

THE

# Freethinker

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*Develop the good and the bad dies of atrophy. Man does not progress by trying not to walk backward. He progresses by walking forward.—G. W. FOOTE.*

## The Devil.

THERE are still people who bother their heads about the Devil, wondering "whether he is an actual personage or simply a picturesque Oriental expression for the impersonal power of evil." The Rev. Dr. David Smith regrets that it is "the fashion nowadays to disbelieve his personality," and that "ministers have so little to say about him." Of course, it would be a dreadful calamity to the Church if the Devil were to be entirely dropped from its theology. Dr. Smith himself makes the following quotation from Fielding: "Pray," said the sergeant to Partidge, "what sort of a gentleman is the Devil? For I have heard some of our officers say there is no such person; and that it is only a trick of the parsons, to prevent their being broke; for if it was publicly known that there was no Devil, the parsons would be of no more use than we are in time of peace." The dropping of the Devil is one of the symptoms of the disintegration of Christianity now taking place. Dr. Smith, being a genuine and consistent theologian, deplors the gradual disappearance of his Satanic Majesty. He contends that "there is nothing irrational in believing that there is a personal Devil"; that "Jesus taught that there is a personal Devil," and that "his language does not admit of being explained away as an accommodation to our moral [religious?] experiences except on the hypothesis of a personal adversary, malignant, vigilant, and subtle, constantly lying in wait, observing our weaknesses, and availing himself of our inattentions." Indeed, Dr. Smith even hopes that there is a personal Devil to share with man the responsibility for all the evil in the world. "It is a comfort," naively observes the reverend gentleman, "to think that the Tempter is in the background suggesting, prompting, alluring, and that while man is his agent and cannot be absolved of the guilt of complicity, he and not man is the author of the evil."

Yes, the doctrine of the Devil is pre-eminently comforting—to those who can believe it; but is it true? It is well-known that in the Old Testament there are only three passages (Zech. iii. 1, 2; Job i., ii.; 1 Chron. xxi. 1) in which Satan is referred to as a distinct super-human personality, and these passages date only from 519 to 300 before Christ. Thus, in the historical books of the Old Testament the Devil does not figure at all. Prior to the Babylonian captivity the Jewish people had no belief in the existence of such a being, nor any experience of him in their lives. In Psalm cix. 6 the term refers to some human adversary or opponent, and there are scholars who maintain that in Zech. iii. 1-4 Satan is merely the personification of the guilty and self-condemning conscience of Israel, while in Job i. 6 he appears as one of the sons or ministers of God. What we find in the later books of the Old Testament is Satan in the making. The term occurs

earlier, as in Numbers xxii. 22, 32, but it has no distinct personal reference, but signifies an adversary of any kind. The Satan that opposed Balaam, for example, was an angel of the Lord. As a matter of fact, in the Old Testament God and Satan are not morally antagonistic. What is attributed to Satan in the later passages is ascribed to God in earlier ones. It is in 1 Chron. xxi. 1 that any degree of ethical disharmony between the two makes its first appearance.

This is a point of vast importance. Satan arises only at a specific stage in the evolution of the idea of God. In 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 Jehovah is said to do what in 1 Chron. xxi. 1 is described as an act of Satan. Even to the last the Old Testament gives not the slightest hint that Satan is a fallen angel, although he does some things for which he is rebuked. But when we enter the New Testament we meet with a wholly different state of things. Here is fixed an impassable gulf between God and Satan, God being the author of all good, and the Devil the originator, instigator, and perpetuator of all evil, as well as the cause and instrument of its punishment. Here also the Devil appears as the head or prince of the kingdom of darkness, with angels and ministers at his constant beck and call. He is a monarch with absolute control over his domains. Dr. Smith asserts that the "Biblical doctrine of the Devil is original, and not borrowed by the Jews from their masters during the Captivity." He adduces no evidence to prove his assertion, but thrusts at us the further unverified assertion that the Persian doctrine of the Devil is radically different from the Biblical in that it is dualistic. Dr. John Massie makes a similar assertion in his article on "Satan" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Dr. Massie admits that there is a violent opposition between God and the Devil, but claims that "there is no Parsee dualism in any true sense." "All that can be said in this direction," he says, "is that the Satanic power is superhuman, and therefore equally superhuman is his capacity for seduction and destruction. But, though Satan is 'strong,' Jesus is 'stronger'; he can spoil Satan's goods, and destroy his works; Christ will finally bring him to naught and rescue his bondsmen, casting him and his angels into the eternal fire prepared for them." Surely, on his own showing, what Dr. Massie gives us is a wholly dualistic doctrine. God and the Devil are represented as two beings in deadly opposition, and the statement that the former is the "stronger" of the two does not do away with the dualism.

Now, this alleged conflict between the author of good and the author of evil, between the friend and the enemy of mankind, is itself a strong presumptive evidence against the objective reality of either. If God is the stronger, why is the weaker still so much to the fore? If Christ came on purpose to destroy the works of the Devil, why are the Devil and his works in such painful evidence in this twentieth century? Dr. Smith hopes that there is a personal Devil; but what about God who, according to Dr. Smith, created the Devil? Is he, too, proud of such a product of his infinite power and wisdom? Surely, if he is omnipotent, and the Devil is not, the continued existence of the latter is a burning disgrace to the former. If Jesus is stronger than the prince of darkness, he has culpably neglected to make the



proper and promised use of his superior strength, if his black highness is still at large. Long after Jesus had lived his Divine life, died his atoning, Devil-destroying death, and gone to glory, a New Testament writer reminded his readers that "your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour," as if neither the life, death, nor ascension of Jesus had had the least deterring effect upon his nefarious activity; and the preachers of to-day repeat Peter's words as if they were still as true as when first written. If Jesus exists, what has he been doing all through the centuries; and if the Devil is a superhuman person and has been always roaming about on that destructive mission, how is it that a single human being remains undevoured? Is it not much more reasonable to conclude that both God and the Devil, both the Prince of Peace and the Prince of this world of strife are alike the creations of the human imagination, and that both are bound to become increasingly unreal in proportion as scientific knowledge sinks into the minds of the people and succeeds in dominating their lives?

