

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVIII.—No. 45

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1908

PRICE TWOPENCE

*To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust.*

—THOREAU.

## Church and Stage.

THERE was a Vagabond Club dinner at the Hotel Cecil on Sunday evening, with that great and good man, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., in the chair, the function itself being in honor of Mr. Forbes Robertson and Miss Gertrude Elliott, and also in celebration of Mr. Jerome's new play, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*—though it was not the *Third Floor Back*, but the mysterious lodger in that apartment, who "passed" into the infinite. Naturally a dinner of the Vagabonds went merry as a marriage bell. The rattle of dishes, the popping of corks, the jingling of glasses, and the hum of conversation, made up what the Swan of Avon calls "a concord of sweet sounds." It was a good company, and we don't see why the Founder of Christianity himself might not have been eligible for a seat at the top table, although he would hardly have been allowed to display his fondness for "the beloved disciple" as he is reported to have done on a former occasion. The Prophet of Nazareth was a former Vagabond. He lived principally on the high road, and he had not where to lay his head, except as a tramp disposes of his top storey when he resigns his intelligence to the keeping of Morpheus. We admit that he would probably have cut a queer figure at the Hotel Cecil. His resemblance to Mr. Forbes Robertson in evening dress would not have been striking. In his usual footsore and duststained condition he would have borne a greater likeness to the gentleman on the music-hall stage who said that the cost of staying at the Hotel Cecil was three pounds a day, so he had five minutes, which was enough for an address.

The master-tramp of the Palestine highroads not being present at the Vagabonds' dinner, there was room for a substitute, and the vacancy was filled by the soft and sleek oracle of the City Temple. Mr. Campbell officiated first at his regular place of entertainment, and having got through what is called "the service," sermon and all, he changed his garments—which was a thing that his "Master" never did, having only one suit—and hurried off in regulation attire to join the new "communion of saints." Nor did he imitate his Lord on the journey from Holborn Viaduct to the Strand. When the Galilean preacher had the ride of his lifetime it was on a donkey. Mr. Campbell scorns that slow and undignified method of travelling. He scoots around on a motor-car—the price of which, if properly invested, would have furnished the whole twelve apostles with a satisfactory old-age pension, on the gospel basis of a penny a day as the Trade Union rate of wages.

Mr. Campbell was a bit late, naturally, for it takes time to get through a religious service, even with a dinner in front of you, especially when the congregation are not going to share it. But he was just

in time to respond to the toast of his own health, which was for some reason coupled with Mr. Forbes Robertson's (and his wife's). Perhaps it was thought that the similarities between the preacher and the actor, and even their professions, were greater than the differences. Perhaps it was intended to suggest that the old feud between the Church and the Stage was a kind of family quarrel. This idea occurred to the great Sarah Bernhardt some twelve years ago in America. She was denounced as a wicked play-acting woman by the late Rev. Dr. Talmage, and she graciously reminded him that fellow artists ought not to quarrel with each other in public.

Judging from the newspaper reports Mr. Campbell did not waste his eloquence on Shakespeare. He devoted it all to Jerome. It was not *Hamlet* that he was interested in, but *The Third Floor Back*. Why be always praising the old masterpieces? Let the modern ones have a turn. Besides, the City Temple preacher has a nose like a sleuthhound for any suggestion of "Christ." He confided to his audience that after seeing Mr. Forbes Robertson play the omnipresent and loquacious lodger, he was "for the first time in his life moved to write a congratulatory letter to an actor." There now! The stage is looking up. The play was pregnant with possibilities. "It's central idea," he said, "is just the one which I have been trying to preach during nearly the whole period of my public ministry." Which shows the truth of the ancient saying that great wits jump. "In this play of Mr. Jerome's," he continued, "our stage puts forward the greatest truth that Christianity has brought into the world." Well, what is this truth? Mr. Campbell proceeded:—

"Its connection with the Christ of history is simply that Jesus of Nazareth was the supreme revelation of this diviner self. I think, too, that Mr. Jerome means us to understand that it is only by working along this line of appeal—to each man's better self—that Christianity has been able to produce the effects that it has produced."

This is so like the present-day preacher, with his delightful vagueness. "Christianity has been able to produce the effects"—*What effects?* The "effects that it has produced." How expressive! How illuminating! You pay your money and you take your choice. Select your own "effects." Alva and Torquemada, or Francis of Assisi and—and—Mr. Campbell: what does it matter? Really, at this rate, the Church and the Stage are nearer than we thought. We gave the preference in the matter of brains to the Stage, but if actors and actresses (and playwrights) listen to this sort of thing with satisfaction, there is little to choose between them.

Except on the theory that popular preachers and popular actors are varieties of the same species, we do not know why the Stage should be anxious for the Church's patronage, or Mr. Campbell's praises and flatteries. When the Stage was banned by the Church it did its best work and produced its greatest masterpieces. Since it took to hobnobbing with its old persecutor it has fallen into decadence. For its own sake, it should revert to the old tradition. Rather let Bossuet play the bigot over the dead body of Molière than allow unctuous apostles of faith to smother the living intellect that gives the drama all its value.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Christianity and the Unemployed.

BRITAIN is the greatest nation on the face of the earth—so says the patriotic Briton. Christianity is the purest, the best, the most progressive religion known to man—so says the parson. Yet, in spite of the information coming to us from first hand authorities, the statement seems to be in conflict with the facts. For the same Briton and the same parson, backed by the press and platform of the country, are full of lamentations concerning the misery, the vice, the destitution in this greatest of all nations living under the influence of the best of all religions. Official statisticians tell us of the increasing wealth of the country, and prove that the average income per head is on the increase. This is doubtless true enough; as true as would be the statement that the possessions of Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and myself, averaged would make the three of us millionaires. Meanwhile, the cry of the unemployed and the starving goes up with increasing persistency. Inside the churches we hear of the civilising and humanising influences of the Christian religion; outside we hear the tramp of hundreds of thousands of men and women, willing to work but unable to do so, half-starved in the midst of plenty, living in the extreme of destitution and degradation, mocked meanwhile by an ostentatious display of comfort and wealth.

There could hardly be a more incisive impeachment of modern civilisation than is furnished by these armies of men parading our streets, and lacking the necessaries of decent living. The plea often heard that many of the unemployed are unemployable may be true enough, but no greater mistake could be made than to imagine that this statement, even if true of the majority, makes the problem less grave. On the contrary, it accentuates the gravity of the situation. That men should be out of work who are willing to work is bad enough, but that there should exist numbers who will not work, but who would sooner live under wretched conditions, subsisting by casual charity, raises an infinitely graver social problem. And, as a matter of fact, the character of our really lower class (I am not referring to the ordinary working man, whether in or out of work) raises one of the most serious questions before the public—if the public were only intelligent enough to see it. The dregs of the Christian cities and large towns of this country form, probably, as hopeless a type as the world holds. It is not long ago that the medical officer of health for Liverpool declared that the slums of his city were developing as low a type as was to be found in the whole of Europe. And as a comment upon this, the pious of the city make herculean efforts to build and endow a new Cathedral; while William Watson, for suggesting that the Cathedral scheme should remain in abeyance until the poor had been provided with better houses, receives a trouncing from the pulpits for his lack of spiritual discernment.

The acuteness of the unemployed question has brought the usual crop of sermons on the subject. All the clergy have expressed their sympathy, which there is no reason to doubt was sincere, but which is not of much use otherwise. Average human nature is ready enough to extend sympathy to acute and picturesque cases of suffering, which are in the nature of the case not common, but sympathy of the kind that sets up desirable humanising relations of life is not so common, but is much more needed. Professor McGiffert argues, in the *Hibbert Journal*, that the Christian purpose is to create a reign of sympathy and service among men. We may pass the statement for what it is worth, although one may say in passing that if the purpose be granted the failure is obvious. And its failure is most complete in the quarters where it is most needed. In social intercourse the existence of consideration and sympathy is assured, for social intercourse could not exist in its absence. But in the life of the majority of people, particularly of the working classes, social

intercourse is comparatively infrequent. The larger portion of their lives is spent in a relationship with others that comes under the head of business relations. And here, instead of Christianity having established sympathy and a sense of mutual service, there has developed, with or without its connivance, relations that are divested of nearly all their humanising influences. In church, where the thing is inevitable, the employer may talk about, and feel, a sympathetic relation to others. But what of his relations in the shop, the factory, the commercial world? In the very places where moralising and humanising relationships are most needed they are most absent. Men's value is estimated in terms of machinery or money, instead of money and machinery being valued in terms of human welfare. The plea that business and commercial relations will not permit the exercise of feelings of consideration and sympathy is quite beside the point. So far as it is sound it only emphasises the failure of Christianity.

But Christianity is more than negatively responsible. The power of self-deception counts for much in perpetuating wrong. Face to face with wrong in all its ugliness, average human nature will make for improvement. But given an opportunity for concealment, given the chance of pseudo-social humanising labor, and the wrong may be perpetuated indefinitely. If the Churches have done nothing else, they have certainly done this. It is not without its significance that missionary and evangelical enthusiasm reached their highest expressions during the worst days of the factory system. The desire to evangelise the heathen, to bring the whole of the people to a knowledge of the "Word," the creation of religious philanthropic agencies in no wise interfered with the fearful child labor of Christian England a century ago, which was surely the most horrible thing the world has ever witnessed. Yet there is no reason to suppose that those who profited by these things were ever alive to their real character. Church and Chapel provided plenty of outlets for expressions of moral and religious sincerity; philanthropic work—the effort to palliate in a small measure the evil created by the same people—served to convince people they were social benefactors; and so the thing went on. There is the same thing to-day. Running a Sunday-school atones to some extent for the Standard Oil Trust; the endowment of a Young Men's Christian Association cloaks the sacrifice of human life and value in a chemical works; the building of a number of institutions of a showy character makes up for a fortune accumulated by more or less unscrupulous methods. I am not, be it noted, dwelling upon the effect of these things upon the general public, although that aspect of the matter is important, but the effect of these things in blunting the edge of the nature of the principals themselves. In a word, Christianity, by opening avenues of pseudo-beneficial labor and a socially profitless outlet for moral energy, has been largely instrumental in perpetuating conditions of business life that result in some of our most glaring evils.

The Bishop of London, who may safely be trusted possibility be found, has been expressing his sympathy never say a wise word if a foolish one can by any pathy with the unemployed, and airing his favorite doctrine and cure for social ills—that the rich are the stewards of the poor. On what compulsion? Who made them so? To whom do they give an account of their stewardship? The rich will not, I expect, take the trouble to quarrel with the teaching, and the poor will not find themselves materially benefited. The rich who really believe it will feel that their wealth and their conduct is sanctioned by God Almighty, and the poor will be duly grateful for any crumbs that reach them from the rich man's table. But if ever one of the heirs to this wealth calls at the rich man's house and demands an account of his stewardship, he will be promptly removed by a policeman, with a prospect of seven days for having the impudence to inquire into the administration of his own property. The doctrine

has, one must admit, a certain basis in historical Christianity. It is only a new version of the old teaching that we are to be content in that position in which God—and the landlord—has been pleased to place us. The Christian conception of society has always been that of a handful of rich men doling out relief to a multitude of paupers. Personally, I deny that the rich are stewards for the poor, or that it is the duty of the rich to look after the poor; it is the duty of society, as a whole, to look after the interests of each of its units, and to so organise itself that extreme poverty shall be next to impossible, while extreme wealth may be acquired by intellectual mediocrities.

