto Gomorrah. So it is with us now. England is deep sunk in the filth of scepticism and sensuality; but still the Lord of hosts has graciously left unto us a very small remnant in the churches, and by means of this remnant England shall yet be saved from the total overthrow and destruction that now threaten her." We give the old parson enthusiastic thanks, and shout, Hallelujah! Even the Editor and the readers of the *Freethinker* may escape in the shadow of the Blessed Remnant!

Rev. J. H. James, of Burton, is a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of the P. S. A. Brotherhood and Kindred Societies. He seems to be an authority on all subjects he knows nothing at all about. Speaking at a mass meeting recently held at Sunderland, this omniscient and infallible little pope characterised the "mass of doubt" as "doubt born of low moral condition, the result of a weakening of the moral fibre." That was lying for the glory of God, the very vilest type of lying in the whole world. And where is there a Gospel peddler who does not lie in that fashion almost every time he opens his mouth? The saints take no notice, they even approve of it because it seems necessary to the success of spiritual trade.

We have frequently observed how Christians go on discussing the old questions from the old standpoint, and with a complete ignoring of new conditions and recent knowledge. A religious weekly has, for example, a column devoted to notices of recent writings bearing on the question of immortality, in which questions are propounded that are simply ruled out of court by what we know of the history of the belief. One of the questions is, "How comes it that all the religions of the world have admitted the notion, more or less developed according to their various grades of civilisation, of a substance which is called the soul?" Fault might be found with the form of the question, but we pass that by. The question is however answered, and conclusively answered, by all that we know of the early history of mankind. The cause of a belief in a double that survives death, with the subsequent development of the belief, is to be found in almost any up-to-date text-book of anthropology; it has been discussed at length by such men as Tylor, Spencer, and Frazer; and it is simply childish to spring a question of "How comes it?" on uninformed readers without any indication of the fact that the question has been answered over and over again.

Another almost asinine remark is this, that through the ages men have denied the persistence of the soul, is of no avail against the fact that through the ages men have believed it. Slight reflection ought to have shown that the

testimony of those who have outgrown a belief is *prima facie*, of more value than the fact that others retain it. A belief may be universal because it rests on a misunderstanding or a misinterpretation of normal phenomena—as, for example, witchcraft or demoniacal possession. But when *some* give it up there is reason for concluding that they have seen further and more clearly than their fellows. Moreover, apart from sheer conservatism, various vested interests have for centuries worked for the perpetuation of certain beliefs, and have made any impression to the contrary exceedingly dangerous. That in spite of these and other considerations, the belief in immortality has waned, surely counts for more than that others still remain, in this respect, on the culture level of earlier generations.

The reformers in India, China, and Turkey had better be on their guard. They are all solemnly warned by the *Methodist Times* that none of their reforms will be of any use "unless those who are shaping them are illuminated by Christian ideals and upheld and guided by Christian faith." We have no doubt that the conscience of the *Methodist Times* is now easy. To have seen the whole world going wrong for want of the gospel of Methodism, and not to have issued a warning, would have been a grave neglect of duty. Having issued the warning, the responsibility rests with other people. After all, though, the world would lose a lot of humor if it were not for the very serious people in it.

"The state of religion in a nation," says the *Methodist Times*, "is the surest indication of its general healthiness." Exactly; is it not written—

"When the Devil was sick the Devil a saint would be;  
When the Devil was well, the devil a saint was he?"

Rev. Dinsdale T. Young says: "I have very little faith in the opinions of any minister on politics." It is really astonishing how many things clergymen say nowadays that we find ourselves in agreement with.

Rev. Professor Orr, of Glasgow, has just published a six-shilling volume on *The Resurrection of Jesus*, in which he does the cause of Freethought a much greater service than that of the ancient Faith. He has succeeded in making the orthodox doctrine look more ridiculous and unbelievable than ever. It is against the New Theologians, great and small, that Dr. Orr unsheathes his sword, and pours out the phials of his righteous indignation. But no blood is shed, no wounds are inflicted. It is, in reality, a mock attack with toy weapons.

Dr. Orr hates the Higher Criticism with perfect detestation. The Gospels are too sacred to be subjected to the tests applied to Secular literature. Free inquiry, or private judgment, cannot be exercised in dealing with these divine oracles. To criticise God's Word is to be guilty of rankest impiety. Our one duty is to believe and adore. Professor Orr's book deals orthodoxy the deadliest blow it has received for many long years, and Freethinkers everywhere should accord the author the heartiest vote of thanks for having supplied a valuable addition to their armory.

The Rev. Dr. Sheldon, author of that vapid book, *In His Steps*, was surprised to find that in England a wise merchant may be a member of respectable society. Evidently, this servant of God believes in ostracising and boycotting such a man, forgetting that his Lord, in whose steps he pretends to be so anxious to walk, was known as "the friend of publicans and sinners" (harlots). What a beautiful, charming thing piety is in practice, to be sure!

The Church Army organ is not overburdened with brains. Under a big, bold heading, "Will Your Anchor Hold?" it tells of the *Amazon* going to pieces on the Welsh coast, and the consequent loss of twenty lives. It is stated that one of the rescued men exclaimed: "Now I am saved, I thank God. There must be a Supreme Being, for no man could live by himself in such a sea." This implies that the Supreme Being deliberately let twenty men drown. Our pious contemporary hasn't the intelligence to perceive it—although it is as obvious as a haystack.

Floods in India have swept away thousands of human beings. We suggest that there should be a thanksgiving service. The sermon might be from the text, "He doeth all things well."

Cholera is going strong in Russia. Good old "Providence." There is room for another thanksgiving service in Tsardom.

The Rev. W. B. Selbie characterises harvest thanksgivings as a "miserable humbug." They are, he says, "simply a show, a means of getting a little money, and not a real harvest thanksgiving at all. That was the sort of thing that dominated a lot of Nonconformist churches—all sorts of dodges to draw." We are naturally pleased to find our opinion of these annual impostures endorsed.