The orthodox doctrine of the Devil is only held now by a dwindling minority of old-fashioned divines. With no doctrine of God can that of the Devil be reconciled. Perceiving this the progressive theologians abandon the Devil, but hold on to God. It is their conviction that a good God could never permit the active existence of such a horrible monster as the Biblical Satan. They are quite right; but they make far too light of the fact that, though the Devil has vanished, the same is not true of what used to be called his works, and that as long as these exist, the existence of an infinitely good and loving God is both logically and ethically unthinkable. To be rid of the personal Devil, while still face to face with the evil and cruelty rampant in the world, is of no advantage whatever. Mr. R. J. Campbell evades this difficulty by affirming that "evil is nothing but resistance applied to the expression of fuller life," and that "if there is to be splendor in the expression the resistance must be there, if only that we may know the glow and grandeur of the overcoming." Surely Mr. Campbell cannot be ignorant of the mournful fact that myriads upon myriads are continually being utterly devoured by the evils in the world, and that if there be a God these are as much his children as the few who escape or overcome. Are the many heartlessly destroyed that the elect may "know the glow and grandeur of the overcoming"? Mr. Campbell utters a great and precious truth; but the truth he ignores is quite as real, and it flatly contradicts his falsely soothing doctrine of an all-good and all-loving God who is doing his best for all concerned. "Do what we will," says this New Theologian, "we shall end where we began: God it must be by whose will and power things are what they are if there be a God at all in any intelligible sense." That is undeniably true; but the truth of it can only land us in pure Atheism. Mr. Campbell describes his all-good and all-loving God as "deliberately afflicting us in order that we may rise in the scale of being by learning to obtain victory over the immediate causes of such affliction." Here again Mr. Campbell fails to consider the faith-shattering truth that the number of those who obtain the victory is insignificant as compared with those who are snuffed out. The cruelty of Nature, to which he refers, is a cruelty that ruthlessly blots out thousands of simple and innocent human beings, and such awful catastrophes have been periodically happening ever since the world began. Of course, Mr. Campbell flees for refuge to the belief in a future life. No life is snuffed out, he tells us; it is only the forms that perish, while the life goes on forever. That is another evasion of the difficulty. It is merely an escape from fact to fancy, a running away from reality to shelter behind a dream.

We hold that the facts of the world logically necessitate the dropping of God as they have already led to the giving up of the Devil. If there is a God there must be a Devil, coequal in power. If there is

no Devil there cannot be a God. Dr. Smith alludes to the "obsolete materialistic theory of the Universe"; but the divine is mistaken. That theory is not obsolete, but is the theory of the great bulk of our modern scientists. Carl Snyder, in his *New Conceptions in Science*, expresses a radically different opinion thus:—

"Physical science will not stop short of a reduction of the Universe and all it contains to the basis of mechanics; in more concrete terms, to the working of a machine. Meanwhile the scientific spirit will penetrate yet deeper. The same methods which have taken from us the childish and fantastic notions of our ancestors, and brought in their stead clear and rational conceptions of this world, will help us further. They will make possible the scientific organisation of industry, of politics, of morals—in brief, of the whole scheme of our daily lives."

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Truth About Free Will.—V.

(Continued from p. 51.)

PROFESSOR JAMES is forced to admit, as a scientific psychologist, that a profitable study of mental phenomena is impossible unless we postulate Determinism. But having admitted this, he attempts to find a place for the belief in "free will" as a "moral postulate." The region of morals thus becomes a place to which illegitimate and unscientific theories are banished—as though there could be any healthy morality in the absence of a sense of intellectual rectitude. This moral postulate consists in the belief that "what ought to be can be, and that bad acts cannot be fated, but that good ones must be possible in their place."\* In a writer usually so clear this somewhat ambiguous deliverance may be safely taken as indicating the desperate straits to which a capable man may be driven to find a foothold for "free will."

The question really turns upon what is meant by "ought" and "possible." As against Determinism, what should be meant by "possible" is that although one thing actually occurs, an entirely opposite thing might have transpired *without any alteration in the conditions*. If it does not mean this, then Professor James is merely saying, both in the sentence quoted and in a lecture on the same point in *The Will to Believe*, what every Determinist is saying. But as he asserts that a man is foolish who does not stand by "the great scientific postulate that the world must be one unbroken fact, and that prediction of all things must be ideally if not actually possible," and as prediction would be a sheer impossibility unless one thing only is possible under given conditions, one is driven to suspect confusion of thought in the sentence quoted.

To say that things ought to be, or that one ought to act in this or that manner, are common expressions, and, within limits, intelligible expressions. But we cannot really mean that without any alteration in the conditions other consequences than those actually resulting might have occurred; that, as Professor James would admit, is impossible. We are simply picturing an ideal end; nothing more. When, for instance, I say that men ought to think wisely, I do not affirm either that they do think wisely or that they can think so without modification of mental structure. I simply eliminate all those conditions that make for unwise thinking, leaving wise thinking as the only possible result. That is, I am conscious that under different conditions, different consequences will result, and imagination eliminates all conditions that are inimical to the desired end. So, too, with matters of morals. No one who understands the problem will assert that the murderer, with his heredity, his organisation, and his environment, could be other than he is. His being what he is, is one of the conditions that makes the "prediction of all things" ideally, if not actually, possible.

\* *Principles of Psychology*, ii, 573



In saying that he ought not to be a murderer, we are only saying that our ideal of human nature eliminates the conception of murder, and that our imagination can construct a human nature in which the desire to murder holds no place. The "moral postulate" does not, then, contain an assertion of the existence of uncaused volitions; it does assert that certain things *ought* to be, and bases this "ought" upon the modifiability of human nature, and upon the scientific axiom that any alteration in the factors of a problem will produce a corresponding alteration in the result. Whatever else there appears to be in the "ought" is a mere trick of the imagination; and the surprising thing is that a writer of the calibre of Professor James should not have been perfectly alive to this.

A cruder form of this position was upheld by the late Dr. Martineau in the statement that—

"We could never condemn one turn of act or thought did we not believe the agent to have command of another; and just in proportion as we perceive in his temperament or education or circumstance the certain preponderance of particular suggestions, and the nearer approach to an inner necessity, do we criticise him rather as a natural object than as a responsible being, and deal with his aberrations as maladies rather than sins."\*

Well, human nature might easily have been better than it is had our aberrations been always treated "as maladies rather than sins." The malevolence of religious feeling might not in this case have been so fully gratified, but the texture of our social consciousness would certainly have been of a better quality than it actually is. For the rest one may ask, is there any human action conceivable, an adequate cause for which cannot be found in "temperament or education or circumstances"? I think it would have puzzled Dr. Martineau to have named a single human action that lies outside the scope of these influences. Moreover, ethical judgments are really not concerned with the question of whether mental states are determined by temperament, education, and circumstances, or by a self-determining ego. Actions are either beneficial or injurious, and the nature of their cause can in no sense lessen our desire to encourage one class and discourage the other. Moral judgments are concerned with two sets of facts, and with two only—the sentiments that lead to action, and the effects of that action on self and society. All that lies beyond is a question of psychology on the one hand and of sociology on the other. But no matter how such sentiments are generated, their existence is a fact; and as no one questions that praise and blame have *some* effect on conduct, every requisite for a moral judgment is furnished by the facts.