If Christians were criticising a non-Christian country, in the capital city of which about three-quarters of a million were living below what Mr. Charles Booth calls the "poverty line," they would not be slow to attribute the evil to the influence, or lack of control, of the dominant religion. On the same lines of reasoning, how shall Christianity escape condemnation? No religion in the world has ever had, and for so long a period, the opportunities for moulding the life of a people that Christianity has possessed. It has had money, power, position, and length of tenure. Wherever a church could be set up, one has been planted. Half the energy expended in building churches might have covered the land with healthy, habitable houses. Half the time spent on discussing questions of theology and expended on social topics would have left many of our problems as mere historical curiosities. It has talked about peace, and encouraged the maintenance of huge armaments that are a menace to civilisation. It has talked of the blessings of poverty, and developed as useless a leisured class as the world has seen. Under its auspices civilisation is dominated by the insolence of wealth, and threatened by the spectre of race degeneration. And yet, in spite of its failure, it claims to be the director of civilisation, the source of all that is helpful in modern life. If a sense of humor were only sufficiently keen and sufficiently general, the next generation might see it laughed out of existence.

C. COHEN.

### Tweedle-dum or Tweedle-dee?

JOHN BYROM was by no means a great poet, but he was witty, and could write exceedingly clever verses. When the rivalry between Handel and Buononcini was at its zenith, creating quite a storm in aristocratic circles, Byrom satirised it in the well-known lines:—

"Some say, compared to Buononcini,  
That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny;  
Others aver that he to Handel  
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle.  
Strange all this difference should be  
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee."

It is easy to say that Byrom had no ear for music, which was probably a fact; but it is equally clear that his lines are essentially true. In reality, the controversy was largely a personal one between the Duke of Marlborough and the bulk of the nobility on the one hand, and the Prince of Wales and a small clique on the other. A little later a similar rivalry arose in Paris between the admirers of Glück and those of Piccini. The whole city became an excited battlefield over the respective merits of the two musicians. A few people followed Marie Antoinette and were blind Glückists, while the majority, practically the whole of the Young France party, because of their opposition to the Queen, were enthusiastic supporters of Piccini.

As has already been hinted in this journal, the present heated controversy in the Churches concerning Immanence and Transcendence is quite as unintelligible and silly as was either of the two rivalries referred to above. Immanence and Transcendence are theological terms, the meaning of which can be only arbitrarily or speculatively determined.

Take Immanence first. To be immanent signifies to remain within, to be resident or inherent. The saying that God is immanent in the Universe means that he dwells in it or makes it his abode. But in what sense does God inhabit the Universe? On this point no two theologians are agreed. In all ages this has been a bone of endless contention among them. One of the most recent deliverances thereupon is by Principal Griffith-Jones, which is summarised thus: "Immanence expresses the fact that God is in some sense manifested in the objective Universe as its sufficient, ever-present, quickening, sustaining cause." That may pass muster as orthodox theology, but it is a virtual denial of immanence. If the Universe is finite and caused, there is no reason why its infinite causer should reside in it. The cause of anything may be perfectly external to it. The Principal offers another definition of immanence: "It is an expression of his (God's) will and purpose, and so far as we can detect that purpose it reveals him to his rational creatures." This is what the pulpit has been repeating *ad nauseam* through all the centuries; but the person of whose will and purpose the Universe is supposed to be an expression need not on that account make the Universe his habitation. As a matter of fact, Principal Griffith-Jones does not believe in the Divine immanence at all, nor does any other orthodox Christian Theist. The Divine immanence imperils the Divine personality. What the Principal's teaching comes to is this: I do believe that in some mysterious sense God is immanent in the world; but this is a truth on which we must put as little emphasis as possible, or we shall be guilty of the great sin of ignoring the transcendence of God, which alone guarantees his personality.

Now comes the New Theologian, who maintains that everything is to be explained "in terms of the Divine immanence in the Universe and in mankind." This emphasis on the immanence of God borders on Pantheism, although the New Theologians angrily resent being classed as Pantheists. What is Theism? A half-way house between Deism and Pantheism. This is the house occupied by all Christian divines, and the only difference between them is, that the Old Theologians live in apartments facing Deism, while the living rooms of the New Theologians enjoy the Pantheistic view. In other words, the Old Theology, in its dread of Pantheism, becomes Deistic, while the New, in its dread of Deism, practically adopts Pantheism. But the curious thing is, that both schools are alike in their hatred of the two opposite extremes, Deism and Pantheism. As an expression of their horror of Pantheism the New Theologians emphasise their belief in the Divine transcendence, and as an expression of their detestation of Deism the Old Theologians emphasise their belief in the Divine immanence. We outsiders, who are but witnesses of these controversial manoeuvres, are forced to exclaim with old John Byrom:—

"Strange all this difference should be  
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee."

Let us glance at the transcendent Deity. He is infinite and absolutely perfect. But the Universe, which he has made and governs, is, we are told, both finite and imperfect. It bristles with defects and disharmonies. Certain parts of it are perpetually getting out of order, and the waste that characterises many of its operations is incalculably great. Now, is it conceivable that such a Universe should be the work of such a Deity? Does not the very fact of evolution, with all the horrors that accompany it, stand up as a living witness against the existence of the transcendent God, who is said to be a person with a conscience and a heart? An imperfect Universe, teeming with suffering and sorrow, injustice and wrong, cannot be the creation of a perfect Deity. The contention that it is a contradiction in terms, which logic excludes.

There is really no difference between Deism and Theism. They are but two names for the same thing, the former being from the Latin, *deus*, and the

latter from the Greek, *theos*. The alleged differences between them, manufactured by different schools of theology, are only like the difference 'twixt Tweedledum and Tweedle-dee. Of course, Principal Griffith-Jones would resent this statement with great violence. This trainer of parsons speaks as if he were in possession of special information. He tells us that, in his religious life, he has to do with God, "not merely as immanent, and not merely as transcendental, but as Himself who is both, who is neither limited by the immanent order nor separate from it, but who 'is in and through and above' all things, God blessed for evermore." But that is "a rhapsody of words," not a reasoned discourse; windy rhetoric, not solid argument. It is impossible to reason with a man who expresses himself in the following irresponsible fashion:—

"That tiny part of God—if I may speak in the language of accommodation—which is revealed in the Universe, is to the totality of his being but as a drop of water to the circumambient air, and I cannot be satisfied with anything less than all of God, whose transcendence is an infinite possibility of immanence, but whose immanence in the actual Universe and in myself is an utterly insufficient embodiment of his eternal and inexhaustible transcendence."

In justification of such wild language Mr. Griffith-Jones falls back upon the exploded theories of Revelation and Incarnation. Inspiration he describes as "such a spiritual sensitising of elect souls that they are able to receive and transmit to others less highly favored the result of their immediate contact with God in his self-revealing activity." That theory of Revelation has utterly failed to justify itself at the bar of human intelligence, and the spread of knowledge is destroying the last shred of belief in it. The same remark applies to the hypotheses of Incarnation and Redemption. The Principal calls these "the crowning watchwords of our faith." Jesus, whom he regards as the incarnate Son of God, come to redeem a fallen world, is being quietly relegated to the large category of mythological Savior-Gods whom most ancient nations laboriously manufactured but whom moderns have either wholly or almost wholly outgrown and discarded, and whom no amount of consuming zeal and magnetic eloquence can ever permanently revivify and re-establish on their thrones.

Principals Griffith-Jones and Garvie, Mr. Campbell and Dr. Warschauer, may find amusement in splitting theological hairs, and each of them may comfort himself with the soothing assurance that he is the only one who does the work with final accuracy; but let them bear in mind that for the outside world, which is growing bigger every year by invading and appropriating portions of their domains, theological hairs have lost all interest, because the God around whom all the disputing and wrangling and quarreling has always centred has ceased to be real to it. The theological conference recently held at Liverpool, during which, we are officially told, "feeling more than once rose to fever heat," the acrid correspondence over the split in the New Theology camp, which is now appearing in the *Christian World*, and the gradual desertion of all places of worship by the masses of the people, are convincing proofs that the world is not "under the gracious control of a supreme God," that no knowledge of such a being is in the possession of any man, or any body of men, and that the belief in his imagined existence rests on nothing better than the varied and conflicting assumptions and speculations of impractical metaphysicians. In the Protestant world just now four different Gods are fighting for the ascendancy. So fierce is the conflict that they are repeatedly annihilating one another, and each efficiently working his passage to final dissolution in the land of nonentity, out of which he originally sprang. When the last has vanished the history of all of them may be compressed into these three words: MAN-MADE, MAN-SUPPORTED, MAN-DESTROYED.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Great Critic on a Great Writer.

THE "Contemporary Men of Letters" series has recently been enriched by an admirable monogram on Anatole France by George Brandes.\* This fine appreciation of a great French Freethinker and *littérateur* by a Danish Freethinker and *littérateur*—both occupying the highest pinnacle of fame in their respective countries—will well repay the perusal of the growing nucleus of thoughtful men and women who love great thoughts and the fertile brains that give them birth.

Anatole France is, as George Brandes remarks, a spiritual descendant of Renan. Both are princes in the realm of style, masters in the art of splendid expression and finely chiselled thoughts. What can be more admirable than the humor of this utterance of Anatole France concerning Renan: "If we may believe this amiable shepherd of souls, it is impossible for us to elude divine mercy, and we shall all enter Paradise—unless, indeed, there is no Paradise, which is exceedingly probable?"

The Christian and the Catholic ever lurked in the emotional nature of Renan, like ghosts of departed gods amidst the temples from whose altars the smoke of sacrifice once ascended. With Anatole France the divorce from the ancient creed is more absolute. His art, as George Brandes remarks, occupies itself very frequently with religious feelings and situations. But whereas Renan's mind was always religiously disposed and his language often unctuous, France, in treating of religious subjects, in spite of apparent reverence, is as callous in his inmost soul as Voltaire (p. 18). A splendid instance of this is furnished by the letter,† so *spirituelle* and eloquent, that he addressed to the Congress of the National Association of the Freethinkers of France which took place at Paris in July, 1905.

"The unfortunate thing," he says, "about revealed religions is that the revelations on which they are based represent a stage of thought anterior to science and civilisation. No doubt the mind of the gods is no more immutable than that of the men who pose as their interpreters. It marches forward with the times. But it always lags behind the progress of the unfettered intelligence of man. Look at the God of the Christians; no one can reproach him with unchangeableness. He was once a Jew, and has become an Anti-Semite. To give him his proper due he is not to-day as ferocious as formerly. But he still remains the enemy of science and reason, and does not like people to indulge in thinking. It is patent to every eye that the Churches founded in the name of his son, and especially the Catholic Church, are to-day opposing a desperate resistance to the intellectual and moral development of the nations which they pretend to govern."

"You, gentlemen"—he said, in conclusion, addressing the assembled Freethinkers of his country—"you, gentlemen, embody that spirit of doubt and examination which alone render possible the progress of science and without which there would be in this world neither pity nor tolerance nor any wide human sympathy." Quite in this vein, though with a subtler irony, are the words, cited by George Brandes, which Anatole France puts into the mouth of one of his characters, an Abbé: "It is a great infirmity to think. God preserve you from it, my son as he has preserved his greatest saints and the souls whom he loves with especial tenderness and reserves to eternal felicity."

In the dark days when the Church and its Anti-Semite God obscured the lucid intelligence of France and drove the country to temporary madness and its victim, Dreyfus, to the torture and despair of the Isle du Diable, Anatole France sided with Zola and the resolute band of French Freethinkers, and took his stand against the rampant Chauvinism which for the time being appeared well-nigh irresistible. By his and their splendid striving for justice and

\* *Anatole France*, by George Brandes. London: Wm. Heinemann; 1908. (1s. 6d. net.)