A week or two ago the *Christian World* said that Christian missions had "almost Christianised" the inhabitants of Madagascar. A member of one of the missions contradicted the statement in a subsequent issue, and pointed out that two-thirds of the inhabitants are still as they were. We have no doubt that the estimate would be still further reduced on a careful and impartial inquiry.

Men of God tell the truth occasionally, if only by accident. Bishop Moloney, of Mid China, preaching at a farewell service to missionaries in St. Bride's Church, Fleet-street, said that "the English people were very dull of intellect compared with some of the races of the Far East." Quite so. That is why the English people are Christians. It is also the reason why they fool their money away in trying to make Christians of the Eastern "heathen."

Archdeacon William Lathan Bevan, of Ely Tower, Brecon, South Wales, left £71,700. The "races of the Far East" hear of these things and smile at Christianity.

Another poor Nazarene gone God knows where—probably to a warm climate. Rev. Prebendary Henry Montagu Villiers, vicar of St. Paul, Knightsbridge, left £88,934. "Woe unto you rich!" A rare joke, isn't it?

It is reported that a Johannesburg Jewish paper, the *Jewish Chronicle*, awarded to General Booth the weekly "cake" it offers to celebrities. The "cake" was given the General by a representative of the paper. This reminds one of the story of the Jew and the Christian who were partners in the law business. The Jew made out a client's bill of costs, to which the Christian objected. It was not heavy enough. A fresh one was drawn up; still the same objection. At last the Christian took the matter in hand, and produced a document that was perfectly monumental in its proportions. "Ah," said the Jew, as he looked at the enormous total, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Herbert Potts, ex-cashier in Beckett's Bank at Doncaster, has been arrested on a charge of misappropriating the sum of £1,293 as trustee under a will. He was choirmaster and organist at St. James's Church.

Most of the Bishops have a motor-car. The latest recipient of one is the Bishop of Worcester. Jesus Christ had to ride on a jackass.

#### GRACE FROM THE GRACELESS.

Long ago, in Barnet, a small town in northern Vermont, when it was the custom to entertain wayfarers at the comfortable farmhouses along the road, a long-legged, cadaverous individual in a suit of rusty black stopped at the home of Deacon John L. Woods for dinner. His melancholy manner just exhaled piety. "Stranger, will you say grace?" asked Deacon John, as they drew up to the table. Turning his sad, uncomprehending eyes on his host, the pious guest said drearily: "If you want to talk to me you'll have to holler like—; I'm deaf as a — old adder."

#### ACCORDING TO HISTORY.

A woman in a Western city, who belongs to a community called the "Sisters of St. John the Baptist," not long ago spent a month in a backwoods district. Shortly after her arrival she went to the local post-office and inquired if any letters had come for Sister Bernardine. The rural postmaster looked bewildered. "Sister who?" he asked, incredulously. "Sister Bernardine," repeated the lady; "a sister of St. John the Baptist." "I think not," he answered, dubiously. Then, after some reflection, he added: "Say, ain't he been dead pretty near a hundred years now?"



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, October 11, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester; 6.30, "Socialism and Religion."

October 18, Manchester; 25, Stanley Hall, London. November 1, Birmingham.

**To Correspondents.**

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—October 11, Stanley Hall, North London; 18, Glasgow. November 15, Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society; 22, Falls-worth; 29, Birmingham.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 11, Glasgow; 18, Stanley Hall, London.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £251 14s. 8d. Received since.—B. Vickers, 5s.; J. D. (2nd sub.), £5; R. L. M., £2 10s.; T. S. Welch, 5s.; James Thomson, 5s.; J. Greeves Fisher, 9s. 6d.; Trinity, 6s.; George Smith, 5s.; Alice M. Baker, £5. *Per D. Baxter*:—A. Friend, 6s.; A. D., 2s. 6d.; George Paul, 2s. 6d. S. Fellows, 2s. 6d.; "Blackheath" (2nd sub.), 2s.; J. H. Ridgway, 2s.; R. Taylor, 2s.; J. P., 2s.; H. Black, 5s.; H. E., £1 1s.; P. J. O'Donagan, 10s. 6d.; George Britton, 2s. 6d.
- H. BLACK.—We don't quite understand the "old readers" of this journal who "thought it was defunct." However, we are glad you were able to tell them that it was "very much alive."
- A. E. SMITH, 47 Alexandra-road, Wellingboro', would like to know of other Freethinkers in the same locality. He says he has taken this journal for nine months and "looks forward to each new number with increasing pleasure."
- D. J. LODWICK (Caerbont).—Pleased to hear you were so delighted with Mr. Foote's lecture at Queen's Hall on Shelley's Atheism. Thanks for good wishes.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Glad the Liverpool Branch had "two very successful meetings" on Sunday at the opening of its new hall.
- MARION WOODGATE, twenty-two, of 41 Maycroft, Cranmer-road, Forest-gate, London, E., asks us as "a favor" to say that she "would so much like to correspond" with a lady Freethinker about her own age on "Atheism." Recently, she says, she has "connected two persons to our cause."
- R. LOCKEY.—The matter shall be seen to. Thanks.
- R. STEVENSON.—We are obliged to you for your letter, but we have only the very dimmest recollection of the affair now.
- ATHEIST (Liverpool).—We replied to your letter by post last week. You would probably find a full report of Mr. Sexton's speech in the next day's *Liverpool Post* or *Manchester Guardian*. Your suggestions shall have consideration.
- T. S. WELCH.—We shall have to print another article on the subject of your inquiry. Meanwhile, you might read Wheeler's *Bible Studies and Footsteps of the Past*, and our own *Crimes of Christianity and Flowers of Freethought*, all of which are in the Pioneer Press catalogue.
- H. MEREDITH (Calcutta).—Will be useful. Thanks.
- G. F. COWAN (Port Elizabeth).—Certainly you could form a Branch of the National Secular Society out there. We are requesting the London secretary to send you full particulars. Glad to hear the circulation of the *Freethinker* is increasing at Port Elizabeth. There ought to be a good field for it in your part of the globe. Thanks for the newspaper.
- H. IRVING.—Mr. Foote has been willing to pay Leeds a visit for some time, but the local "saints" don't seem to get much "forrader" with the idea.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever-welcome cuttings.
- G. J. READING.—We are always delighted to hear a "saint" say "my wife is a Freethinker." It gives us the greatest pleasure, week by week, to know that good women—wives and mothers—honor us by reading what we write. The bookstall "No" shall be dealt with promptly by our shop manager.
- E. BARNBY.—Will be useful. Thanks for your trouble in the matter.
- A. ALLISON.—We hope for the best. See paragraph.
- H. TONKIN.—Shall be sent. Thanks.
- J. C. BANKS.—We saw nothing in the volume worthy of our attention—or yours.
- H. G. FARMER.—We will keep it in mind.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—The very size of London makes it a difficult place for Freethought meetings. Advertising over all the area from which the audiences are drawn is ten times too expensive. A place open every Sunday advertises itself. But we have not been able to obtain such a place of late years, either for love or money.
- G. SMITH.—Will you kindly give us a complete reference to the book—title, etc., and publisher's name.
- P. V.—Glad to have the report, and will deal with it fully next week.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Sugar Plums.**