The same writer also argues that "the moral life dwells exclusively in the voluntary sphere," and that "the impulses of spontaneous action do not constitute character." Neither of these statements seem to me accurate. Action, whether it be of an unreflecting or reflex kind, or whether it results after careful deliberation, must be equally the expression of all that is included under the term "personality." If the opportunity of stealing presents itself, I may be so far organically moral as to be unaware of any desire to steal, unconscious even of the opportunity to do so. Or I may be so poorly developed that it is only after a long and severe struggle that I decline to avail myself of the opportunity. But whether my action be spontaneous or deliberate, it must be equally an expression of character, of personality, and it is equally the outcome of temperament, education, and circumstances.

And if we accept the statement that moral action dwells entirely in the voluntary sphere we are committed to the curious position that all moral development tends to make man less moral. To be voluntary, an action must, as we have seen, be consciously performed in view of an end that is also consciously realised. But a large part of the more important

functions do not come under this category, while a still larger portion are only semi-voluntary. The care for wife and family, the conduct that leads to one doing one's duty to society, is not due to any conscious deliberation and resolve to act in this manner; with the great mass of people it springs from the organised impulses of our socialised nature. Most of us are prepared, if occasion demands, to justify our conduct in these directions, and we may also have floating through our minds, in a semi-conscious manner, the reasons why we act thus and thus; but it is absurd to say that our conduct has therefore been deliberately chosen and expressed.

Moreover, one need only study the moralisation of character that takes place with each of us, to see that the formation of moral habits is the most important part and the chief aim of the educative processes. Our aim here is nothing less than to so fashion character that it will place itself unquestionably and instinctively on the side of right. Family influences so curb and fashion the egotism of the young child that it requires an effort to act against the happiness of the family. Social influences continue the work and bring the individual into instinctive harmony with the welfare of the State. The mere repetition of a particular action involves the development of habit, and habit is meaningless unless it connotes a modified nerve structure that instinctively operates in a given direction. It is not, therefore, the man who does right only after deliberation and struggle who is the most moral, but the one with whom doing right is the most imperative of necessities. The man who does right after struggle demands praise, but chiefly for the reason that all weakness cries for support, or because he has in him the making of a more perfect character. But to place him as the superior of the one whose morality is the efflorescence of his whole nature is to misunderstand the ethical problem.

What, then, becomes of punishment, of responsibility, of praise and blame? On each of these points it is necessary to say something, although each has been answered, by implication, in what has already been said. As words, both "punishment" and "responsibility" have certain misleading associations, and their precise meaning need be made clear. Responsibility and punishment obviously go hand in hand, and they are linked together because they belong to legal phraseology rather than to a strictly scientific nomenclature. When I say that a man is responsible, I assert that he is accountable to some one or to some thing for his conduct. I am not responsible for my character being what it is, but my character being what it is I am accountable for my actions so long as certain other things are assumed. My responsibility, or accountability, is, therefore, not connected with the order of my mental states, with their character, or with their cause. It is an external fact forced upon the human organism, in this case, by the social structure of which it is a part. That this is a correct description of the nature of responsibility is shown by the fact that people commonly do not feel responsible towards foreign societies, and even within a given society the feeling of responsibility may be active in relation to one class of the community, and inoperative in relation to another class.

Leaving other aspects of this subject for the moment, let us turn to the meaning of punishment. Here we are dealing with a word of many shades of meaning, the only constant feature of which is the infliction of pain. Punishment, with one class, means little more than the infliction of pain because of certain actions committed, and is almost wholly of a retrospective character. But so far as punishment is inflicted in this spirit, it only serves to gratify feelings of malevolence. A certain element of healthy resentment may be associated with punishment, but it is soon swamped by the more powerful malevolent feeling. And if punishment begins and ends with reference to the past, then it is naturally revolting to inflict pain upon a man for doing what his organisation and environment pro-

\* *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii., p. 41.



duce. So far, one can agree with Professor Sidgwick that when a man's conduct is "compared with a code, to the violation of which punishments are attached, the question whether he really could obey the rule by which he is judged is obvious and inevitable."\* But when he goes on to add, "If he could not, it seems contrary to our sense of justice to punish him," the reply is, Not if the code is one that normal human nature can obey, and the special organism one that can be modified in a required direction to both his own benefit and that of others. For if our punishment is prospective instead of retrospective, looking to the past only for enlightenment as to the kind of individual we are dealing with, and using punishment as a means of creating a healthy modification of character, then punishment is merged in correction, and has a complete justification upon Determinist lines. Indeed, upon the basis of Free Will punishment is as wholly brutal as responsibility is absurd.

(To be concluded.) C. COHEN.

### To the Third and Fourth Generations.

"UNTO the third and to the fourth generation," says the inspired writer (Exodus xxxiv. 7), shall a man's iniquities be visited on his helpless descendants; and most people suppose that in one sense or another the statement is true. Commentators differ as to the nature of the retribution which overtakes the "children's children." Most of the older exegetes held that it would take the form of a special visitation of God. "God," says one, "shall bring such judgments on a people as shall be the total ruin of families." He shall cause the descendants of sinners "to fall by the sword, be taken captive, and enslaved." But this interpretation will not do for a generation that believes the universe is governed by immutable laws, and which shrugs its shoulders at the notion of deity who interferes in mundane affairs. Modern apologists have to find a meaning for the ancient text in harmony with modern thought. They have to show that the alleged sufferings of the sinner's descendants are the natural consequences of the former's sins, not the result of supernatural intervention; and their endeavors to do this have led to some curious speculations. It has been suggested that certain sins—e.g., drunkenness and immorality—produce in offspring certain defects, mental or physical, which are capable of being handed on by heredity. Imbecility is mentioned as one of these defects, and the notion has been widely accepted. One comes across it in unexpected places. In a certain chapter of *Richard Feverel*, for instance, an imbecile nobleman, Lord Lipscombe, is represented as the "headless, weedy, degenerate issue and result" of his father's profligate past. "Nowhere in fiction," writes the Rev. W. J. Dawson, "is there a more tremendous sermon on the inevitable consequences of sin than in that chapter of *Richard Feverel* called 'The Wild Oats Plea.'"