† Now first published in England.

humanity the land of Rabelais and Voltaire was saved from the moral and intellectual eclipse which those dreadful critical times seemed to forebode. As George Brandes tells us:—

"Suddenly Anatole France stripped himself of all his scepticism and stood forth, with Voltaire's old blade gleaming in his hand—like Voltaire irresistible by reason of his wit, like him the terrible enemy of the power of the Church, like him the champion of innocence."

To Anatole France, to Zola, and to the leaven of Freethought in the French character it is due that to-day France as a country still stands in the foremost place amongst the civilised communities. But for their labors, the Church and the composite gang of reactionaries who fought under its black banners would have wrecked the country on the breakers of war and national ruin.

One of Anatole France's finest characters is Riquet, Bergeret's dog. In Riquet's *Thoughts* he satirises the foibles and superstitions of mere man. How Christian in sentiment and selfishness is Riquet when he speaks thus: "My master keeps me warm when I lie behind him in his arm-chair. That is because he is a god. In front of the fire is a warm hearthstone. The hearthstone is divine." We have all heard this convincing argument from design at evidential displays on behalf of the verities of "our holy religion"! How Christian a dog may be is also shown by another canine yelp: "An action for which one is thrashed is a bad action. An action for which one is caressed or given something to eat is a good action." The Christian's heaven, all milk and honey, psalms and sloth, is but a gilt-edged edition of Riquet's paradise where paunch and pure water doth abound and where stray dogs don't break through and steal. Can anything, too, be more typically pious than Riquet's prayer?—

"O Bergerot, my master, god of carnage, I adore thee. Praised be thou when thou art terrible, praised when thou art gracious. I crawl to thy feet, and lick thy hands. Great thou art and beautiful when, seated at thy spread table, thou devour'st quantities of food. Great art thou and beautiful when, bringing forth fire from a little chip of wood, thou changest night into day. Keep me, I pray thee, in thy house, and keep out every other dog."

George Brandes truly calls this a good-natured yet trenchant parody of human religion. It is a true parody, though both "the truth" and its parody are equally false to fact.

There is much beauty and meaning in the answering speeches which Bergeret addresses to his dog, in whom Anatole France embodies the whole undeveloped portion of the human race:—

"You are pious; you have your theology and your morality. And you know no better. You guard the house, guard it even against those who are its protection and ornament. That workman whom you tried to drive away has, plain man though he be, most admirable ideas. You would not listen to him.....Fear, which created gods and crimes, makes you the enemy of the unfortunate and deprives you of pity."

Riquet, in fact, symbolises the honest million-headed Cerberus of superstition and ignorance keeping faithful watch against the intruding element of progress, ever ready, for a few meaty bones and scant caresses, to rend and devour the pioneers of the future who would drive out the wild beast from the untamed and curriish spirit in man.

One of the most delicious of Anatole France's stories is that of *Putois*. It is the story of a myth which became flesh and dwelt amongst us. How the myth grew and acquired attribute after attribute; how, launched into being by the idle inventiveness of M. Bergeret, it assumed definite shape and reality, believed in by many, dreaded by multitudes, yet ever eluding the grasp of discovery,—all this is better told by George Brandes than by any poor summary of ours. In the story of *Putois* France speaks, though in parables, of the generation of religious myths and spiritual unrealities.

"No one," says George Brandes, "can deny the rule of mythical beings over the minds of men, their influ-

ence on human souls. Gods and goddesses, spirits and saints, have inspired enthusiasm and terror, have had their altars, have counselled crimes, have originated customs and laws. Satyrs and Silenuses have occupied the human imagination, have set chisels and brushes to work century after century. The Devil has his history, extending back for thousands of years—has been terrible, witty, foolish, cruel; has demanded human sacrifices; and has not only been worshiped by magicians and witches, but has up to our own days had his priests. France, however"—Brandes significantly adds—"has not the Devil only in his mind; his thoughts range higher."

As Brandes finely says, we can find traces of Putois everywhere, not only in religion, where his huge shadow darkens theology in its entirety, but in the countless illusions in the political and social life of to-day which we transform into positive verities or in the unrealities woven by our imagination and moulded by our fears and hopes into beings of flesh and blood.

This charming booklet, which is adorned with a fine bust of Anatole France and contains a reproduction of the Master's autograph letter wherein he speaks of Brandes as "one of the loftiest souls of the day—one who has never flattered anybody not even the crowd," will doubtless command a wide circle of readers who will rise from its perusal with a deepened admiration for the great lord of style, the fearless Freethinker and, as such, the natural sworn enemy of shams and frauds.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### Manners and Piety.

THE "ACADEMY" ON "G. B. S." AND THE "FREETHINKER." In the current number of the *Freethinker* there is an article by Mr. Bernard Shaw which is headed "Mr. Bernard Shaw Explains his Religion." Mr. Bernard Shaw's religion turns out to be the religion of the Hyde Park atheist orator. It is just as crude and just as silly, with the added idiocy of the Shavian paradox which is expected of him. Listen to him:—

"When, as Nietzsche-Zarathustra puts it, God is dead, Atheism dies also. Bible-smashing is tedious to people who have smashed their Bibles. I do not say that there is no work left for atheists and Bible-smashers among people who remain steeped in the crude idolatry that is still all that religion means to large masses of the English people."

In other words, Mr. Shaw does not choose to call himself an atheist because he and his fellow "intellectuals" and "stalwarts" have, in their own estimation, so completely disposed of God and the Bible that there is no further necessity for these "intellectuals" and "stalwarts" to protest against them. In short, Mr. Shaw is such a complete atheist that he is not an atheist. People who are amused by this childish juggling with words deserve to be condemned to read the *Freethinker* every week for the rest of their lives, than which we could desire no worse fate for them. Mr. Shaw thinks he has smashed the Bible. He has certainly butted his head against the walls of the Temple, and "something had to go," as the late lamented Bessie Belwood put it. We wonder what the Christian Socialist clergymen who are so lavish in their support of "that great and good man," Mr. Bernard Shaw, and whose presence on his platforms when he is preaching Socialism adds so vastly to the respectability of the great "movement," have to say for their idol's "religion." We challenge Mr. Percy Dearmer, who, in the columns of "the best penny review," treats us this week to two columns of his own brand of Socialism, to read aloud to his congregation Mr. Bernard Shaw's crude and blasphemous twaddle, and then, if he can, to explain how he finds it consistent with his duty to appear as the public supporter of their only begetter and his like.

—The "Academy," October 31.

### PIOUS INTOXICATION.

The Rev. Mr. Stoker was a man of emotions. He loved to feel his heart beat; he loved all the forms of non-alcoholic drunkenness, which are so much better than the vinous, because they taste themselves so keenly, whereas the other (according to the statement of experts who are familiar with its curious phenomena) has a certain sense of unreality connected with it. He delighted in the reflex stimulus of the excitement he produced in others by working on their feelings. A powerful preacher is open to the same sense of enjoyment—an awful, tremulous, goose-flesh sort of state, but still enjoyment—that a great tragedian feels when he curdles the blood of his audience.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Bryan's election campaign in the United States, the *Christian World* says, was marked by a frequent and effective use of Biblical quotations and illustrations. It appears that they "caught on" well; the crowd shouted enthusiastic approval. In his speech at a town in Iowa he referred to the charge that he was a dreamer, and compared himself with that Bible dreamer, Joseph, who got all right in the end down in Egypt, where his brethren found him—with the corn! This little bit was greeted with immense applause. Probably they did not recollect, any more than Mr. Bryan did, that there was another dreaming Joseph, in the New Testament. This dreaming Joseph was a more wonderful dreamer than the other one. He dreamed that he heard an angel tell him that Mary's baby, about which he was so much concerned, was the offspring of the Holy Ghost. And as far as we can see that dream is the sole evidence for the Virgin Birth of Christ—that is, for the central Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. Wasn't that a dream!

Mr. J. J. Allan (of the Allan Line) presided over a Socialist meeting at Manchester recently. We understand that this gentleman is a good Christian. It appears to us, therefore, that he ought to go in for a much more immediate form of Socialism than that of the Independent Labor Party. Mr. Allan should obey his Master's orders. He should sell all he has and give to the poor. That is the Socialism of Jesus Christ. Of course, it would be rather sudden, and probably trying; but that is a personal question, and does not affect Mr. Allan's duty as a follower of the "Savior."

Mr. Allan allowed that Socialism is "not professedly a religious system," but he claimed that it was "a practical expression of the spirit of Christ's teaching." (Observe how the gentleman keeps off the letter.) "It cannot be atheistic," he said, "it is doing God's work in the world." Thus do the Christian Socialists insist on dragging their religion into Socialist meetings. Yet they fly into a dreadful temper when Freethinking Socialists attempt the same stratagem.

Rev. R. J. Campbell, who spoke at that Manchester meeting, subsequently addressed a meeting at Stockport, where he stated that he "had no confidence in the stability of any human society or any reconstruction of the State which is not inspired by vision of God." How long are Socialists going to tolerate this sort of thing? Atheists like Karl Marx and Lassalle—to say nothing of leaders in France and Italy—founded and fought for Socialism before Mr. Campbell was born. He comes in at the eleventh hour and tries to "collar the blooming show." Just like a Christian!

We are sorry to see the suggestion in *John Bull* that Messiah Smyth-Pigott might be prosecuted for "blasphemy." Mr. Bottomley's paper took up a right attitude towards the prosecution of Harry Boulter for "blasphemy." We trust that he will see the advisability of maintaining the same attitude towards all other cases. The Blasphemy Laws are relics of bigoted and persecuting times, and should be abolished altogether. We entirely object to their being retained for what this or that temporary majority may call "special cases." No man ought to be prosecuted for "bringing the Scriptures into ridicule and contempt"—not even the Agapemone impostor.

It is very unlikely, by the way, that a prosecution for "blasphemy" against the Spaxton Messiah would be undertaken by the authorities, and still less that it would have an "excellent chance of success." The Blasphemy Laws were never meant for Christians, and were never used against them. They have only been used against "infidels."

Prosecuting Smyth-Pigott for "using subtle craft to deceive and impose," especially on the ground of his "pretended intercourse with the invisible world," is a more dangerous course than our contemporary seems to perceive. Roman Catholic priests who take money for hurrying souls through purgatory would be liable under that interpretation of the Vagrancy Act.

Why are so many people anxious to see the Spaxton Messiah prosecuted? Is it because he has so few friends? If all the pious impostors in England were sent to prison we should have to enlarge our penal establishments tremendously. Even if all the professed Christians who "carry on" with

females were imprisoned there would have to be a good deal more room.

A *Daily News* review of Mr. J. M. Robertson's latest political book says that he "never touches a subject without illuminating it." We don't recollect that the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience ever found that characteristic of Mr. Robertson's in his Freethought writings.

The same number of the *Daily News*, reviewing Father Benson's new novel, says that "like every convinced man, he writes to offend." This dictum is not remembered when the "offenders" are Freethinkers. It is still vulgar on their part to be "offensive" to their opponents. In the case of Christians it is recognised as a virtue and a sign of sincerity.

It is universally acknowledged that the number of the "saved" is painfully small. It is also well known that very few professing Christians ever read the Bible. Now, the Rev. Mr. Wetherbee informs us that "thousands of people who habitually read and study the Bible are still unsaved, although they belong to some church." What a shocking state of things! All mankind are living "under the gracious control" of a supreme God who is love; and yet he controls them so badly that the great bulk of them are "lost" and, according to the Scriptures, doomed to spend all eternity in a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, wherein "they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Is it any wonder that the number of Atheists is on the increase?

Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus, of Chicago, says that "the immediate concern of a fine moral life is a noble God who can be noble." Then there must be an ignoble God who can be ignoble. But, in any case, "a fine moral life" has nothing whatever to do with God, noble or the contrary; "a fine moral life" is simply a social asset, the immediate concern of which is the welfare of the community.