Mr. Foote opens the new lecturing season for the Leicester Secular Society to-day (Oct. 11), his subject (in the evening, at the Secular Hall) being "Socialism and Religion." Mr. Foote hopes to meet "saints" from many places within easy reach of Leicester. Every reader of the *Freethinker* in the locality should try to bring people to the Hall, which ought to be crowded to the doors. The admission is free, with a collection in aid of the Society's funds.

Mr. Foote opened the new lecturing season for the Glasgow Branch on Sunday. He had very fine audiences, the hall being well filled in the morning and densely crowded in the evening. The Branch committee are proud of such a successful opening, and hope for a continuance of good meetings throughout the winter. They ask us to announce that the Glasgow platform will be occupied to-day (Oct. 11) by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who has made many friends in that city and ought to make more during this visit. Glasgow and district "saints" who have not heard him yet should make a point of not missing him this time. They will be glad they went.

Stanley Hall—where the new course of Sunday evening lectures is being delivered under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd.—is next door to the "Boston" in Junction-road, Highgate. The "Boston" is one of the landmarks of North London. Omnibuses and tramcars pass it from various directions, there is a Tube station nearly opposite, and a Midland station not far off. The place is really easy of approach, and we hope there will be a first-class gathering to-night (Oct. 11), when Mr. Cohen delivers the second lecture of the course. His subject is a bold one, which should be attractive—"The Necessity of Atheism."

London Freethinkers will remember that the next social gathering, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, is fixed for Thursday evening, October 22, at Anderton's Hotel. If the weather is decent there is pretty sure to be a big gathering. Questions have been asked again as to the attendance of non-members. We repeat that members of the N. S. S. are at liberty to introduce a friend, and that non-members who cannot be so introduced may obtain an admission ticket by applying to the N. S. S. general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

The Newcastle Branch has decided to open a Secular Sunday-school for the children of Freethinkers residing in the district. A large and airy room has been rented in the centre of the city, and if those who care to send their children will communicate with the secretary, Mr. H. B. Dodds, 182 Philip-street, he will give them all information in connection with the scheme. It is hoped there will be a prompt and wide response, as the Branch desire to have the school under way before the winter sets in. The school will be run on rules laid down by Mr. F. J. Gould.

We are glad to see the local press taking note of the protest of the Woolwich N. S. S. Branch against the refusal of the Town Hall to them for lectures as on previous occasions. The big protest meeting held in Beresford-square was the largest the Branch has ever had in Woolwich. The matter has been brought up at a Council meeting, and a deputation is to wait upon the Committee soon after this week's *Freethinker* goes to press. It is to be hoped that the bigots will be soundly defeated in the end.

We are sure that the majority of our readers must be interested in the extracts we print now and then from the letters of persons who have only recently come across the *Freethinker*. Here is one from the letter of a teacher in a town which, for prudential reasons, we do not indicate. "Two years ago," he says, "I fell in with the *Freethinker* through a friend, and have ever since lamented that I did not know of its existence earlier, say when I entered the University. There can be no doubt that I should have pursued my studies with greater zeal and more discretion. At present, the majority of students wander aimlessly through their course and leave College practically uneducated, or, what is worse, miseducated. I look forward eagerly to the *Freethinker* every week, admiring it for its unwavering courage, its sound reasoning, and its fine language.....The teacher who is a Freethinker is in an awkward position. We have a syllabus of religious instruction for the children, which is both comical and deplorable. However, a good deal can be, and is being, done by myself and others whom I know to make these lessons really aid our cause." Another of our "illiterate" admirers! It is wonderful what an idea of the *Freethinker* the average Christian entertains.

We are quite proud of receiving a handsome subscription towards the President's Honorarium Fund from Miss Alice M. Baker, of Birmingham, who bears a name held in such high honor by Midland Freethinkers. The late Mr. Daniel Baker, her father, was the chief pillar of the Secular cause in Birmingham for many years; helping it with his money, giving it the benefit of his wise advice, and enhancing its reputation by his sterling character. Mrs. Baker was not fond of public appearances, and was an invalid during the later years of her life, but she was a remarkable woman—one of the most remarkable we ever met. We recollect the first time we saw her. It was over so many years ago—more than we care to count—in the funny little St. George's Hall. Her face was so fine, and her eyes beamed with such a gracious mixture of intelligence and benevolence, that we fell in love with her (in a reverential way) on the spot. Miss Alice M. Baker comes of the best Freethought stock, and she belies the common orthodox theory that Freethinkers' children all turn out Christians.

#### MORALS AND MIND.

Imagination or mind employed in prophetically imaging forth its objects, is that faculty of human nature on which every gradation of its progress, nay, every, the minutest, change, depends. Pain or pleasure, if subtly analysed, will be found to consist entirely in prospect. The only distinction between the selfish man and the virtuous man is, that the imagination of the former is confined within a narrow limit, whilst that of the latter embraces a comprehensive circumstance. In this sense, wisdom and virtue may be said to be inseparable, and criteria of each other. Selfishness is the offspring of ignorance and mistake; it is the portion of unreflecting infancy, and savage solitude, or of those whom toil or evil occupations have blunted or rendered torpid; disinterested benevolence is the product of a cultivated imagination, and has an intimate connection with all the arts which add ornament, or dignity, or power, or stability to the social state of man. Virtue is thus entirely a refinement of civilised life.—*Shelley*.