Now, while I have no desire to excuse or extenuate parental "sin," I deny that there is a shred of proof that imbecility, or any other mental defect, is ever due to this cause. Imbecility, like idiocy and feeble-mindedness, which are different degrees of the same thing, is a failure to develop mentally, an incapacity to learn. The view of its origin (when not accidental) accepted by most modern authorities is that it is due in the first instance to reversion—reversion as regards mental capacity (often correlated with an atavistic brain) to an early, and, in extreme cases, to a pre-human stage in the ancestral history. I say in the first instance, because, like all inborn qualities, imbecility is transmissible to offspring, and is, therefore, often inherited. To what the reversion is due we do not know, any more than we know to what hare-lip,

club-foot, and other abnormalities are due; but the recent Report of the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded distinctly negatives the belief that parental sin has anything to do with its causation. I know that a number of medical men and others still support the popular and theological view—at least as regards the effects of parental drunkenness—and I know the kind of evidence on which they rely. It takes the form of statistics showing that mentally defective children often have intemperate parents, the inference being that the filial defects are directly due to the parental vice. The fact is ignored that mentally defective children often have temperate parents, and no attempt is made to show that a larger proportion of defective children is born to intemperate than to temperate parents. A mass of evidence of this kind was examined by the Royal Commissioners, and brushed aside as worthless and misleading. The notion that imbecility is a consequence of parental sin is unsupported by any known facts, and the weight of authoritative opinion is against it.

Consumption is another form in which it is suggested that a man's iniquities are visited on his children, even to the fourth generation. In the chapter of *Richard Feverel* above referred to we meet with one, Darley Abaworthy, who in his youth had sown wild oats, and whose three consumptive daughters are represented as reaping the deadly harvest. Now, there is no more reason than in the case of imbecility for supposing that consumption is ever due to parental misconduct. Consumption is due primarily to a micro-organism—the *Bacillus tuberculosis*—in the absence of which it never arises. This pest is responsible for one in every seven or eight of the total number of deaths from all causes. It attacks more people than it destroys. It destroys mainly those who have what is called the consumptive diathesis—a constitutional incapacity to resist the attacks of this particular parasite. The tendency to consumption, the diathesis, is inborn, and therefore hereditary. It is never acquired, though the disease itself may be acquired by individuals who have not the diathesis, as in cases where exposure to unhealthy conditions, intense grief, or any other cause, has greatly weakened the vital powers. That consumptive children are born to errant fathers proves nothing. If errant fathers have consumptive children they also have children that are not consumptive, and consumptive children are often born to fathers whose lives have been blameless. It has never been shown that more consumptive children are born to fathers who have sown wild oats than to fathers who have not; and even were it shown we could not draw an inference from the fact unless we knew exactly what proportion of the offspring in either category had the inborn tendency which rendered them liable to contract the disease in any case. Clearly consumption does not afford a possible illustration of the verity of the Bible statement.

But the list of "modern instances" is not yet exhausted. Granting, it is sometimes said, that a father's vices, as such, do not affect his children's health, are not vicious men exposed to a certain disease which, if they contract it, may afflict their descendants even to the fourth generation? Clergymen have told their flocks that this is the nemesis referred to in the Decalogue, and popular novelists have given currency to the same view. In Sir Conan Doyle's story, *The Third Generation*, an innocent man develops signs of a loathsome disease from which his grandfather had suffered, and consults a famous specialist. "Do you think," he asks, "do you think the poison has spent itself on me? Do you think if I had children that they would suffer?" "I can only give one answer to that," replied the oracle. "'The third and fourth generation,' says the trite old text."

But even in the case of "specific disease" (as no one probably knows better than Sir Conan Doyle), there is no evidence that its effects ever extend beyond the second generation. A diseased father

\* *History of Ethics*, p. 10.



may indeed infect his unborn child, but the latter, if it survive, will cease to be infective long before it can have children of its own; hence the ancestral sin cannot affect the fourth, nor even the third generation. Unlike consumption and imbecility, this disease—due to a microbe discovered in 1905, but known inferentially long before that date—is not hereditary. A child born diseased is a child that acquires the disease—*i.e.*, the microbe—from its parent; it does not inherit it as it might inherit a tendency to gout or insanity, and it cannot, therefore, hand it on to its own children. Nor has it ever been shown that the children of a parent recovered from this disease are afflicted in any other way—in the form of physical deterioration, for instance. This assumption rests on no better foundation than the kindred assumption that the children of drunkards tend to be feeble-minded.

Thus, none of the modern meanings which it is sought to read into the ancient text will bear examination. Bad as the consequences of sin often are for the sinner, and also for the sinner's children, there is absolutely no proof that they can affect his descendants of the third and fourth generations. The belief enshrined in the Second Commandment is a vulgar error, handed down from a remote and ignorant past. It survives, like countless other errors, mainly because it happens to have found expression in a book which people are taught to look upon as Divinely inspired.

D. WAUDBY.

### Jesus Christ and the Primrose League.

ONE of the principal objects of the Primrose League is to uphold Christianity. Let us, therefore, examine the life of the founder of that religion under the microscope of respectability. At the outset, we find that Christ was merely the alleged son of a working man, which is dreadful; and that he was born in a stable, which is worse. As a boy, he was not well-behaved. He "sourced" his mamma at a very early age, and disputed with the "doctors." If we understand anything of medical men, the Son of Mary probably finished that discussion face downwards, whilst one of them administered a vigorous massage. If so, the prescription was not repeated to any purpose. By the time he reached man's estate he was a controversial hooligan, and his speech was strong enough to blanch the face of a fish-porter. People who disagreed with him were called "vipers," "whitewashed sepulchres," "devils," and "dogs," to mention some of the oratorical jewels. He also possessed a fearful temper. He would never have been fitted for a tea-fight at a tin tabernacle or an evangelical lawn-tennis party.

Christ's associates were anything but "twelve good men and true," despite the efforts of centuries of apologists. He called one of them "a devil," and we assume that he sometimes knew what he was talking of. Our blessed Savior also mixed with "publicans"; but this need not concern us unduly. Are not these tradesmen the backbone of the Conservative party? He also was seen with "sinners," including Marie Magdalen, whose reputation was so very fragile. We often prayerfully wonder how the "Virgin" behaved when the Ever-Blessed-Wielder-of-the-Jack-Plane used to bring Marie home to tea.

What is worse is that "the Lord" was not a teetotaler. On the contrary, he even encouraged people to keep their spirits up by pouring spirits down. There is even a grave suspicion that he was a gambler. That anecdote of the coin and the question, "Whose superscription is this?" seems to suggest pitch-and-toss.

A far more serious matter is that J. C.'s views on sociology approximated closely to anarchy. The topsy-turvy ideas he had concerning the distribution of wealth, his panegyrics of poverty, his denunciations of riches, all have a flavor about them.