Dr. Gunsaulus has no patience with what he calls the "utilitarian school of morals," and asserts that it "goes down before any noble impulse." Of course, the reverend gentleman would have to give up his present job if morals were universally regarded as customs and deeds which only make for the good of society, and need nothing for their production but a strong sense of social responsibility, which is not at all a gift from heaven, but a product of education.

"Where are the young men on Sundays?" is a puzzling problem for the present-day pulpit. One answer is undoubtedly correct: "They are not at any place of worship." Naturally, the preacher infers, they must be frequenting bad places. Their being absent from church and chapel is proof positive that they are deteriorating, and clearly on the road to the Devil. It never occurs to the pulpit that the young people who deliberately absent themselves from its ministrations may be doing so because they have outgrown it, and now look down upon it as only a somewhat amusing relic.

Dr. Robertson Nicoll says that Christianity is not to be judged by "outward results or apparent success." "Those who judge by appearances may conclude, as the children of this world have concluded so often, that Christ's cause is decadent and doomed to perish." That is the verdict of reason and intelligence; but if that verdict were allowed to pass, the days of the *British Weekly* would be numbered. Therefore the editor proceeds: "We who are his know that Christ is reigning and conquering." This is a fine example of pious lying. The fact is that Christians know the very opposite of what they believe. Dr. Nicoll himself virtually admits this when he says: "It is the test of our Christian loyalty that we labor by faith, and not by outward results or apparent success." We understand now. Piety is more feeling engendered not by knowledge gained from facts, but by faith rooted in a vain superstition.

Here is sentimentalism run mad: Christ's "love is ruling at the spring and centre of all things." What does Dr. Nicoll know about the "spring and centre of all things"? Nothing. That is a region of impenetrable mystery and unbroken silence. To believer and scientist alike, its doors are all securely locked and barred. What we are concerned with is what rules "all things," and it requires no special insight to perceive that whatever it is, it is not the love of Christ. Judged by common sense, then, "Christ's cause is decadent and doomed to perish."

A working man gave the Bishop of Stepney the following explanation of the lack of interest in religion which char-

acterises his class: "It's not that we are against your religion, but the whole thing does not touch us any closer than the moon." What an excellent definition of orthodox Christianity: it is a thing really outside a man's daily life.

At their Liverpool meeting, many Congregational ministers wondered how long Christian experience would survive belief in what they described as the underlying facts of the Christian religion. Those "facts," they admitted, are being seriously challenged by scholars both without and within the Church, and they felt perturbed and apprehensive. We can confidently assure them that once they surrender the "facts" and the doctrines based upon them, Christian experience will soon be a thing of the past. God always leaves the people who do not believe in him severely alone. This is the rule to which there has never been a single exception.

The Rev. Thomas Phillips, the Bloomsbury sky-pilot, says that the religious life, unless vigorously and systematically cultivated, is doomed to die. He warns Christian students, who come up to London from the country, that if they do not devote so much time every morning to Bible-reading and prayer, and keep Sundays free from all study and all thought of study, the diversions of this great city will certainly choke their religious faith out of being. And he is quite right, because the religious life is against the grain, unnatural, and foreign. This is why so much stress is laid on Christian training, and on the duty of attending the endless list of services held in church and chapel.

A popular preacher exclaimed, "If any perishes, it is not because Jesus will not have him, but because he will not have Jesus." If a man is drowning, you do not wait till he asks you to save him; you save him straight off. If a man is starving, you throw him a crust at once, without asking whether or not he will take it. And yet Jesus, "the mighty to save," does nothing until he secures the lost one's consent, which means that Jesus never does anything at all. The talk about his having died for all, and his being willing, even eager, to save all, is the merest twaddle. He gives absolutely no sign that he is either willing or able, or that he exists at all.

Another preacher, an LL.D., cries out: "He is able to subdue all things unto himself." Then, in the name of all that is reasonable, why doesn't he do it? The only proof of the ability would be the doing.

Tit-for-tat it is in the kingdom of heaven. The Rev. Hardy Harwood told some missionaries at the Congregational Union meeting that "if they trusted Christ, Christ would trust them," and that "if they did not fail Christ, Christ would not fail them." Well, that sounds very promising; and the man of God gave them this assurance: "That being so, you cannot fail." We shall see whether he is right or not. One thing is absolutely certain—namely, that Christ, who is now "reigning and conquering," can do absolutely nothing without the missionaries; nor can it be boasted that he and the missionaries together perform any miracles.

Mr. E. H. Parker, Professor of Chinese at Victoria University, Manchester, says that the Japanese, "in translating Western books, are beginning, to the dismay of our missionaries, to leave out all the Christianity that is in them." This comes as a timely comment upon the industriously-circulated missionary yarn concerning the great progress made by Christianity in Japan.

The same authority also says: "The Chinese Government has always been one of the broadest-minded and the most liberally inclined towards pure religion; it has never persecuted to the merciless and cruel extent once so common all over Europe, and when it has seemed to persecute at all, it has really only defended what it honestly believed to be its own political rights; it has never encouraged religious spite, mental tyranny, or the stifling of any free opinion that keeps clear of State policy, scandal, or libel." This is not, of course, in line with the picture drawn by our truth-loving missionaries, but it is presented by one who is an authority on things Chinese, and who can have no ulterior purpose to serve in speaking as he does.

Competition, says the *Christian Commonwealth*, puts a strain upon human nature "which the Almighty never meant it to stand." Poor "Almighty"! He really did mean things to go right, but people and things are always getting in his way and knocking his plans to smithereens.

Now if he had had the foresight to make human nature a little stronger so that it might have borne the strain, or had he possessed the power to prevent certain troublesome people from interfering with his arrangements, how different things might have been! But what can the Almighty be expected to do against organised capital and competition? Our sympathies are with the "Almighty" for the sake of his good intentions, also with the *Christian Commonwealth* writer—for other reasons.

Dr. MacKinnon, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Edinburgh University, claims that no other religion has so "moulded for well-nigh 2,000 years the development of a civilisation" as Christianity has done. We sincerely hope that Dr. MacKinnon's lectures to his students are on sounder lines than would appear to be the case from the expression quoted. To take Christianity, merely because the term has existed for so long, as the dominant factor in European civilisation is a common trick of the pulpit, but it is one that a professor of history should avoid. Dr. MacKinnon should be quite well aware that there does not exist a Christianity common to all the centuries from the time of Constantine to our own day. Historically, Christianity covers a number of forms, and a far greater number of follies. Nor would the statement be correct even though Christianity had existed in the same form during the whole of the period named. For religion is only one of the forces that affect a people, and due allowance must be made for these other influences. Moreover, it would be much nearer the truth to say that civilisation has moulded Christianity than to put the matter the other way about. The modifications of Christianity have been constant, and has been produced by the overwhelming influence of Western civilisation. Christianity in the West and Christianity in the East are practically different religions. Christianity to-day and Christianity a hundred years ago are different things. The knowledge, the feeling, of to-day has made the Christianity of our grandfathers almost an impossibility. And as a crowning proof of this we have the development of interest in social questions forcing into existence a form of Christianity that declares itself to be social or nothing. Christianity at its best is a social chameleon that changes color with the nature of its environment. At its worst it is a conservator of outworn beliefs and obstructive customs that the people would, if they were wise, hurry out of existence.

We are pleased to see that Bishop Welldon approves of Sunday concerts, although he only accepts them as the lesser of two evils. If the choice lies between the street and the concert-room the Bishop prefers the latter, which is a most liberal way of looking at the matter. As a matter of course, he would prefer that people should be at church; but if they would have concerts let them keep to "sacred music," refrain from making a profit, and hold their concerts at such times as would not interfere with the regular hours of divine service. On closer scrutiny, the Bishop's approval of Sunday music does not seem as whole-hearted as it might be. It looks as though he is trying to control something he would like to destroy, but cannot. The advice that concerts should not be held during church hours is an invitation to hold them at the least convenient hours. It expresses also the fear that, if the choice lies between a concert and a church, people may prefer the former. And why should not profit be made on a Sunday concert as well as on one held during the week, or even upon a church service? The manager who makes a profit in providing good music on Sunday is earning money in as clean a way as it can be earned—much cleaner, we have no hesitation in saying, than much that comes under the name of service in the majority of the churches of this country. For a good concert benefits all who listen, and injures none. And this certainly cannot be said of religious services.

Sunday Closing is simply a surrender to the religious bigots, and chiefly to the professional ones, who are Protectionists in business, and want one day in the week all to themselves, without competition. We say this advisedly, for the people who clamor loudest for the Sunday-closing of public-houses are the same people who have always clamored for the Sunday-closing of museums, art-galleries, and public libraries. Nothing but a religious argument can possibly make it any worse to drink beer on Sunday than on Saturday or Monday. Mr. Balfour had the sense and courage—he has both *sometimes*—to remind the House of Commons of this in a recent debate on the Licensing Bill. "A great deal of the feeling with regard to Sunday Closing," he is reported as saying, "was religious in its character, but he did not think that ought to come in when they were discussing a purely Temperance question. They had no right to approach the question from a religious point of view." But

this is really the sole point of view of the vast majority of the friends of Sunday Closing. For our part, we contend that if licensed places of refreshment are open on weekdays they should also be open on Sundays; and if they are closed on Sundays they should also be closed on weekdays. Anything else is sheer Sabbatarianism.

Mr. H. J. Williams, some time ago, succeeded in getting the *Freethinker* placed on the table of the Treharris Reading Room. It has since been "expelled"—owing to the tremendous opposition of the local churches. Letters and deputations poured in upon the committee, some of whom are unable to read or write, and these were particularly hot against the *Freethinker* when the question of its staying or going had to be decided. One of them said it was "a most dangerous paper"—which we cheerfully admit it is—and that he "wouldn't like his boy to come across it"—though it might be a good thing for the boy if he did. Others called it "an immoral paper," but that is mere bigoted nonsense. This journal is as clean and honest as any paper in England. In spite of all the provocation we have had, we have never printed one of the blue or filthy passages of the Christian Bible—not even in our own self-defence. We leave the monopoly of that sort of thing to our pious opponents.

This is the way in which a Nonconformist clergyman, the Rev. E. Griffith-Jones, describes the influence of "the last two centuries" of Christian teaching: "It belittled earth and made too much of heaven. It turned the minds of men from this rich, multiform, blossoming world, with its green springs and golden harvests, to revel in an other-worldliness, fruitful in all manner of unrealities, and, therefore, hypocries. It made it almost sinful to admire anything beautiful that was in any sense secular. It killed art, and all but strangled poetry, for over a century of arid literature. It delayed reform, and perpetuated abuses in almost every department of human industry. In a word, it made the sweet natural life of man barren of idealism, turned its poetry into prose, and precipitated a revulsion against the Christian faith in cultivated circles which has even now by no means spent its force, and made it hard for any man of warm sympathies with what is fair and lovely and human to be a Christian."

Of course, the Rev. Griffith-Jones is only belaboring one form of Christian belief in order to set his own version in a more favorable light. And equally, of course, his own version is *true* Christianity, while that of anyone else is a mere caricature. All this, however, is the mere byplay of Christian amenity. The others would be as ready to draw quite as direful a picture of Mr. Griffith-Jones' belief. The interesting thing about such statements is, that when Christians are brought to the point they do admit that, historically, Christianity has been a series of blunders, and that its influence on the race has been disastrous. And this is what Freethinkers have been saying all along. For Christians to say that the Christianity that produced these disastrous effects was not the pure religion of the primitive Jesus, does not matter in the least. The only Christianity we are concerned with is that which has had a definite historical existence. Anything else lies in the future, and must be dealt with when it arrives.