#### POPE'S EPITAPH ON ELIJAH FELTON.

This modest stone, what few vain marbles can,  
May truly say, "Here lies an honest man:"  
A poet, bless'd beyond the poet's fate,  
Whom Heaven kept sacred from the proud and great:  
Foe to loud praise, and friend to learned ease,  
Content with science in the vale of peace,  
Calmly he look'd on either life, and here  
Saw nothing to regret, or there to fear;  
From nature's temperate feast rose satisfied,  
Thank'd Heaven that he had lived, and that he died.

Elsie, the little daughter of a clergyman, pranced into her father's study one evening while the reverend gentleman was preparing a lengthy sermon for the following Sunday. She looked curiously at the MS for a moment, and then turned to her father. "Papa," she began, seriously, "does God tell you what to write?" "Certainly, dear," replied the clergyman. "Then why do you scratch so much of it out, father?" said the little one.

### The Nonconformist Press and the Great Betrayal.

"NIL ADMIRARI," recommended by the authority of the great Latin satirist-critic, is a philosophical attitude of mind, the propriety of which constantly, in respect to matters social, political, and religious, is being justified. In recent days no more forcible illustration of the need of such mental attitude—hard as it may be to embrace it—has been exhibited than the attitude of the orthodox Nonconformist Press in face of the recent bold and *calculated* move on the part of Sacerdotalism and Papalism. That the *reactionary* Press—both religious and other—hastened eagerly and emulously to hail the triumphal Progress of the Papal Legatus (or Lieutenant) through the streets of London—a new Pandulf—with so much of approval and of admiration, need not provoke much astonishment. Although the fact that the *Daily Telegraph*—the favorite literary organ of the bourgeois classes—devoted several columns to adoring, dithyrambic, eulogy of the audacious sacerdotal aggression, and to unbounded, enthusiastic admiration of the openly-avowed unrelenting enemy, the sworn foe alike of Hebraism (*pace* the *D. T.*) and of British Protestantism, is, it must be confessed, if not altogether surprising, yet not a little pleasant. Pleasant in view of the facts of history and of the not too considerate treatment of "the Chosen People," during some few centuries, by the Chair of St. Peter. But then the peculiar principles of that commercial newspaper "of the largest circulation," are sufficiently well known.

What really is calculated to test to the utmost the force and the extent of the *nil admirari* philosophy, is the supreme contempt displayed by the two chief representatives of Nonconformist Liberalism in the daily Press—to wit, the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News*—for what hitherto had been supposed to be a leading persuasion of Protestantism; the fact of the insidious approaches and aggressions of its ever-implacable and irreconcilable foe. There is a genuine "Liberalism" and there is a false "Liberalism." The former demands, and would grant, unlimited freedom of opinion and of action consistent with the preservation of the rights and safety of the world in general. Than the conductors of the English Press none should be more fully conscious of the certain fact that to concede to the authorities of the Vatican and of the Papacy power or privilege, beyond the inevitable necessity of bare toleration of *private* religious practice, is to be traitorous to the principles of Freedom and to the highest interests of our race. Are these false prophets, these false Liberals who thus betray their trust and the not inconsiderable influence they necessarily wield, who would tolerate intolerance of the most determined and most dangerous sort—under the guise of zeal for freedom of conscience—are they really prepared to stultify their hitherto position by thus so eagerly and emulously acclaiming the obligation on Protestant communities to give full scope to the machinations of a tyrannous and unscrupulous despotism, whose triumph would mean their own extinction, the arrest of all true progress, and slavish subjection?

But it is of little use to appeal to the self-constituted guides of public opinion, whose line of action is already fixed. The appeal must be made to those, as yet, unpersuaded classes in this country, to whom Truth and Right are made and impartial historical writer, the eloquence of whose tremendous denunciation is equalled only by the absolute truth of the accusation. It is thus that the historian of *Rationalism in Europe* emphasises the frightful facts of the despotism of the "Catholic" Church during the long ages of its triumphant dominion:—

"That the Sacerdotal Church has shed more innocent blood than any other institution, which has ever existed among men, will be questioned by no one having a competent knowledge of History. The memorials, indeed, of many of its persecutions are now so scanty that it is impossible to form a complete conception of the multitude of its victims, and it is quite certain that no powers of imagination adequately can realise their sufferings. Llorente, who had free access to the archives of the Spanish Inquisition, assures us that, by that tribunal alone, more than 31,000 persons were burned, and more than 200,000 condemned to punishments less severe than death. The number of those who were put to an agonising death for their belief, in the Netherlands alone in the reign of Charles V., has been estimated by a very high authority at 50,000; and at least half as many

\* The Inquisition in Spain was but one of many "Holy Offices" in various parts of Western Europe. All who wish to have adequate knowledge of what atrocious crimes these Inquisitional Tribunals and Torture-Chambers perpetrated are referred to *The History of the Inquisition*, by H. C. Lea (1887). The first regular "Holy Office" was instituted in the twelfth century A.D.

perished under his son. And when to these memorable instances we add the innumerable, less conspicuous, 'executions'—from the victims of Charlemagne to the Freethinkers of the seventeenth century—when we recollect that, after the mission of Dominic [the founder of the Dominican Order of Friars] the area of persecution comprised nearly the whole of Christendom, and that its triumph in some districts was so complete as to destroy every memorial of the struggle, the most callous nature must recoil with horror from the spectacle. For these atrocities were not perpetrated in the brief paroxysms of a reign of terror, or by the hands of obscure sectarians, but were inflicted by a triumphant Church, with every circumstance of deliberation and solemnity. Nor did the victims perish by a rapid and painless death, but by one that was carefully selected as among the most poignant that man can suffer. They were usually burned alive. They were burned alive not infrequently by a slow fire. They were burned alive after their constancy had been tried by the most excruciating agonies that minds fertile in torture-invention could devise. This was physical torment inflicted upon those who dared to exercise their reason in the pursuit of truth. But what language can describe, what imagination can conceive, the mental suffering that accompanied it? For in those days the family was divided against itself. The ray of conviction often fell upon a single member, leaving the others untouched. The victims of the Church were usually in the first flush of youthful enthusiasm; and those who loved them best were firmly convinced that their agonies upon earth were but the prelude to eternal agonies hereafter. This was especially the case with weak women, around whose minds the clergy had most successfully wound their coils.