But the last straw, the thing that finally places the Prophet of Nazareth beyond the pale of respectability, is that he did not respect the clergy. He cared no more for ecclesiastical authority than Voltaire. Small wonder that he finally left his country for his country's good. Surely an executed criminal is not a fit patron for the handsome knights and fair dames of the Primrose League. Judged by commercial tests, Christ's life was a financial failure. The Founder of the first Salvation Army lived and died a beggar, which every member of the Primrose League regards as one of the most abandoned beings on this planet. The Army and the managing director were sold for thirty shillings. Why was not Mister "General" Booth born two thousand years earlier?

Jesus has, it is true, been called "the Lord"; but the name is not mentioned in Burke or Debrett. What has respectability to do with thee, Mister Jesus Christ, sometime carpenter and joiner, of Nazareth?

Fortunately, English society is too firmly anchored to be washed away by the paltry spray of superstition. Here, thanks be to God, religion is a plaything and not a reality, an organised hypocrisy worked in the interests of the governing classes. Under the spiritual sceptres of Buddha, Confucius, Mahomet, or even Mumbo-Jumbo, precept is united with practice. But here on virtuous English soil we lightly tread the Primrose League path, until the steam-roller of Freethought shall squash the life out of Jesus as it has already pulverised Jehovah of the Jews.

VERDANT GREEN.

### Thomas Paine.

"In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,  
Will Cobbett has done well:  
You'll visit him on earth again,  
He'll visit you in Hell!"

BYRON'S careless epigram gives us in little the popular notion and the popular prejudice regarding one of the notables of history—he was always "Tom" Paine, and hell was never far from the thought or mention of him. There has been a slight improvement in public manners, perhaps in public intelligence, since my lord penned his merry lines.

It is now conceded by good scholars that, as much as any man, Thomas Paine helped to make the United States of America. He was the literary genius of the Revolution, and his burning words inspired the hearts of the people in the hours of discouragement and defeat. His phrase, "These are the times that try men's souls," illuminates that gigantic struggle, and has become one of the shibboleths of liberty. Without Paine the success of the American Revolution is almost unthinkable, and, despite the persistent effort of bigots to diminish and disparage him, his place in history is secure.

The great difference betwixt Paine and George the Third was that the latter firmly believed in the Christian hell and in the submission of the American colonists. Paine believed in neither, and very earnestly argued against both; but it has hurt him more to deny hell than the British supremacy.

Mr. Roosevelt, who has been much better educated than Paine was (the latter was born poor, and educated himself), has written many more books than Paine, but somehow he has never contrived to write a single phrase as memorable as the one quoted above. I believe this single phrase—"These are the times that try men's souls"—is worth all that Mr. Roosevelt has published.

In a rather unworthy way Mr. Roosevelt has associated his name with Paine by characterising the latter in one of his books as a "filthy little Atheist." This was an outrage to the hero of the Revolution, and it furnishes a flagrant instance of Mr. Roosevelt's bad literary manners. It was also a misleading and unjust characterisation. Paine was not filthy, not an Atheist, and he was in stature some five inches taller than the hero of Kettle Hill. It is true he was much inferior to Mr. Roosevelt in breadth of paunch and width of dental exposure; but these points are not in controversy.—*Michael Monahan in "The Papyrus."*

If I am to listen to another person's opinions they must be expressed in plain terms. There is quite enough that is problematical in my own mind.—*Goethe.*



## Acid Drops.

The virtuous newspapers have had their way, and the Rev. John Hugh Smyth-Pigott has been tried in a farcical manner under the Clergy Discipline Act before the Consistory Court at Wells Cathedral. Pigott wasn't there, and the case went through very smoothly without him. The Chancellor found him "guilty of immoral acts, immoral conduct, and immoral habits," within the meaning of the Act. Sentence upon the sinner was left to be pronounced by the Bishop. But how on earth will it affect the Spaxton Messiah? He is as safe and snug as ever in his Agapemone.

Rev. J. H. Jowett, of Birmingham, says that "a real Christian is always a true gentleman." Perhaps so. But there is many a true gentleman who is not a real Christian.

Dr. Dunkinfield Astley, who is lying with a broken leg in the British Cottage Hospital at Algiers, writes to the *Guardian* to discredit the story of his "astral" appearance at his vicarage, East Reedham. He believes that his *locum tenens* and the servant girl were both persuaded that they saw his "astral" part sitting in his study, but he thinks it was due to hypnotic suggestion on the part of the old housekeeper, who seems to have been seeing visions for some time. Thus endeth another ghostly bubble. We believe that hypnotic suggestion is the explanation of many visions, including a lot of things seen at Spiritist *séances*.

Mr. W. T. Stead has still a passion for ghosts. He does not appear to have seen one at any time himself, which is really a point in his favor, if he only knew it; but he knows a good many people who have, and he is satisfied that there are plenty to be seen, if you are capable of seeing them. "Why this place," he recently said to an interviewer, "is chock full of ghosts. If your eyes were open you would see them all around." Happily the interviewer's eyes were not open, and we hope Mr. Stead will always enjoy the same good fortune. It is when you begin to "see 'em" that the trouble commences.

Mr. Stead told the interviewer that ghosts are generally quiet,—which is decidedly lucky, but some "make a fearful row," and one objectionable variety goes in for "stone-throwing," but these are confined to tropical countries,—which is reassuring to the inhabitants of the temperate zones. It would drive an ordinary London policeman mad to see a stone go crashing through a jeweller's window and nobody in sight to be run in for throwing it. "Good God!" the poor bobby might say, "I must have done it myself."

The dear *Daily News* came out the other day with a leading article on "Second Sight." No doubt an interesting subject, in its way; but what our contemporary really wants is a larger measure of "First Sight,"—by which we mean ordinary sight, or common sense. The article in question refers to a hysterical Italian woman who predicted that Messina would be destroyed by an earthquake on the 8th, 18th, or 28th of December. Like all such stories, this one is circumstantially told; but, like most of such stories, it would very likely prove, on critical investigation, to belong to the huge chapter of superstitious fiction. Even if it be assumed as true, what does it prove? The *Daily News* takes it very seriously, and says that "If the story, with all its dates and details, can be established, psychologists and metaphysicians will have an enormous and vital problem to solve." Then it goes on to say:—

"We will only add that for the sceptic who dares to say 'chance' we profess in advance our whole-hearted contempt."