The Rev. Dr. Len Broughton, of America, who has been officiating at Westminster Chapel, declares that the second advent of Jesus is as sure as the first. We are inclined to agree with this. The rev. gentleman also asserts that the advent is near at hand, and would feel no surprise if he heard the sound of the trumpet in the midst of one of his sermons. We should say he is more likely to hear the snores of the congregation. Dr. Broughton is returning to the States; probably he wishes to be in his own home when his Lord and Master pays his return visit.

The Established Church has been complaining for a long time of a dearth of candidates for Holy Orders. The Church no longer attracts brilliant young men to its ministry. But there is a greater want than the want of clergy, and that is the want of laity. Of course, both wants are clear indications that Christianity is losing its hold upon the English public.

There was a meeting at the Mansion House called by the Road Union to consider the necessity of fresh legislation to deal with motor traffic. The Duke of Northumberland, being one of the speakers, said it was a shock to some of them to find how selfish rich people could be and how little they really cared for the interests of their poorer neighbors.

This appears to have annoyed the Lord Mayor, who officiated as chairman, but he was not going to reprove a peer of the realm, and he bottled up his indignation until the next speaker gave him an opportunity of easing his feelings. He then declared that he could not let the meeting be resolved into a general attack on the rich men of the country. We wonder what the Lord Mayor would do if Jesus Christ turned up again, at the Mansion House, crying "Woe unto you rich!" It would probably be forty shillings or a month.

Here is another new light on unanswered prayers. A young lady had been earnestly praying for some time without getting any answer, when she ceased praying altogether, in the belief that it made no difference. She went to a man of God and stated her case, and he replied to her thus: "Your praying and believing made so little difference because you prayed and believed in *your own spirit*. But if you had prayed and believed in *Christ's spirit*, you would have derived immeasurable benefit." If the young girl is wise, she will waste no more time in praying and believing. The game is not worth the candle.

Rev. Professor Sanday, of Oxford, says that "such a verse as Hebrews ix. 27, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment,' is ratified in our own consciences." Is it not rather strange that a *post-mortem* event should be ratified in an *ante-mortem* conscience? Will the learned Professor solve the riddle for us?

French Bishops are called upon by the Vatican to be strict in refusing authorisation to the clergy to register themselves at the State Universities. Well, the Church will suffer from this more than the State. There are other "learned professions" besides that of the priests.

Here is a nice light upon Church affairs. The death of Canon Fleming leaves vacant the valuable living of St. Michael's, Chester-square, which is worth over £1,000 a year, with a residence in addition. Some soul-saver will drop into this desirable post. But the vacancy cannot be filled by anybody on earth except the Duke of Westminster, who is at present in South Africa. He is the patron of the living. He decides for the Church people of that parish who shall minister to their spiritual wants. It is difficult to see where Jesus Christ or God Almighty looks in.

A Greenwich motorist, named Albert Martin, being summoned for too fast driving, tried a little religion upon the magistrates. "I go to church every Sunday morning," he said, "and pray for you to administer justice. I trust you will do so. If you don't, I shall strike that part of the Litany out of my prayer-book." The result was 40s. and costs. We wonder if the prayer-book is mutilated.

Major-General Guyon, retired, a well-known Church worker in Richmond, has been arrested on an unsavory charge, and remanded on his own recognizances of £1,000 and bail of the same amount. We have no pleasure in referring to such cases; we only do so to show that religion is no security for good morals. Such cases are, indeed, so frequent in religious circles that they excite no comment. But what excitement there would be if the accused persons were Freethinkers!

It is being suggested, and we suppose it will soon be announced, that the Government finds that no compromise is possible between the Church and Nonconformity on the Education question, and that the Education Bill will therefore be proceeded with before parliament is prorogued. We hope this is true. It will bring the day of Secular Education nearer.

Men and women are arrested in Christian Russia for meeting together at home and reading the Bible. In Christian England the Peculiar People are imprisoned for believing the Bible, and living Freethinkers have also been imprisoned for not believing it. A funny book—that Bible!

Newspapers print a letter from a little girl to the Rev. R. J. Campbell, in which she speaks of Noah's Ark, and asks whether Satan was drowned or went into the Ark with "Mr. and Mrs. Nore." The question is answered in our *Bible Romances*. Mr. Campbell might have referred her to it—though we dare say he didn't.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 8, Alhambra Picture Hall, North-street, Scotland-road, Nelson: at 2.45, "Socialism and Religion"; at 7.30, "Who and What was Jesus Christ?"

November 22, Stratford Town Hall; 29, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—November 15, Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society; 22, Fails-worth; 29, Birmingham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 15, Stratford Town Hall.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £278 9s. 2d. Received since.—D. McLean, 2s. 6d.; J. Rogers, 2s. 6d.; Louisa Morton, 2s. 6d.; F. M. A., £1.

A. HURCOM.—Yes, it is a drag on progress that influential men are often so wobbly on the subject of religion.

JOHN McMILLAN.—You might have told the preacher that if he had become a Mohammedan, instead of a Christian, he would have found all his co-religionists teetotalers, which he certainly doesn't find them now—and in Glasgow! With regard to China, it is in many ways a more civilised country than England—or Scotland. And, as a rule, the Chinaman is hated in other countries more for his virtues than his vices. We note that the *Freethinker* is your favorite journal, and thank you for your good wishes.

MILTON HALL.—Your request is noted. We will see.

A. J. G.—Anyone has a right to affirm, instead of swearing, in any court of justice, in any capacity, under Bradlaugh's Oaths Act, by simply declaring that he has no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief. No other declaration is necessary, and you should respectfully but firmly decline to answer any questions as to the nature of your belief or unbelief. The translation you refer to may be taken as correct.

J. W. REPTON.—We note your hope, and that of your friends, that Mr. Foote will soon be at Queen's Hall again. Thanks for cutting.

R. EHRMANN.—Cuttings received with thanks.

F. J. VOISEY.—Glad you were so pleased with our rejoinder to "G. B. S."

N. LEVEY.—Pleased to hear of Mr. Wishart's satisfactory week's missionary work at Edinburgh. Of course, it is not to be expected that such work will be self-supporting. That is why it is subventioned by the N. S. S.

W. BRADBURN.—You can obtain back numbers of this journal, stamped "specimen," for free distribution by applying at our publishing office.

C. H. HOWSON wishes we had made our reply to Mr. Shaw longer and dealt with some of his minor points. This correspondent is informed that we dealt with the Darwin and Evolution point in a former article on Mr. Shaw's religion, some eighteen months ago.

"ABRACADABRA" informs us that he is writing a reply to Mr. W. P. Ball's recent letter, and hopes to send it in shortly. He has not had the leisure before.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your choice, useful cuttings.

F. ROBBINS.—Next week; Tuesday is too late.

R. T. SPENCER.—Thanks for getting us new subscribers. If others did ditto it would soon make a difference.

LOUISA MORTON.—Pleased to hear you say you "feel so grateful to have the *Freethinker* every week."

VIXIM.—He was connected with the Manchester N. S. S. Branch for a short time, a great many years ago; that is the only fact that seems to give him any importance. You may expect those articles very early in the new year.

WELL-WISHER.—Shall be sent. Glad to have your encouraging letter.

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 had grand meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday. They were the largest he has ever had there. The afternoon audience was a very fine one, far beyond any afternoon audience hitherto, and the evening audience was simply magnificent. The body of the great hall was crowded from the platform to the doors, the side galleries and the big back gallery were crowded from the balcony to the walls, and there was an overflow of people into the orchestra behind the lecturer. The meetings were sympathetic and enthusiastic from beginning to end, and the applause was worth hearing. So many ladies were present, especially in the evening, that Mr. Foote commented on the fact, and congratulated the Freethought party on making such headway amongst the sex of the mothers of the race. Many questions were asked and answered after each lecture. Mr. Fathers, the Branch president, occupied the chair on both occasions. We must also give a word of recognition and praise to the military band which finely rendered a choice selection of music for half an hour before each lecture. Their efforts were warmly appreciated and cheered.

These great meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall owe nothing whatever to the local press, which affects to be entirely ignorant of them. There is no announcement beforehand and no report afterwards. Yet the great meetings are a fact all the same, and they are all the more significant for owing nothing to the press. They represent an independent movement and a genuine success. And what the press does not make the press cannot unmake. There is some consolation in that.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Nov. 8), afternoon and evening, in the Alhambra Picture Hall, North-street, Scotland-road, Nelson, Lancashire. This hall has lately been reconstructed and beautified, and large audiences are expected from various parts of that popular district. There are reserved seats at 1s., 6d., and 3d., and doors will be open to non-ticketholders a quarter of an hour before each lecture, a collection being taken as they enter.

The new course of lectures at the Stratford Town Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, opens this evening (Nov. 8), when Mr. Cohen will occupy the platform, taking for his subject "Science, Faith, and God." The local "saints" should bring all the Christians they can along to the meeting. All seats are free, and it is a fine hall, with plenty of room for a big crowd.

Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. general secretary, desires us to draw attention to the fact that the long-talked-of "Badges" are now ready. The price is twopence. If ordered singly, a penny should be added for postage. A reduction will be made to Branches taking not less than six. We do not pretend to be a judge of such things, but members can see the badge for themselves by calling at 2 Newcastle-street. The pansy is also the Freethought badge or symbol with our French brethren, and we believe with the continent generally.

Mr. F. J. Gould stood as Labor candidate in the Wiggeston Ward, Leicester, at the recent municipal elections. Three vicars—of St. Matthew's, Christ Church, and St. Luke's—issued a joint appeal to the electors to "vote against one who is doing his best to persuade people that the Christian Religion is false." We guess they are sorry they spoke now. The figures were:—Gould, 727; Smith (Liberal), 417.

Not being able, through pressure of other business, to write the "World of Books" paragraphs this week, we prefer to lose no time in calling attention to the *Positivist Review* for December. It contains excellent articles by Professor E. S. Beesly, Frederic Harrison, S. H. Swinny, and other able writers. Mr. Swinny, the editor, writes very interestingly on "The Moral Instruction Congress."

## The Conversion of Romanes.

AN article dealing with the alleged conversion of Professor Romanes appeared in the September number of a rationalist contemporary. The writer of the article very justly concludes that the emotions and judgment of Romanes were frequently at variance. We are told that "Romanes' mind had two sides—the one Christian and the other Agnostic. His sympathies reverted to an inherited faith which his judgment did not find altogether satisfactory." In these circumstances it is but fair to the memory of the man, and in remembrance of the scientific work he accomplished, to ascertain what were the conditions under which the intellect of Romanes succumbed to the twin influences of heredity and family environment. And an investigation of the facts is rendered even more imperative by the doubt that has been thrown upon the value of Romanes' biological work through his much-advertised, and usually misunderstood, re-conversion to an earlier phase of belief.

As an instance of this, we may mention that in his important work, *Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, Mr. A. W. Benn remarks that, "With such emotional cravings for religious belief, and such very confused ideas about scientific philosophy, joined to a total ignorance of history, it is not surprising that Romanes returned to his early creed."\*

In the light of the fact that Romanes was at one time regarded as the naturalist upon whose shoulders the mantle of Darwin would by right of succession fall, the above-quoted opinion of Mr. Benn—an opinion not at all singular to him—is deeply regrettable.

In much the same manner as his greater contemporary, Professor W. K. Clifford, Romanes swung in early manhood from rigid orthodoxy to philosophical Freethought. He became an enthusiastic adherent of the scientific and philosophical doctrines which we have learnt to associate with the great and enduring names of Darwin, Haeckel, and Herbert Spencer.