It is horrible, it is appalling, to reflect what the mother, the wife, the sister, the daughter of the heretic must have suffered from this teaching. She saw the body of him who was dearer to her than life dislocated and writhing and quivering with pain. She watched the slow fire creeping from limb to limb till it had swathed him in a sheet of flames; and when, at last, the scream of agony had died away, and the tortured body was at rest, she was told that all this was acceptable to the God she served, and was but a faint image of the sufferings he would inflict upon the dead through eternity. Nothing was wanting to give emphasis to the doctrine. It rang from every pulpit, it was painted over every altar.

All this is horrible enough, but it is only a part of the misery which the persecuting spirit of the Church has produced. For, judging by the ordinary measure of human courage, for every man who dared to avow his principles at the stake there must have been many who believed that by such avowal alone they could save their souls; but who were scared either by the prospect of their own sufferings or of the destitution of their children, who passed their lives in one long series of hypocritical observances and studied falsehoods; and, at last, with minds degraded by habitual deception, sank hopeless and terror-stricken into the grave.

And besides all these things, we have to remember that the spirit which was manifested in acts of detailed persecution had often swept over a far wider sphere, and produced sufferings, not, perhaps, so excruciating, but more extensive. We have to recollect those frightful massacres, perhaps the most fearful the world has ever seen—the massacre of the Albigenses, which a pope [and a friar, Dominic] had instigated. We have to recollect those religious wars which reproduced themselves century after century with scarcely diminished fury, which turned Syria into an aceldama, which inundated with blood the fairest lands of Europe, which blasted the prosperity and paralysed the intellect of nations, which planted animosities in Europe which two hundred years have been unable altogether to destroy. Nor should we forget the hardening effects that must have been produced on the minds of the spectators who (e.g.) at every royal marriage in Spain were regaled by the public burnings of heretics,\* or who were summoned to the great Square of Toulouse to contemplate the struggles of 400 'witches' in the flames.....When we consider all these things, it seems not exaggeration to say that the Christian [i.e., the 'Catholic'] religion has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has ever existed among men. To complete the picture it is only necessary to add that these things were done in the name of the Teacher who said, 'By this shall all men know that you are my followers—that you love one another' (History of Rationalism in Europe, by W. E. Lecky).

But even after all this exposure of the history of the results of the domination of "Catholicism," it is not a complete picture. All who are versed in the annals of Inquisitional and other Papalist tribunals, know that not only sacerdotal pretensions, but also the most criminal and the vilest motives actuated and inspired, in a vast number of cases, all this fearful atrocity—avarice, private malice, and revenge on the part of the ecclesiastical judges. Innumerable families of

\* For the "Act of Faith" formerly celebrated by the wholesale burning of "heretics," in the Spain of to day has been substituted, as a sort of compromise with the spirit of the age, another species of "Act of Faith" at the celebration of royal marriages—the equally iniquitous and (so-called) "Bull Fight," which accurately would be entitled Bull and Horse Torture. Thus, in fact, was celebrated the marriage of the English princess, at Madrid, two years ago. Well may Sacerdotalism claim the *Semper Radem* boast.

the condemned, whose property was confiscated, were reduced to beggary and starvation, through two or three generations, it might be. The slightest suspicion of "heresy"—even of the most trifling or ridiculously-manifested sort—sufficed. Even those who "recanted" were condemned often to life-long immurement in filthy dungeons, to the most degrading and painful penances, and to semi-starvation. Children of the tenderest age—young girls and boys—were involved in the frightful fate of the accused—more or less. Many good Protestants seem to be under the impression that the fires of Smithfield and the *autos-da-fé* of Spain or the atrocities of the Albigensian and Vaudois persecutions, it may be, sum up pretty nearly the crimes of villainy of Papal Sacerdotalism. To such inadequately instructed (orthodox) Protestants it is to be commended the volumes narrating the history of the Inquisition, by H. C. Lea. There they may learn something like the real truth. Almost the whole of Western Europe, for some five or six centuries, was, in fact, subject to its infernal régime.

And all these monstrous, these literally innumerable crimes against Humanity, there are teachers of a pseudo-Liberalism or of a pseudo-Philosophy ready, if not altogether to condone, at all events, to minimise by transparent sophistry or subterfuge. They allege (1) the *Spirit of the Age*—that "Secular" Governments are equally obnoxious to the accusation; (2) that the "regrettable" cruelties were, at least, inspired by a sincere and conscientious, if "mistaken," belief in the rightness of their cause and claims; (3) that it is all passed now, and that it is impossible for such a sacerdotal despotism to be restored, or to be regarded with approval even by the modern sacerdotalists. Why, then, rake up (say they) past atrocities and iniquities? To all such sophistical pleading, whether *bonâ fide* or otherwise, it is severely to be replied: (1) What! the proudly and constantly-boasted infallible Catholic Church, under the direct guidance of heaven and its infallible vice-gerent, to be excused all those diabolical crimes under plea of the compelling spirit of the times! Besides, it is not true that the "Secular" Governments—barbarously cruel as they, for the most part, were—have been guilty of one-thousandth part of the atrocities and iniquities of the "Church"; (2) the alleged conscientious belief and bigotry, even that miserable plea, is falsified and nullified by the actual facts of history. Ambition, lust of domination, with other, yet more revolting incentives, beyond all possibility of doubt or dispute, have always been, in greater or less degree, the real actuating causes (disguised, as they were, under hypocritical professions) of its unscrupulous and unrelenting policy; (3) the plea that the "Catholic" Church—that is to say, its ruling Powers—has been influenced by the modern spirit so far that it would never dream of reviving the *arguments of force*, is entirely falsified simply by the present attitude of its responsible authorities. 1. It never has, by the mouth of its highest accredited authorities, condemned, or even regretted, its policy of the past—never expressed repentance or remorse for all the proved crimes against Humanity. 2. On the contrary, unless purposes of temporary policy constrain, so far from repudiating it, it constantly proclaims its divine right to assert its supremacy, or rather its despotism, and to "compel" the heretics "to come in" by all possible means.