Thus to have a theory different from that entertained by an anonymous writer in the *Daily News* is an act of *daring*,—in the sense of impudence, and calls for no other answer than *contempt*. Such are the sense, taste, and manners of orthodox disputants. They treat the question as one of *morals*; to differ from them is to be a low, vulgar, and perhaps wicked character. Now we venture to remind our pious contemporary that the great Bacon, who was probably very much wiser than anybody at the *Daily News* office, pointed out more than once that in all such matters as this prediction of the doom of Messina it is the practice of superstitionists to count the hits and forget the misses. One lucky hit is counted a prophecy; a million failures go for nothing. At this rate, the editors of prophetic Almanacks ought to be considered as behind the scenes of the universe, for they generally foretell something that happens. In 365 guesses they are pretty sure to be near the mark now and then. In the same way, there are hundreds of hysterical women declaring what is coming to pass; once in a way it

does come to pass; but this is not a prophecy, it is a coincidence. And instead of using such terms as "dare" and "contempt" the *Daily News* should face the argument.

We have received some printed matter from the Salvation Army's Emigration Offices, dated January 18, 1909. The first is a circular signed by "Colonel" David E. Lamb, and we note the following printed on the left-hand margin: "Passages, First, Second, and Third Class, booked to all parts of the world by all Lines at all Seasons, and at ordinary prevailing rates." This shows whether the "Army" is after philanthropy or business. The English people fancy that William Booth is carrying away the "unemployed" to a better land. He is really carrying away the able-bodied, self-supporting working-men and lower middle-classes, by means of an emigration agency which works for profit like any other emigration agency, taking the commissions allowed by Shipping Companies, etc., for passengers. All the rest is sheer pretence, including the sneers at other Agents "who are only seeking their own interests."

Canada, the Boothite documents say, wants "5,000,000 of Britain's overflowing population." And the "General" hopes to get a commission on every one of them.

We don't talk politics in the *Freethinker*. But since the Salvation Army, which is a religious organisation, declares that five million brisk and enterprising Englishmen ought to go to Canada, we venture to say that the Land Laws should be altered so as to keep as many as possible of those five million brisk and enterprising Englishmen in England.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has had a bad cold. We hope he is now himself again. His retirement into his tent diminishes the gaiety of nations. He must feel this himself, for he felt bound to sparkle from the sick-room. Being asked by a newsagency for an announcement, he replied: "Kindly inform the public that I am dead. It will save me a great deal of trouble."

After all these years the Christian journals are still publishing appeals for the "Liberator" victims, and we wonder if these appeals are paid for at advertisement rates. There was a whole column occupied in last week's *Christian Commonwealth*. But it must be remembered, after all, that Christians owe the "Liberator" victims special compassion; for, as the appeal in the *C. C.* says, these "poor creatures" were led into this most crushing sorrow of their life largely by the influence of Christian men."

England is a great country. England is also a Christian country. There can be no doubt of it after the announcement that Miss Violet Charlesworth—who is called "the heroine of the 'Cliff Mystery'"—has been engaged for the music-hall stage at a salary of £300 a week. Lady artistes on the music-hall stage, who may find it difficult to make both ends meet, will understand now how to get on. It might be well, too, if they bore in mind the fact that "the heroine of the 'Cliff Mystery'"—yes, *heroine*—is a lady of piety, who is able to reel off Scripture by the yard.

Canon Scott Holland devoted nearly an hour at St. Paul's the other Sunday, to an elaborate attempt to show how supremely difficult it is to tell where Jesus Christ is. The reverend gentleman is perfectly right. No one has ever yet been able to locate the Divine Savior. One says he is here, another that he is there, while a third places him *some* where else. The God-man is the Will-o'-the-Wisp of history. Men say they see him, but never succeed in catching him.

The Rev. Dr. Balgarnie, preaching at Manchester recently, said that King David had been made to "lie down in green pastures" all his life-long. "Jehovah had been his guide, and had led him in paths of righteousness. Jehovah had been his protector and saved him in the evil hour." Has Dr. Balgarnie never read David's biography as contained in the Bible? The man had his good points, no doubt; but no Divine Guide and Protector prevented him from himself committing, or from ordering others—and specially his successor—to commit some of the foulest, blackest deeds on record. If David is a sample of what God does for man, to be rid of God would be the best of all riddances.

Preaching in Bristol Cathedral on a recent Sunday evening, the Rev. Melville Griffiths, M.A., told his hearers that the old, stable commercial firms of their city, "unlike some of the mushroom houses of the northern cities," had "for



three or four generations stood the test of time, and are now prosperous," because their founders believed in, and practised, "prayer, and were found in God's house on Sunday." The curious thing is, however, that they continue to prosper, although their present directors do not seem to be much given to prayer and church attendance. Of these he will "say nothing good or bad," beyond reminding them that they owe their present good fortunes to the piety of the founders. If the reverend gentleman had the courage to face the facts of life and the true philosophy of financial success or failure, he would clearly see what unmitigated nonsense he is permitted to pour out from his Cowards' Castle.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer is very easily pleased. He takes a bird's-eye view of the whole field of human history and says, "Behold, it is very good." "Always the wildest forces have been under the control of the Divine Love." The bloodiest wars, the cruellest persecutions, the most horrible tyrannies and oppressions, violent and destructive class-hatreds, the crushing of the weak by the strong—all "have been under the control of the Divine Love." What a strange anachronism the Divine Love must be. What wonderful eyes men of God have in their heads! All's well, hallelujah!

Rev. F. B. Meyer refuses to believe that the people are becoming less religious than they used to be, "though they no longer express their religious life through our churches, as they did once." Will Mr. Meyer tell us in what way they do now "express their religious life," or wherein their "religious life" consists?

Great heavens, what are we coming to? A man of God has just announced that Christianity provides for the "survival of the unfittest." There has been cruelty enough in connection with Nature's law of the Survival of the Fittest. But it is safe to predict that ten thousand times ten thousand more misery and pain and cruelty would ensue, if Grace's law of the Survival of the Unfittest were set in operation. The Rev. W. J. Tunbridge had better reconsider the whole matter in the light of maturer knowledge.

According to the *Methodist Times*, all that is wanted to set the world right is—"A Great Methodism." The Methodist Revival, we are told, "saved England from a revolution that might have been as fatal as the French Revolution." "The Methodist Revival was the forerunner of modern philanthropy." In short, had it not been for Methodism England would have reverted to its primitive savage state long ago. And Methodism is, of course, the one hope of the future. The joke comes in when we remember that Congregationalism speaks of itself in precisely the same terms. In face of this vain sectarian braggadocio, we venture humbly to suggest that England might have been much more advanced to-day, in every respect, had no Church of any name ever been set up within its borders. It is to Science, not to Religion, that we owe the rapid progress of the last hundred years.

Gipsy Smith has just captured Pittsburg for Christ. That announcement was confidently made after he had held one service in the famous city. The Gipsy does the same thing for every city he visits. He has been on the job now for some twenty years, with practically equal success all the time. And yet both England and America are farther away from Christ to-day than they were when this professional revivalist started on his lucrative career.