In 1878, under the pen-name of "Physicus," Romanes published an anti-Theistic work, entitled *A Candid Examination of Theism*. In this he adopted a frankly critical attitude towards all Theistic beliefs and assumptions, conjoined with a general acceptance of the doctrines of scientific materialism. His contributions to the science of life commenced with his investigations concerning the primitive nervous systems of jelly and star-fishes, and other relatively lowly organised forms of animal life. From this work arose his important constructive additions to the science of physiological psychology. These contributions are to be found in three highly-interesting, instructive, and important works, *Animal Intelligence*, *The Evolution of Mind in Animals*, and *Mental Evolution in Man*, the last-mentioned work bearing the sub-title of "The Origin of Human Faculty." These three volumes form a consecutive series; the rationalist attitude is maintained throughout, and no concessions are made to religious or metaphysical prejudices.

It is true that he championed the sensationalist or idealistic position, that, apart from our personal consciousness, we have no warrant for the existence of the external world, but as this is a mere philosophical truism we need attach no undue importance to it.

Professor Lloyd Morgan, in his article on Romanes in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, sums up the three works in question in the following words: "The keynote of the whole series is the frank and fearless application of the principles of evolution, as formulated by Darwin, to the development of mind."

The son of a Christian minister, Romanes evinced a strong desire in his student days to enter the Church. But his theological aspirations met with positive discouragement from his father, and, strange

to say, were in no way countenanced by his mother. While at Cambridge, Romanes read the writings of Darwin, and, as a result, his views concerning the nature of existence underwent a profound change. A close personal friendship with the great evolutionist followed, and remained unbroken until Darwin's death in 1882.

But now appears one of the most remarkable inconsistencies in the character of Romanes, for at the very same time that he was elaborating his scheme of animal and human mental evolution in terms of matter and motion, an article on "The Fallacy of Materialism" appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*. In 1885, in an essay on "Monism," matter and mind are considered as at least of co-ordinate importance, and in 1886 Romanes was responsible for a rambling essay, entitled "The World as Eject," which contained half-hearted Theistic implications.

Three years later (in 1889) Romanes read a paper before the Aristotelian Society on "Evidences of Design in Nature," in which, after summing up the evidence for and against Theism, he concludes in reference to the "existence of a disposing mind" thus: "Although I cannot wait to argue this, the ultimate question we have met to consider, I may briefly state my own view with regard to it. This is the same view which the originator of Natural Selection used habitually to express to me in conversation—viz., to use his own words, 'I have long ago come to the conclusion that it is a question far beyond the reach of the human mind.' Such, of course," adds Romanes, "is the position of pure Agnosticism,"\* and such appears to have been the position he maintained until almost the end of his life.

June, 1892, brought the first warning of approach-death, but no specific disease seems to have manifested itself until twelve months later. On July 11, 1893, Romanes was stricken with hemiplegia. From this attack, we are told, "he slowly recovered,"† and it may be reasonably supposed that his condition of mind two days later was not such as to enable him to give serious consideration to religious subjects. Even after the lapse of two months his condition may be gathered from a letter to Professor Thistleton Dyer: "Since my last letter I have been at Death's door. On July 11 I was stricken down by paralysis of the left side, and am now a wreck"‡ (Sept. 15). Yet on July 13, two days after his stroke, when Romanes was, in all human probability, scarcely conscious, Dr. Paget administered the Holy Communion. There is no evidence that Romanes had requested the administration of the Sacrament; indeed, it seems difficult to suppose that he could have been in a condition to proffer any rational request at all. Yet Dr. Paget appears to have considered it part of his duty as a Christian minister to administer the communion to a man presumably scarce conscious, and who was certainly at the time an avowed sceptic.

After a "slow recovery" from his illness, the erstwhile communicant "set himself to face the ultimate problems of Life and Being, to face the possibility of a return to faith."§ In October, 1893, his physical condition continued deplorable. Writing to Sir Joseph Hooker on October 29, Huxley says: "Romanes gave me a pitiable account of himself in a letter the other day. He has had an attack of hemiplegic paralysis, and tells me he is a mere wreck. That means that the worst anticipations of his case are being verified."|| Meanwhile, his religious views remain unchanged.

Writing to Mr. Francis Darwin on October 8, he says: "It is comparatively easy to set our teeth and face the inevitable with 'a grin,' but the 'highest bravery' is to hide our anguish with a smile. I do

\* Quoted in *The Life and Letters of Romanes*, by his wife p. 252.

† *Life of Romanes*, p. 310.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

|| *Life and Letters of Huxley*, vol. ii., p. 364.

think I make a decently good Stoic, but confess that in times like this Christians have the pull."<sup>k</sup>

Again, on October 29, the communicant of three months ago writes to Professor Henslow: "It seems to me this self-adaptation doctrine.....simply refers the facts immediately to some theory of design, and so brings us back again to Paley, Bell, and Chalmers. As when a child asks why a flower closes at night, and we answer him, 'because God has made it so, my dear,' *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas science.*"<sup>†</sup>

At the time of his death, Romanes was engaged upon *Darwin, and after Darwin*, the second and third volumes of which were published posthumously. The tendency and tone of this work is strongly rationalistic. So much so is this the case that Mrs. Romanes considers it necessary to explain the "exceeding severity, the almost harsh" manner in which supernaturalism is treated by the supposition that, "as more and more he found himself yielding on the side of emotion, of moral convictions, inclination of spiritual need to the relinquished faith, so much more did he resolve to be utterly true.....to be, in fact, absolutely and entirely honest"; which would appear to mean that, as the broken spirit yielded to the cravings of hereditary superstition, such of the old intellect as remained to a stricken invalid steadfastly refused to accept any but a rationalistic interpretation of the universe.

The posthumous *Thoughts on Religion*, on the other hand, though for the most part academic in tone, displays strong leanings towards Theism, and in the later chapters towards Christianity.

The perusal of the work leaves one with an unsatisfactory feeling that the author has been indulging in special pleading. He never succeeds in answering his own arguments adduced in *A Candid Examination of Theism*, and for the most part the book consists of a plea for what Romanes called "pure Agnosticism," which would seem to consist of the admission that if a Theistic interpretation of the universe is not entirely satisfactory, neither does a Naturalistic one leave nothing to be explained.

Apart from such impressions as may be gathered from posthumous publications, the exact position Romanes adopted towards Christianity at the last is difficult to ascertain.

According to Mrs. Romanes, "On Thursday in Whit week he went to the eight o'clock celebration of the Holy Communion in the Latin Church, and in the course of that day he said: 'I have now come to see that faith is intellectually justifiable.' By and by he added: 'It is Christianity or nothing.' Presently he added: 'I as yet have not that real inward assurance; it is with me as the text says, I am not yet to look up; but I feel the service of this morning is a means of grace.' This," adds Mrs. Romanes, "was almost the last time he ever spoke on religious subjects."<sup>‡</sup>

Dr. Gore, in a concluding editorial note to *Thoughts on Religion*, gives a somewhat different account of Romanes' final attitude. In this we are given to understand that Romanes was completely reconciled to the Christian faith before his death; and the reader of *Thoughts on Religion*, unenlightened by the facts recorded by Mrs. Romanes in her life of the scientist, would remain in utter ignorance of Professor Romanes' wrecked condition.

Whether Romanes even secured that "inward assurance" or not, it is impossible to say until we know whether Dr. Gore or Mrs. Romanes is in error. This at least seems clear. As the health of Romanes failed, so the Christian side of his mind developed. As the keen intellect which produced *A Candid Examination of Theism* became dulled by disease, so the influence wielded over him by Christianity became stronger.

Much as we regret the unmerited suffering which culminated in Romanes' premature death, and deeply as we deplore the loss which the science of life

suffered from his untimely withdrawal from his loved vocation, we nevertheless realise that the contributions to biology he was enabled to make are likely to survive as human benefits when the pathological phenomena of his "conversion" are buried by oblivion's relentless hand.

VERITAS.

### Maurice Maeterlinck.

"To bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,  
That is the top of sovereignty."

—KEATS.

SINCE Maurice Maeterlinck was compared with Shakespeare it has been hard to be just to him. It is never safe, nor is it consistent with sound criticism, to pick up some popular favorite of the day and compare him with one of those intellectual giants whose work has survived in undiminished splendor the lapse of centuries. Maurice Maeterlinck's gifts are few and simple and distinct, and hardly anyone can be blind to them. Nor have we any wish to underrate his temperate and persuasive philosophy, his delicate and sober use of words, and his dainty imagination. His voice is not a new one, but what he has to say is well worth hearing.

Maurice Maeterlinck has made a pilgrim's progress from the stifling atmosphere of the footlights into the ether inhabited by the philosophers. This seems a more amazing journey than that made by Captain Lemuel Gulliver. We should be more than surprised were one of our contemporary English playwrights—Pinero or Henry Arthur Jones—to undertake to instruct us in the philosophy of life. We only expect that from a brilliant Irishman like Bernard Shaw. Yet Maeterlinck has succeeded in bridging this abyss. There is no gulf between the *Petits Drames pour Marionnettes* and *La Sagesse et la Destinée*. The synthesis of *Aglavaine et Sylsette* is contained in *Le Tresor des Humbles*. Maeterlinck is, in the last analysis, a dreamer and a thinker more than a dramatist, or student rather than a painter of circumstance. The transition seems natural and inevitable; it is as though he had forsaken the calm, placid, motionless canals he loves so well, and had ventured boldly on the broad river of life. Philosophy to him is the interpretation of his art. And yet one may doubt how far his secret spring has touched his work to artistic issues. The average Englishman will not trouble his head about that. That Maeterlinck has a mission is his claim on the insular attention. But it is more certain that had he been less philosophical he would have had a wider public.

Maeterlinck is not a profound nor an original thinker; but he has the heart of a poet, and he is gifted with a spark of the divine flame. He is also a scholar for whom the great writers and philosophers of the past hold marvellous secrets and truths. Thus he possesses the charm of culture in addition to the attraction of his own poetic genius. He tells us quite frankly and gratefully how he has sat at the feet of Plato and Plotinus, of Marcus Aurelius and Carlyle. He explains how he has absorbed the mysticism of Paganism and plucked the heart from the Christian superstition. He smilingly tells us how he has lingered lovingly in the philosophy of Emerson, "the kindly morning shepherd of pale fields green with a new-born optimism." He is, indeed, an eclectic, clinging to no school, and calling no prophet by the name of master. He admires Pascal no less than Schopenhauer. Yet there is nothing fragmentary in the ethical outcome of so wide a course of study. Maeterlinck has a truly wonderful gift of assimilation. The roots of his philosophy may run deep down, but the flower is at once beautiful, individual, and indisputably modern. In *La Sagesse et la Destinée* he pours his philosophy into one mould. He teaches a form of Stoicism. He points to Marcus Aurelius as one lifted above misfortune by wisdom. There is, however, no dogmatism. Maeterlinck never pretends to hold in his

\* *Life of Romanes*, p. 354 (1902 Edition).

† *Ibid.*, p. 331.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

hand the master-key which will unlock the portals of truth. Rather he is a truth-seeker, a patient and unwearied searcher after knowledge. There is no necessity to emphasise the fact of Maeterlinck's Freethought. It is a foregone conclusion. He is an iconoclast so far as he insists that "religions no longer reply to the great questions of mankind."

In nearly everything that Maeterlinck pleads for, English literature of to-day is lamentably deficient. A vivid perception of the interiority of life cannot be counted among our virtues. We have neither the idealism of the Slav, nor the poetry of the Celt, nor the refined perceptions of the Latin races. We love exteriorities, we revel in photographic delineations of domestic life, and we have barely emerged from the backwash of Christianity. In Maeterlinck's books, morality, conduct, life are surveyed from every point of the compass. But for unnecessary renouncement, abandonment of happiness, and such parasitic virtues, he has no commendation, feeling that man should be joyous. He finds room even "for the hours that babble aloud in their wantonness." Those who follow Maeterlinck are led smilingly to the heights where happiness sits enthroned, where virtue rewards itself in the "silence that is the walled garden of its happiness." The man himself is greater than his books. He possesses the rare faculty of seeing beauty in all things, and has the still rarer faculty of loving all things. So the influence upon us of this cultured Belgian Freethinker cannot fail to be illuminating, and the growing appreciation of his work among us is of happy augury for the future of Liberty. M.