Those are incontrovertible facts which only ignorance or, what is far worse, insincerity, will attempt to deny. Other Christian religionists are scandalously and shamefully obnoxious to the charge of intolerant despotism and of cruel persecution, and they have to answer for it before the just and impartial tribunal of History. But the all-essential, all-significant differentiation is this: that none of the Protestant sects, with all their folly and Bibliolatrous fanaticism, has ever adopted systematised methods of atrocious persecution and compulsion as an authoritatively recognised and organised part of its policy. And it must not be forgotten that they but inherited the teaching and traditions of their prolific Parent. *Palmarum qui meruit ferat*. No writer in the *Freethinker* will be suspected of partiality for orthodox Protestantism, with its "old wives' fables" and long worn-out childish superstition and sham. But it is against the unrelenting and unscrupulous and all-powerful Great Enemy of Freethought, during all the ages, that all thoughtful and truthful minds will always fight most especially and most determinedly. For the time-serving and opportunism which seeks to minimise the significance of obvious facts—from whatever motive—no condemnation can well be too severe, and no contempt too crushing.

H. W.

Let each considerate person have his way, and see what it will lead to. For not this man and that man, but all men make up mankind, and their united tasks the task of mankind.—*Carlyle*.

## The World of Books.

Shelley's first piece of important prose was the "Letter to Lord Ellenborough," before whom Daniel Isaac Eaton was tried for "blasphemy" in March, 1812, his offence being the publication of the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason*. This virtuous man and honorable publisher was found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, also to stand in the pillory. Shelley was not yet twenty, and he waited to see if some older and more influential champion of freedom would "raise his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity." But no one spoke, and the young poet stepped into the breach. The manuscript of his letter was entrusted to Mr. Syle, a well-known printer and publisher of Barnstaple. Shelley ordered a thousand copies to be printed, but the tradesman was more easily frightened than the author. Mr. Syle suppressed and destroyed all the remaining sheets after some two hundred copies had been delivered. It was difficult to circulate even a few of these copies, but the pamphlet survives amongst Shelley's prose works, and is a monument to his honor. It is not, as a composition, to be compared to such a superb achievement as the later *Defence of Poetry*, which was so highly—yet not too highly—praised by James Thomson. But the Letter to Lord Ellenborough was one that only Shelley could have written; it is creditable alike to his head and his heart; its style was wonderfully mature for a youth only half way through his twentieth year; and it has the distinction, we repeat, of being his first prose writing of real importance.

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Six years and a half later, in October, 1819, Richard Carlile had to answer six indictments for "blasphemy." He read the whole of the *Age of Reason* in his defence, in order to have it published as part of the report of his trial. He was found guilty (of course!) and sentenced to a fine of £1,500 and three years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol. The news of this judicial crime reached Shelley at Florence, where he was "in hourly expectation of Mary's confinement." He was also "full of all kinds of literary plans." Yet he could not forbear giving his attention to the new "blasphemy" case. Writing to the Gisbornes on November 6, 1819, he said: "I have just finished a letter of five sheets on Carlile's affair." What became of it we do not know. Is there any Shelleyan alive—Mr. Wise, Mr. Dobell, or another—who can give us any information on the point? Dr. Dowden, Shelley's official biographer, says that the letter was "addressed to Leigh Hunt." He gives a brief account of it, running only to seven lines; and winds up, characteristically, with bigoted nonsense about "the incencies of Paine's commentary on the story of the birth of Jesus Christ"—as if it were not Shelley's opinion, but Dr. Dowden's, that really mattered.

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The Carlile case attracted the attention of another great poet—John Keats. Writing to his brother George, before Carlile's trial came on, Keats first observed that England was recovering from the reaction which followed the French Revolution, and then he proceeded:—

"There are little signs whereby we may know how matters are going on. This makes the business of Carlisle [Keats's spelling] the bookseller of great amount in my mind. He has been selling deistical pamphlets, republished Tom Paine, and many other works held in superstitious horror. He has even been selling, for some time, immense numbers of a work called *The Deist*, which comes out in weekly numbers. For this conduct he, I think, has had about a dozen indictments issued against him, for which he has found bail to the amount of many thousand pounds. After all, they are afraid to prosecute. They are afraid of his defence; it would be published in all the papers all over the empire. They shudder at this. The trials would light a flame they could not extinguish. Do you not think this of great import?"

Richard Carlile was happier than he knew. His own indomitable manhood was equal to anything. No one ever looked on the face of danger with greater equanimity. He was incapable of fear. He was as stubborn as the oak of his native Devonshire, as enduring as the Dartmoor granite. And he had friends amongst the people, and friends of eminence like the great Jeremy Bentham. But he was unaware that his fight was watched by two mighty poets, both Republicans and Freethinkers, both friends of human liberty and progress, both young and fated to die young, and both destined to become fixed stars in the firmament of English literature. Richard Carlile has been sneered at by dilettante reformers, who had none of his passionate devotion to principle, nor a single spark of his fiery courage. They could never have wielded his sword even if they had seized it in a moment of unwonted enthusiasm. He fought like a Titan, and there was no room for "delicacy" in such a struggle. He had all the qualities that were requisite.

And the two most exquisite poets of his time—for Coleridge was alive then, but not creative—looked out from their towers of song and saw where his whirling sword gleamed in the desperate fight, and recognised, with the intuition of genius, that he was a true hero battling for the most precious possession of humanity; for that intellectual liberty, without which life is a slavery and happiness a disgrace.