With reference to the appointment of Professor Abbott Lawrence Lowell as President of Harvard University, the *Christian World* remarks: "It is significant that whereas half a century ago it was thought necessary for a college president to be a theologian, only laymen are now considered eligible for the most distinguished of such posts." After this, we can read with a smile the report in the same column, of Gipsy Smith's conquest of Pittsburg. It simply means that the religious people there are having an exciting beanfeast.

The Rev. Dr. Warschauer is a Christian partisan with a vengeance. He knows that Jesus' proclamation of the Fatherhood of God transcended what Seneca taught in many a passage, by the fact that Christianity conquered the Roman Empire, and not Seneca's Pagan Philosophy. But perhaps the world would have been much better off to-day had Seneca's doctrines prevailed. Surely, not even Dr. Warschauer can be proud of the history of the Christian Church during the dismal Middle Ages. The world was never morally lower than it was then, even on the testimony of Christian historians.

The Rev. Dr. Waddy Moss, of Didsbury College, is an exceptionally wise man. Though a Wesleyan the reverend gentleman is a Higher Critic. As a Higher Critic he is aware that the Four Gospels are not strictly historical, and cannot contain the very words Jesus used. As a theologian, however, the Higher Critic is nowhere, as the following shows: "It did not matter if we had not the exact words of Jesus preserved, so long as we were sure we had his teaching." But did not Jesus embody his teaching in well-chosen words? How on earth, then, can we have his teaching if his words are not preserved? As a teacher, Dr. Moss must know what a difference in meaning the change of a single word often implies.

Mrs. Carrie Nation, the hard-mouthed, hatchet-wielding saloon-smasher, who is now ramping round Great Britain, claims "the approval of the New Testament for her methods." Some people will think that this is a very poor certificate.

The Church of England is holding a Mission in Birmingham, beginning on February 7. We have seen a printed circular in connection with the part of the Mission which "will (D. V.) be held in St. Cuthbert's Parish Church. It is signed J. P. Cushing,—but the gentleman's name really ought to be Gushing, the document being so full of "dear friends" and other sloppy expressions so much affected in religious circles. We don't think, however, that this Mission is going to be a big success. We understand that Christianity is going backward in Birmingham, and that two chapels have lately been converted into Picture and Variety halls.

The *Glasgow Herald* gives a summary, but evidently careful, report of the recent lecture by the Rev. Alexander Miller, M.A., at the Glasgow University on "The Problem of Theology as Conditioned by Modern Movements of Thought and Life." The lecturer gave up the idea of an infallible Church, and also declared that "the Inspired Book had been shipwrecked on the rock of criticism." But the Church and the Bible both gone, what remains? God's revelation, he said, must always be a personal revelation to the individual soul; which is precisely what Thomas Paine said when he argued that all revelation must be first-hand, since second-hand revelation is only hearsay. Mr. Miller is in a tight corner, and has to get out of it by means of considerable dexterity. One man's "experience of God" cannot be of any authority to another man; so the reverend gentleman falls back on "the spiritual consciousness of the race." This may mean the "inner light" of Tom, Dick, and Harry; but as that can never be of very much value, it is said that we must rely upon the consciousness of "the higher souls." They are the "experts," and we must go to experts in religion as we do in science. Which is all very pretty—only it breaks down at the critical point; for the statements of experts in science can be verified if necessary, whereas the statements of experts in religion rest only on a basis of personal authority. The facts, in the one case, are objective; in the other case, they are subjective; and this makes all the difference in the world. Moreover, the religious consciousness of even "the higher souls" depends on their training,—in other words, on the intellectual and moral environment in which they are born and bred. What they teach, therefore, depends upon earthly, not upon heavenly conditions.

Rev. L. Sandys Wason, vicar of Cury-with-Gunwalloo, Cornwall, is a very High Churchman, and his parishioners are apparently Low Churchmen. They don't like him and his "practices," and they have just expressed their dislike in a way that shows the sweet, restraining influence of religion. They broke into the church and smashed certain images of the Virgin and Child into atoms, and several pictures representing the stations of the Cross were torn from the walls, thrown into the churchyard, and broken to pieces.

By the way, it has been said (see our first article last week) that the earthquake at Messina was caused by a hoodigan attack upon an image of the Holy Child. We shall see if there is an earthquake in Cornwall.

Mr. R. J. Campbell is succeeding admirably, of late, in making God look ridiculous. Ever since the disastrous earthquake he has been making desperate efforts to clear the Divine character. "God it must be," he cries, "by whose will and power things are what they are if there be a God at all in any intelligible sense." Of course, if there be a God at all, he is responsible for everything; but that "there is a God at all in any intelligible sense" is what Mr. Campbell and his brethren have, so far, utterly failed to prove. God and Evil are flat and eternal contradictions.



"The War Against Evil" is the title of the Rev. R. J. Campbell's last printed sermon. We reproduce a characteristic passage:—

"If we were able to see eternal truth as it really is, our consciousness of evil would disappear. But while we have the latter it is our business to make war upon all the causes of suffering and wrong, and, as far as we can, make an end of them. It is very striking and impressive that Jesus is here made to declare that the ultimate responsibility for the presence of these things rests with God, and that they only exist in order that we may overcome them, and in so doing manifest God's eternal goodness and joy."

It must be very gratifying to Jesus to know that Mr. Campbell regards this view as "the only sensible one to take." But for all that Mr. Campbell's sentences are so extraordinarily foolish that we can hardly understand how people who do any thinking at all could fail to see through them. How on earth does Mr. Campbell know what would happen if we could see eternal truth as it is? He admits by implication that no man—which we presume includes himself—is able to see it. Why, then, does he make any assertion about it? The poet Longfellow wrote that "things are not what they seem." Of course the statement may be true, but how did he know it? The truth is that when men, even clever men, talk religion, they reel off nonsense as readily as a duck takes to water.

Mr. Campbell says, practically, that there is no such thing as evil; and then he goes on to say that it is our duty to fight against it; that is, to fight against nothing. Later on he says that pain and struggle are real enough, but they are the conditions of man's moral and spiritual development. Mr. Campbell, who knows everything, as usual, is quite sure that Omnipotent Omniscience could not design it otherwise. Finally, he argues that the end justifies the means, and that we shall all see that God was right some day. But this is prophecy, and the way to answer a prophet is to prophesy the opposite.

Pointing to a sternly sarcastic passage in Hardy's *Tess* and a stern passage in Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, Mr. Campbell deplores that humanitarians are "throwing over altogether the belief in a divine government of the universe." Well, we are glad to see that Mr. Campbell's perceptions are widening a little. We are also glad to see that he is reading better books than he used to—if we may judge by his pulpit references.