## The Christian Religion.—II.

BY COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

(Continued from p. 685.)

In all civilised countries it is not only admitted, but it is passionately asserted, that slavery is and always was a hideous crime; that a war of conquest is simply murder; that polygamy is the enslavement of woman, the degradation of man, and the destruction of home; that nothing is more infamous than the slaughter of decrepit men, of helpless women, and of prattling babes; that captured maidens should not be given to soldiers; that wives should not be stoned to death on account of their religious opinions, and that the death penalty ought not to be inflicted for a violation of the Sabbath. We know that there was a time, in the history of almost every nation, when slavery, polygamy, and wars of extermination were regarded as divine institutions; when women were looked upon as beasts of burden, and when, among some people, it was considered the duty of the husband to murder the wife for differing with him on the subject of religion. Nations that entertain these views to-day are regarded as savage, and, probably, with the exception of the South Sea Islanders, the Feejees, some citizens of Delaware, and a few tribes in Central Africa, no human beings can be found degraded enough to agree upon these subjects with the Jehovah of the ancient Jews. The only evidence we have, or can have, that a nation has ceased to be savage is the fact that it has abandoned these doctrines. To everyone, except the theologian, it is perfectly easy to account for the mistakes, atrocities, and crimes of the past, by saying that civilisation is a slow and painful growth; that the moral perceptions are cultivated through ages of tyranny, of want, of crime, and of heroism; that it requires centuries for man to put out the eyes of self and hold in lofty and in equal poise the scales of justice; that conscience is born of suffering; that mercy is the child of the imagination—of the power to put oneself in the sufferer's place, and that man advances only as he becomes acquainted with his surroundings, with the mutual obligations of life, and learns to take advantage of the forces of nature.

But the believer in the inspiration of the Bible is compelled to declare that there was a time when slavery was right—when men could buy, and women could sell, their babes. He is compelled to insist that there was a time when polygamy was the highest form of virtue; when wars of extermination were waged with the sword of mercy; when religious toleration was a crime, and when death was the just penalty for having expressed an honest thought. He must maintain that Jehovah is just as bad now as he was four thousand years ago, or that he was just as good then as he is now, but that human conditions have so

changed that slavery, polygamy, religious persecutions, and wars of conquest are now perfectly devilish. Once they were right—once they were commanded by God himself; now, they are prohibited. There has been such a change in the conditions of man that, at the present time, the Devil is in favor of slavery, polygamy, religious persecution, and wars of conquest. That is to say, the Devil entertains the same opinion to-day that Jehovah held four thousand years ago, but in the meantime Jehovah has remained exactly the same—changeless and incapable of change.

We find that other nations beside the Jews had similar laws and ideas; that they believed in and practised slavery and polygamy, murdered women and children, and exterminated their neighbors to the extent of their power. It is not claimed that they received a revelation. It is admitted that they had no knowledge of the true God. And yet, by a strange coincidence, they practised the same crimes, of their own motion, that the Jews did by the command of Jehovah. From this it would seem that man can do wrong without a special revelation.

It will hardly be claimed, at this day, that the passages in the Bible, upholding slavery, polygamy, war and religious persecution are evidences of the inspiration of that book. Suppose that there had been nothing in the Old Testament upholding these crimes, would any modern Christian suspect that it was not inspired, on account of the omission? Suppose that there had been nothing in the Old Testament but laws in favor of these crimes, would any intelligent Christian now contend that it was the work of the true God? If the Devil had inspired a book, will some believer in the doctrine of inspiration tell us in what respect, on the subjects of slavery, polygamy, war, and liberty, it would have differed from some parts of the Old Testament? Suppose that we should now discover a Hindoo book of equal antiquity with the Old Testament, containing a defence of slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution, would we regard it as evidence that the writers were inspired by an infinitely wise and merciful God? As most other nations at that time practised these crimes, and as the Jews would have practised them all, even if left to themselves, one can hardly see the necessity of any inspired commands upon these subjects. Is there a believer in the Bible who does not wish that God, amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, had distinctly said to Moses that man should not own his fellowman; that women should not sell their babes; that men should be allowed to think and investigate for themselves, and that the sword should never be unsheathed to shed the blood of honest men? Is there a believer, in the world, who would not be delighted to find that every one of these infamous passages are interpolations and that the skirts of God were never reddened by the blood of maiden, wife, or babe? Is there a believer who does not regret that God commanded a husband to stone his wife to death for suggesting the worship of the sun or moon? Surely, the light of experience is enough to tell us that slavery is wrong, that polygamy is infamous, and that murder is not a virtue. No one will now contend that it was worth God's while to impart the information to Moses, or to Joshua, or to anybody else, that the Jewish people might purchase slaves of the heathen, or that it was their duty to exterminate the natives of the Holy Land. The Deists have contended that the Old Testament is too cruel and barbarous to be the work of a wise and loving God. To this, the theologians have replied, that nature is just as cruel; that the earthquake, the volcano, the pestilence and storm, are just as savage as the Jewish God; and to my mind this is a perfect answer.

Suppose that we knew that after "inspired" men had finished the Bible, the Devil got possession of it, and wrote a few passages; what part of the sacred Scriptures would Christians now pick out as being probably his work? Which of the following passages would naturally be selected as having been written by the Devil—"Love thy neighbor as thyself," or "Kill all the males among the little ones, and kill every woman; but all the women children keep alive for yourselves"?

It may be that the best way to illustrate what I have said of the Old Testament is to compare some of the supposed teachings of Jehovah with those of persons who never read an "inspired" line, and who lived and died without having received the light of revelation. Nothing can be more suggestive than a comparison of the ideas of Jehovah—the inspired words of the one claimed to be the infinite God, as recorded in the Bible—with those that have been expressed by men who, all admit, received no help from heaven.

In all ages of which any record has been preserved, there have been those who gave their ideas of justice, charity, liberty, love and law. Now, if the Bible is really the work of God, it should contain the grandest and sublimest truths. It should, in all respects, excel the works of man. Within that book should be found the best and loftiest definitions of justice; the truest conceptions of human liberty; the

clearest outlines of duty; the tenderest, the highest, and the noblest thoughts,—not that the human mind has produced, but that the human mind is capable of receiving. Upon every page should be found the luminous evidence of its divine origin. Unless it contains grander and more wonderful things than man has written, we are not only justified in saying, but we are compelled to say, that it was written by no being superior to man. It may be said that it is unfair to call attention to certain bad things in the Bible, while the good are not so much as mentioned. To this it may be replied that a divine being would not put bad things in a book. Certainly a being of infinite intelligence, power, and goodness could never fall below the ideal of "depraved and barbarous" man. It will not do, after we find that the Bible upholds what we now call crimes, to say that it is not verbally inspired. If the words are not inspired, what is? It may be said that the thoughts are inspired. But this would include only the thoughts expressed without words. If ideas are inspired, they must be contained in and expressed only by inspired words; that is to say, the arrangement of the words, with relation to each other, must have been inspired. For the purpose of this perfect arrangement, the writers, according to the Christian world, were inspired. Were some sculptor inspired of God to make a statue perfect in its every part, we would not say that the marble was inspired, but the statue—the relation of part to part, the married harmony of form and function. The language, the words, take the place of the marble, and it is the arrangement of these words that Christians claim to be inspired. If there is one uninspired word,—that is, one word in the wrong place, or a word that ought not to be there,—to that extent the Bible is an uninspired book. The moment it is admitted that some words are not, in their arrangement as to other words, inspired, then, unless with absolute certainty these words can be pointed out, a doubt is cast on all the words the book contains. If it was worth God's while to make a revelation to man at all, it was certainly worth his while to see that it was correctly made. He would not have allowed the ideas and mistakes of pretended prophets and designing priests to become so mingled with the original text that it is impossible to tell where he ceased and where the priests and prophets began. Neither will it do to say that God adapted his revelation to the prejudices of mankind. Of course, it was necessary for an infinite being to adapt his revelation to the intellectual capacity of man; but why should God confirm a barbarian in his prejudices? Why should he fortify a heathen in his crimes? If a revelation is of any importance whatever, it is to eradicate prejudices from the human mind. It should be a lever with which to raise the human race. Theologians have exhausted their ingenuity in finding excuses for God. It seems to me that they would be better employed in finding excuses for men. They tell us that the Jews were so cruel and ignorant that God was compelled to justify, or nearly to justify, many of their crimes, in order to have any influence with them whatever. They tell us that if he had declared slavery and polygamy to be criminal, the Jews would have refused to receive the ten commandments. They insist that, under the circumstances, God did the best he could; that his real intention was to lead them along slowly, step by step, so that, in a few hundred years, they would be induced to admit that it was hardly fair to steal a babe from its mother's breast. It has always seemed reasonable that an infinite God ought to have been able to make man grand enough to know, even without a special revelation, that it is not altogether right to steal the labor, or the wife, or the child, of another. When the whole question is thoroughly examined, the world will find that Jehovah had the prejudices, the hatreds, and superstitions of his day.

If there is anything of value, it is liberty. Liberty is the air of the soul, the sunshine of life. Without it the world is a prison and the universe an infinite dungeon.

If the Bible is really inspired, Jehovah commanded the Jewish people to buy the children of the strangers that sojourned among them, and ordered that the children thus bought should be an inheritance for the children of the Jews, and that they should be bondmen and bondwomen forever. Yet Epictetus, a man to whom no revelation was made, a man whose soul followed only the light of nature, and who had never heard of the Jewish God, was great enough to say: "Will you not remember that your servants are by nature your brothers, the children of God? In saying that you have bought them, you look down on the earth, and into the pit, on the wretched law of men long since dead, but you see not the laws of the gods."

We find that Jehovah, speaking to his chosen people, assured them that their bondmen and their bondmaids must be "of the heathen that were round about them." "Of them," said Jehovah, "shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids." And yet Cicero, a pagan, Cicero, who had never been enlightened by reading the Old Testament, had the moral grandeur to declare: "They who say that we should

love our fellow-citizens, but not foreigners, destroy the universal brotherhood of mankind, with which benevolence and justice would perish forever."

If the Bible is inspired, Jehovah, God of all worlds, actually said: "And if a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished; notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money." And yet Zeno, founder of the Stoics, centuries before Christ was born, insisted that no man could be the owner of another, and that the title was bad, whether the slave had become so by conquest, or by purchase. Jehovah ordered a Jewish general to make war, and gave, among others, this command: "When the Lord thy God shall drive them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." And yet Epictetus, whom we have already quoted, gave this marvellous rule for the guidance of human conduct: "Live with thy inferiors as thou wouldest have thy superiors live with thee."

Is it possible, after all, that a being of infinite goodness and wisdom said: "I will heap mischief upon them: I will send mine arrows upon them; they shall be burned with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. I will send the tooth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, the terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling, also, with the man of gray hairs"; while Seneca, an uninspired Roman, said: "The wise man will not pardon any crime that ought to be punished, but he will accomplish, in a nobler way, all that is sought in pardoning. He will spare some and watch over some, because of their youth, and others on account of their ignorance. His clemency will not fall short of justice, but will fulfil it perfectly."

(To be continued.)