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The October number of the *Positivist Review* opens with an interesting and suggestive article by the late Dr. J. H. Bridges on "Mental Health." Mr. F. J. Gould writes on "Positivism and the Workers," urging Positivists towards Socialism. Mr. Frederic Harrison writes on "The Positivist Library," supplementing the older sketch by Comte. Mr. S. H. Swinny, the editor, writes on "British Justice in India." This article ought to be read by Lord Morley. There is the usual supply of thoughtful paragraphs.

## The Man-Milliners.

CATHOLIC PRIESTS EXHORTED TO ABANDON GEWGAWES AND GENUFLEXIONS AND BE MEN.

By M. C. COOMER.

To each Priest of America: This is an appeal to your manhood. True, you were trained in an atmosphere of supernaturalism, an artificial world, and this may have given you ideas or impressions that differ widely from those of the practical world. You were taught to live outside of nature, if that were possible—and you were taught to imagine it possible. You were taught, and perhaps you still believe, that holy orders place you on a higher intellectual plane than that occupied by the rank-and-file of your empire, the kingdom of heaven. Those of the rank-and-file acknowledge you as their superior, thereby counting themselves inferiors, hence by this appellation they may be designated. You are supposed to stand in the place of God, to whom inferiors must apply for salvation.

In order to be qualified to act as God, you are required to take a long course of instruction called education. This consists in learning a dead language and its ritualism, which doubtless came from pagan Rome, names and some other words being changed. Much practice is necessary to become familiar with the exact order of phrases and their attendant motions and manœuvres and the regalia set apart for each change and the special sounds and sights introduced in certain places to impress the congregation. In Brahmin ritualism, if the least mistake is made, it spoils the whole; and presumably if the Catholic priest should say "oom" when he ought to say "om," it would render the whole service of no effect.

Now look at the result of these years of preparation. You lay aside your manhood and assume the dress of a professional fortune-teller, even outdoing the gypsy woman in the gaudiness of your decorations, and then you go through stupid, babyish performances from which normal manhood recoils.

How can you, a full-grown man, bow and kneel to an idol or a cross as if it had a mind and a will; as if it were puffed up with vanity which must be gratified at the expense of your manhood? There are men who will not join an order that compels an initiate to kneel to a man; their manhood rebels against playing the baby act; yet you stoop so much lower as to kneel to a fetish, a piece of wood or metal, compared with which a man's brain is many times more worthy of honor. You induce the idol, or emblem, with a disposition to inflict evil, thereby placing yourself on an intellectual plane with the horse that shies at sight of a boulder. You kiss an altar, or the senseless rag that covers it, and that is lower than the horse would stoop to propitiate a rock.

If you called it a mere play, it would be more honorable because more truthful; but you claim that these idiotic performances are required by a being that knew enough to make a world, a universe.

Have you so little of the intelligence of manhood as to believe that your incantations have the magic effect of changing bread and wine into human flesh and blood? If you know that it is a fraud, your pretence is untruthful; and deception is unmanly.

If you believe that it is the Real Presence, you know that after the flesh is separated from the blood they are dead; they may be food for flesh-and-blood eaters, but they have not life. Yet you act the grotesque play of swinging the dead matter back and forth and pretending that it is the living Jesus Christ pronouncing the benediction, which you repeat. A Punch and Judy show, but what a poor Punch and Judy!

In *The Faith of Our Fathers*, Cardinal Gibbon says that each person of the godhead is full God, which makes Jesus

the Almighty. Yet you shut the little cakes and wine in a gilt cage and wave it about, though, according to your creed, the Almighty ought to show that he can pick you up and swing you all over the house. You, less than a grain of sand compared with the universe, you pretend that you lift the whole God up where he pronounces a benediction, using your mouth for a speaking-tube.

You childishly gather children around you and play with them, letting them build a smudge and smoke you under your dress-skirt.

Untruthfulness is not manly. You teach inferiors to misrepresent the rules and history of the Roman Catholic Church. Some of them assert that they read whatever they wish, conveying the idea that there is no Index. They may quiet conscience with the thought that they do not wish to read anything that tells against their Church, yet they try to deceive by withholding a part of the truth.

Not only inferiors, but superiors also deny that the Roman Catholic Church ever persecuted or executed anyone for religious opinion. It is greatly to the credit of the Church that it has learned to be ashamed of its past, but it is unmanly for you, Mr. Priest, to throw all the blame upon the governments which acted by command or direction of the Church. The slaughter of its citizens was a loss to a kingdom; the benefit of their death accrued to the Church alone. Persecution secured to priests the greater obedience of those who were loath to die. Did the Pope or any of his officials ever excommunicate a ruler or magistrate for condemning a person to death because his opinion did not agree with that of Rome?

Your vocation requires you to make the sexual instinct a means of gain to your Church. If an inferior is attracted to a person who is not a Catholic, no matter how strong, how pure their mutual love may be, you step between them and, like a slaveholder, declare that "this must be stopped right where it is; the other is a Protestant"; and the inferior knows that he must not marry unless the union gives the whole family to the Church as a constant source of income and power. You make merchandise of the sexual passion, to that extent placing yourself on a par with a man that keeps a house that may not be named. Did you drop your manhood when you took the vow of celibacy?