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCT. 29.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. A. Allinson, J. Barry, S. Bloomfield, E. Charlton, H. Cowell, C. Cohen, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, W. Leat, J. Marshall, J. Neate, C. Quinton, V. Roger, R. Rossetti, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, F. Wood, and E. Woodward.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Monthly cash statement adopted. Twenty-two new members were admitted.

An application for permission to form a Branch of the Society at hitherto benighted Boston, was granted. The Secretary gave a report of her visits to that town.

The President reported upon his forthcoming visit to Liverpool, and upon the restrictions the Corporation wished to place upon him if a charge for admission were made, and the meeting warmly supported his attitude.

The Secretary produced specimens of the new Badge for the Society, the design being a neat pansy printed in mauve on a button pin in accordance with the resolution moved at the Conference. The Badge was approved, and several were purchased.

A highly-successful social gathering at Anderton's Hotel on October 22 was reported, and it was resolved that another should be arranged early in December.

The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

## A SALVATION WORRIER.

She was one of that class of human beings whose one single engrossing thought is their own welfare—in the next world, it is true, but still their own personal welfare. The Roman Church recognises this class, and provides every form of specific to meet their spiritual condition. But in so far as Protestantism has thrown out works as a means of insuring future safety, these unfortunates are as badly off as nervous patients who have no drops, pills, potions, no doctors' rules to follow. Only tell a poor creature what to do, and he or she will do it, and be made easy, were it a pilgrimage of a thousand miles, with shoes full of split peas instead of boiled ones; but if once assured that *doing* does no good, the drooping Littlefaiths are left at leisure to worry about their souls, as the other class of weaklings worry about their bodies. The effect on character does not seem to be very different in the two cases.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

**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.**

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, C. Cohen, "Science, Faith, and God."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, F. A. Davies, "Salvation."

**OUTDOOR.**

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.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Herbert Thompson, "The Importance of Little Things." Illustrated.

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Corn Exchange, Market-place): 7.30, Joseph Bates, "Bible Fairy Tales." Vocal and instrumental music before lecture. Committee meeting, Wednesday, Nov. 11, at 8.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, a Lecture.

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Recital by Fred Morgan.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, 12 noon, "Charles Bradlaugh and the Myth-Makers"; 6.30, "The Soul."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central-buildings, 113 Islington): 3, Eurica, "Does Atheism Satisfy?" 7, Mr. Finucane, "The Awakening of Reason." Debating Society: Thursday, November 12, *Islington Chronicle*, No. 1, edited by W. D. Fairbrother.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Woollen, "The Mistakes of Jesus Christ."

NELSON (Alhambra Picture Hall, North-street, Scotland-road): G. W. Foote, 2.45, "Socialism and Religion"; 7.30, "Who and What was Jesus Christ?"

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, November 12, at 8, T. T. Lodge, "Death."

**OUTDOOR.**

DALKEITH: High-street, Saturday, November 7, at 7, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, at 3, a Lecture.

**TRUE MORALITY:**

Or, The Theory and Practice of Neo-Malthusianism.

IS, I BELIEVE,

**THE BEST BOOK**

ON THIS SUBJECT.

*Superfine Large-paper Edition, 176 pages, with Portrait and Autograph, bound in cloth, gilt-lettered, post free 1s. a copy.*

In order that it may have a large circulation, and to bring it within the reach of the poor, I have issued

A POPULAR EDITION IN PAPER COVERS.

A copy of this edition post free for 2d. A dozen copies, for distribution, post free for one shilling.

The *National Reformer* of September 4, 1892, says: "Mr. Holmes's pamphlet.....is an almost unexceptional statement of the Neo-Malthusianism theory and practice.....and throughout appeals to moral feeling.....The special value of Mr. Holmes's service to the Neo-Malthusian cause and to human well-being generally is just his combination in his pamphlet of a plain statement of the physical and moral need for family limitation, with a plain account of the means by which it can be secured, and an offer to all concerned of the requisites at the lowest possible prices."

The Council of the Malthusian League, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Allbutt, and others, have also spoken of it in very high terms.

Orders should be sent to the author.

J. R. HOLMES, EAST HANNEY, WANTAGE.

**CONTRADICTIONS OF THE BIBLE**

AND

**WHAT THE CLERGY SAY OF THEM.**

By HARRY BOULTER.

Post free, 1½d. One dozen, 1s., post free.

H. BOULTER, 21 FAIRBANK STREET, HOXTON, N.

**TWO SECULAR BURIAL SERVICES.** By Annie Besant and Austin Holyoake. Large type, good paper. Price by post 1½d., from the N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

**A NEW (THE THIRD) EDITION**

OF

**FROM FICTION TO FACT.**

By F. BONTE.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

REVISED AND ENLARGED.  
SHOULD BE SCATTERED BROADCAST.

**SIXTY-FOUR PAGES.**  
**PRICE ONE PENNY.**

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE

**MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA;**

OR, THE

**DEATH OF THE CLASSICAL WORLD.**

An Address delivered at Chicago by

M. M. MANGASARIAN.

Will be forwarded, post free, for

**THREE HALFPENCE.**

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

**PAMPHLETS by C. COHEN.**

Foreign Missions, their Dangers and Delusions ... ..	3d.
Full of facts and figures.	
An Outline of Evolutionary Ethics ...	6d.
Principles of ethics, based on the doctrine of Evolution.	
Evolution and Christianity ... ..	2d.
Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity..	1d.
Christianity and Social Ethics ... ..	1d.
Pain and Providence ... ..	1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

**DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH**

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

Being a Three Hours' Address to the Jury before the Lord Chief Justice of England, in answer to an Indictment for Blasphemy, on April 24, 1883.

With Special Preface and many Footnotes.

Price FOURPENCE. Post free FIVEPENCE.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

**H. S. WISHART, Freethought Advocate,**  
Lectures, Debates, or Missions on behalf of Mental Freedom and Social Happiness.

For dates, etc., write.—22 Sandhurst-avenue, Harehill, Leeds.

# CLEARANCE SALES.

## Great Reductions.

### MAKING ROOM FOR FRESH STOCK.

The first figure after each book or pamphlet represents the original published price.  
 The second figure is the price at which it is now offered.  
 P. means postage.

<b>BACON, LORD</b>	s. d. d. d.	<b>FOOTE, G. W.—Continued.</b>	s. a. d.
PAGAN MYTHOLOGY: or Wisdom of the Ancients ... ..	1 0 2 p. 1½	WILL CHRIST SAVE US? ... ..	0 6 2 p. 1
<b>BENTHAM, JEREMY</b>		DARWIN ON GOD ... ..	0 6 2 p. 1
CHURCH OF ENGLAND CATECHISM EXAMINED ... ..	1 0 8 p. 1	An important work.	
A masterly work, narrowly escaped prosecution.		<b>INGERSOLL, R. G.</b>	
<b>COHEN, C.</b>		THE DEVIL ... ..	0 6 2 p. 1
FOREIGN MISSIONS ... ..	0 9 8 p. 1	CHRISTIAN CATECHISM ... ..	0 6 2 p. 1
A complete exposure of the Missionary movement.		A brilliant work.	
<b>FEUERBACH, LUDWIG</b>		DEFENCE OF FREETHOUGHT ... ..	0 4 1 p. ½
THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION ... ..	1 0 8 p. 1½	Speech at a "blasphemy" trial.	
Demonstrates and explains the purely human origin of God.		ORATION ON THE GODS ... ..	0 6 1 p. 1
<b>COLLINS, ANTHONY</b>		SUPERSTITION ... ..	0 6 1 p. 1
FREE WILL AND NECESSITY ... ..	1 0 8 p. 1	ORATION ON VOLTAIRE... ..	0 3 1 p. ½
"Collins writes with wonderful power and closeness of reasoning."— <i>Huxley.</i>		ROME OR REASON? ... ..	0 3 1 p. 1
<b>FOOTE, G. W.</b>		COMING CIVILISATION ... ..	0 3 1 p. ½
PUBLIC DEBATE WITH REV. DR. McCANN ... ..	1 0 8 p. 2	ORATION ON WALT WHITMAN ... ..	0 3 1 p. 1
COMIC SERMONS ... ..	0 8 2 p. 1	WHAT IS RELIGION? ... ..	0 2 ½ p. ½
LETTERS TO THE CLERGY ... ..	1 0 8 p. 2	Ingersoll's Last Lecture.	
REMINISCENCES OF BRADLAUGH... ..	0 6 2 p. 1	<b>LLOYD, JOHN T.</b>	
OPEN LETTERS TO JESUS CHRIST ... ..	0 4 1 p. ½	FROM CHRISTIAN PULPIT TO SECULAR PLATFORM ... ..	0 6 1 p. ½
PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM ... ..	0 3 1 p. ½	<b>NEWMAN, CHARLES</b>	
HALL OF SCIENCE LIBEL CASE... ..	0 6 2 p. 1	(Cardinal Newman's Brother.)	
GRAND OLD BOOK ... ..	1 0 3 p. 1½	ESSAYS IN RATIONALISM ... ..	1 6 4 p. 2
Reply to Gladstone.		<b>SHELLEY, P. B.</b>	
SIGN OF THE CROSS ... ..	0 6 2 p. 1½	REFUTATION OF DEISM ... ..	0 4 1 p. ½
Contains important examination of the famous Tacitus passage.		LIFE, DEATH, AND IMMORTALITY ... ..	0 2 ½ p. ½
WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM? ... ..	0 3 1 p. ½	LETTER TO LORD ELLENBOROUGH ... ..	0 2 ½ p. ½
With a Defence of Atheism.		<b>STRAUSS, D. F.</b>	
		THE BIRTH OF CHRIST... ..	0 6 1 p. 1
		<b>WATTS, CHARLES</b>	
		IS IMMORTALITY A FACT? ... ..	0 4 1 p. 1
		RATIONALIST'S CATECHISM ... ..	0 3 1 p. 1
		<b>WHEELER, J. M.</b>	
		LIFE OF VOLTAIRE ... ..	1 0 2 p. 2
		FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST ... ..	2 6 6 p. 8

### FURTHER REDUCTION.

Half-a-Crown's worth from above list for Two Shillings.

IS THE BOOK OF THE HOUR. 21

**THE SALVATION ARMY**

---

AND

**THE PUBLIC.**

BY  
**JOHN MANSON.**

**Second Edition (Augmented).**

**OVER TWO HUNDRED PAGES—HANDSOMELY GOT-UP.  
 PRICE SIXPENCE.**

Freethinkers should buy, read, and circulate this searching criticism of the Salvation Army. It is one of the most thorough pieces of work done in our day. The author calls it "a religious, social, and financial study." He leaves no section of "the Army's" territory unexplored. He turns his powerful searchlight on every department of William Booth's gigantic undertaking. And the result is a startling exposure of the extraordinary methods of the greatest religious enterprise the world has seen since the establishment of Mormonism. Mr. Manson has earned the gratitude of all sane and honest reformers. His book cannot be neglected by anyone who is interested in human freedom and progress.

**Single Copies, Post Free, Eightpence.**

**Special Terms to N. S. S. Branches on Application.**

**Order Direct from**

**THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.**

**The Churches & Modern Thought.**

By **PHILIP VIVIAN.**

**One of the Most Remarkable Books Recently Published  
 can now be obtained at the "Freethinker" office.**

**Price 3s. 6d. net, by post 4d. extra.**

**Cheap Edition, 1s. net - same postage.**

Mr. A. W. BENN, author of *The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, says:—"Happening to dip into the first page, I found myself insensibly drawn along, and so continued, devoting to it the few half-hours at my disposal for recreative reading, without missing a word, until I had reached, with regret, the last page."

*A précis of the contents and a selection of over 100 Press opinions will be supplied on receipt of a half-penny stamp to cover postage.*