O Priest, I beseech you, renounce your vows and be a man.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

#### SHELLEY ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNISM.

The system of equality was attempted, after Jesus Christ's death, to be carried into effect by his followers. The practical application of the doctrines of strict justice to a state of society established in its contempt, was such as might have been expected. After the transitory glow of enthusiasm had faded from the minds of men, precedent and habit resumed their empire; they broke like a universal deluge over one abricking and solitary island. Men to whom birth had allotted ample possession, looked with complacency on sumptuous apartments and luxurious food, and those ceremonials of delusive majesty which surround the throne of power and the court of wealth. Men from whom these things were withheld by their condition, began again to gaze with stupid envy on pernicious splendor; and, by desiring the false greatness of another's state, to sacrifice the intrinsic dignity of their own. The demagogues of the infant republic of the Christian sect, attaining, through eloquence or artifice, to influence amongst its members, first violated (under the pretence of watching over their integrity) the institutions established for the common and equal benefit of all. These demagogues artfully silenced the voice of the moral sense among them by engaging them to attend, not so much to the cultivation of a virtuous and happy life in this mortal scene, as to the attainment of a fortunate condition after death; not so much to the consideration of those means by which the state of man is adorned and improved, as an inquiry into the secrets of the connection between God and the world—things which, they well knew, were not to be explained, or even to be conceived. The system of equality which they established necessarily fell to the ground, because it is a system that must result from, rather than precede, the moral improvement of human kind. It was a circumstance of no moment that the first adherents of the system of Jesus Christ cast their property into a common stock. The same degree of real community of property could have subsisted without this formality, which served only to extend a temptation of dishonesty to the treasurers of so considerable a patrimony. Every man, in proportion to his virtue, considers himself, with respect to the great community of mankind, as the steward and guardian of their interests in the property which he chances to possess. Every man, in proportion to his wisdom, sees the manner in which it is his duty to

employ the resources which the consent of mankind has intrusted to his discretion. Such is the [mitigation] of the unjust inequality of powers and conditions existing in the world; and so gradually and inevitably is the progress of equality accommodated to the progress of wisdom and of virtue among mankind.—*Essay on Christianity*.

#### POPE'S EPITAPH ON GAY.

Of manners gentle, of affections mild;  
In wit, a man; simplicity, a child:  
With native humor tempering virtuous rage,  
Form'd to delight at once and lash the age:  
Above temptation in a low estate,  
And uncorrupted, e'en among the great:  
A safe companion, and an easy friend,  
Unblamed through life, lamented in thy end.  
These are thy honors! Not that here thy bust  
Is mix'd with heroes, or with kings thy dust;  
But that the worthy and the good shall say,  
Striking their pensive bosoms—"Here lies Gay!"

#### COLERIDGE ON GHOSTS.

Define a vulgar ghost with reference to all that is called ghost-like. It is visibility without tangibility; which is also the definition of a shadow. Therefore, a vulgar ghost and a shadow would be the same; because two different things cannot properly have the same definition. A *visible substance* without susceptibility of impact, I maintain to be an absurdity. Unless there be an external substance, the bodily eye *cannot* see it; therefore, in all such cases, that which is supposed to be seen is, in fact, *not* seen, but is an image of the brain. External objects naturally produce sensation; but here, in truth, sensation produces, as it were, the external object. In certain states of the nerves, however, I do believe that the eye, though not consciously so directed, may, by a slight convulsion, see a portion of the body, as if opposite to it. The part actually seen will be common association seem the whole; and the whole body will then constitute an external object, which explains many stories of persons seeing themselves lying dead. Bishop Berkeley once experienced this. He had the presence of mind to ring the bell, and feel his pulse; keeping his eye still fixed on his own figure right opposite to him. He was in a high fever, and the brain image died away as the door opened. I observed something very like it once at Grasmere; and was so conscious of the cause, that I told a person what I was experiencing, whilst the image still remained. Of course, if the vulgar ghost be really a shadow, there must be some substance of which it is a shadow. These visible and intangible shadows, without substance to cause them, are absurd.—*Coleridge*, "Table Talk."

What is meant by Conscience? If it means the perception of right and wrong, it is an intellectual faculty, which varies in individuals and societies, some having greater discrimination than others. If it means the recognition of distinct, settled categories of right and wrong, it depends on social and religious training. In a high state of civilisation these categories approximate to the laws of social welfare and disease; in a low state of civilisation they are fantastic and fearfully distorted by superstition. There is hardly a single vice that has not been practised as a virtue under a religious sanction. Finally, if conscience means the feeling of obligation, the sense of "I ought," it is a product of social evolution. It is necessarily generated among gregarious beings, and in the course of time Natural Selection weeds out the individuals in whom it is lacking or deficient. Social types of feeling survive, and the anti-social perish. And this is the whole "mystery" of conscience.—*G. W. Foote*, "Ingersollism Defended Against Archdeacon Farrar."

Are all your Mosques, Episcopal Churches, Pagodas, Chapels of Ease, Tabernacles, and Pantheons, anything else but the Ethnic forecourt of the Invisible Temple and its Holy of Holies.—*Richter*.

Nature proposes to herself no aim in her operations, and all final causes are nothing but pure fictions imagined by men.—*Spinoza*.

The true philosophy is to retire within oneself, and listen to the voice of reason, amid the stillness of the passions.—*Rousseau*.

**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.**

STANLEY HALL (Junction-road, N., opposite Tufnell Park "Tube" Station): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Necessity of Atheism."

**OUTDOOR.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, a Lecture. Brookwell Park, 3.15, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

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.**

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Arthur B. Moss, "Shakespeare." With dramatic recitals.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): J. T. Lloyd, 12 noon, "The Supreme Puzzle and its Solution"; 6.30, "The Highest and Noblest of all the Arts."

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (No. 9 Room, Trade and Friendly Hall): Tuesday, October 13, at 8, Branch meeting.

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate): 6.30, G. W. Foote, "Socialism and Religion."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central Buildings, 113 Islington): Sydney Wollen, 3, "The Immortality of the Soul"—a Challenge to the Clergy; 7, "God and the Woman Question."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Mrs. Hodgson Bafield, "Truthfulness: with Special Reference to the Ninth Commandment."

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, October 15, at 8, J. Bryce, "On the Distribution of Wealth."

**OUTDOOR.**

BLACKBURN: Town Hall Square, 3 and 7, Mr. McClellan, Lectures.

DALKEITH: High-street, Saturday, October 10, at 7.15, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 7, a Lecture.

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S.: Market Cross, Saturday, October 10, at 8, Geo. T. Whitehead, a Lecture.

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

LEEDS: Friday, October 9, N. S. S. Branch, Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms, 77 Briggate, at 7.30, "The Making of Socialists and the Making of Atheists." Sunday, October 11, Woodhouse Moor, at 3, a Lecture; Town Hall Square, at 7.30, a Lecture.

BOLTON: Monday, October 12, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, a Lecture.

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