Referring to the Italian earthquake, one of Heaven's spokesmen said recently: "Brethren, we must be exceedingly careful, else the wrath of God may fall on us also." How eminently worthy of the God of love such an utterance is! Vengeance and respect of persons are two typically Christian virtues, which are always ascribed to the Deity and exhibited by his devotees.

The *Academy* is pretty nearly touching bottom. After referring to the *Evening Standard's* suggestion that the destruction of Messina by the earthquake was probably, or at least possibly, due to "a blasphemous parody printed in a Radical paper of that city," our pious weekly contemporary says it is "glad to notice that a workaday evening paper is not above confessing to a belief in the possibility of the supernatural." Evidently any sort of belief in the supernatural is better than none at all; even the belief in a God who destroys a whole city in order to show his anger at the contents of a comic journal.

Earthquake shocks have been felt in the Philippines, and the volcano Lagnas, in the south-western part of the Island of Luzon, has violently erupted, doing great damage to the surrounding country. Fields are ruined and highways impassable. The people who were saved rushed to the hills. Three cheers for "Providence."

The eastern Mediterranean has also been visited with fresh earthquake shocks. Three hundred dwellings were destroyed in the villages of the Phocæa district. "He doeth all things well."

The *Catholic Times* does well to taunt the Protestants who talk so much of "Roman persecutions" with the murder of Servetus by John Calvin and the disembowelling by Elizabeth of her Catholic subjects. There is also truth in its assertion that "top dogs are very prone to persecute, and bottom dogs to complain of being persecuted." But this is not the sum-total of the matter, Christianity, and

the Catholic Church which is its highest expression, has the doctrine of salvation by faith; and that doctrine was logically made the basis of systematic persecution. This evil doctrine inspired both Catholic and Protestant in their bloodiest deeds. Spordic and impulsive persecution may be the work of undisciplined human nature, but systematic persecution rests upon a dogmatic basis, and is invariably inspired or carried on by Churches.

We see that the *Catholic Times* quotes with approval the statement of a French writer that "We [the Catholics] are destined to struggle for our Faith in the furnace seven times heated of a Pagan democracy." We hope it won't be quite as hot as that. But we are glad that the Catholic Church has a great struggle before it, and we have a strong hope that it will be soundly beaten.

A perfervid writer says that "the bringing of this selfish, obstinate, sin-enclaved old world to Christ is the biggest job ever undertaken." So it is. It was undertaken nearly two thousand years ago, and it is less likely to be performed to-day than at any former period. The world will never embrace a palpable lie: only the gulls do that, of whom there are always too many.

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace says that Christian missions are "a hideous hypocrisy" while the British government "permit trade in rum and firearms, and every kind of robbery and persecution of the natives." But why include "rum"? Jesus Christ was not a teetotaler. He may not have cared for rum, but he would have found something eligible amongst the great variety of drinks to-day—in Christian countries.

We are sorry to see that the first of the six new French battleships of the "Dreadnought" type is christened "Voltaire." No doubt it is meant in honor of the great Freethinker, but a name like his ought not to be associated with violence and bloodshed.

Liverpool City Council has decided against Sunday Music for the people by a majority of 43 to 22. A close time is necessary for the Christian citizens who get drunk on Saturday night and have to get ready for work on Monday morning.

Chancellor Espin, at Chester Consistory Court, had several "angels" in a case before him. He could not solve the problem, who was the "Angel of the Meridian," neither could anybody else in court, so the great question was adjourned for further information. It will be a sad thing for England if this vital question isn't settled promptly. Hurry up, gentlemen, hurry up!

An old lady died recently in London who threw away money with a man's head on it (the King's). Few people share this prejudice. For our own part, we wouldn't throw away money if it had a god's head on it.

Rev. Conrad Noel, a Christian Socialist, has been telling a Burton meeting, under the auspices of the Independent Labor Party, that "the greatest Atheist in the country, Mr. Foote, was a strong anti-Socialist." Mr. Foote accepted the Presidency of the National Secular Society in February, 1890. From that moment he ceased to side with any political party or to share in any direct political action. He has never written or spoken for or against any political party whatever for nineteen years. He has worked, when possible, with men of all parties for the National Secular Society's objects. He has spoken at Socialist demonstrations in favor of Secular Education, and he sent a subscription towards Mr. Herbert Burrows' election expenses at Haggerston, because Mr. Burrows was in favor of Secular Education and the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws while the other candidates were not. We advise Mr. Noel to bring his public statements up to date, and to see that they convey an accurate impression to his hearers.

Mr. Noel might also reflect that even if Mr. Foote were engaged in a crusade against Socialism it would prove nothing. There are Atheists who preach Socialism. On the other hand, there are eminent Christians who oppose Socialism. This referring to individual Atheists, as if Atheism were responsible for their particular opinions in politics or sociology, is really childish.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 31, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester; at 3, "God's Message to Messina"—at 6.30, "The Silence of the Tomb."

February 7 and 14, North London; 21, Glasgow; 28, Birmingham.

March 7 and 14, Queen's Hall, London.

**To Correspondents.**

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—February 14, Glasgow.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 31, Birmingham Town Hall. February 7, Aberdare; 14, West Ham; 28, Glasgow. March 7, Manchester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £89 14s. 6d. Received since.—A. D. Corrick, 10s.; W. Horrocks, £2 2s.; C. O. M., 2s. 6d.; W. Bean, 5s.; E. B., £1 1s.

ATHEIST.—It is not "our" article at all; neither is it our duty to defend every expression in a reprinted article. We are responsible in a general way for such an article's being of interest and value. To cut out what we are not prepared to endorse fully would be an inexcusable mutilation. A writer is entitled to go before the public, if at all, in his natural condition.

C. GOODWIN.—(1) Sir Francis Galton's statistics *re* the efficacy of prayer, were published in the *Fortnightly Review*, August, 1872.

(2) The three great sees of the early Church were Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome. Alexandria fell into the hands of the early Mohammedans; Constantinople founded the Greek Church, and Rome the Latin Church.

H. BOULTER.—We would gladly deal with the subject in the *Freethinker*, but the letters on the orthodox side in the *Islington Gazette* are such miserable stuff that we should only waste our time in dealing with it. Some things are really below criticism.

W. HORROCKS, subscribing to the President's Fund through Mr. J. W. de Caux, "hopes Mr. Foote may be spared a long time to go on with his noble work."

W. SMITH, 2A Chapel-street, Edgware-road, London, W., sells the *Freethinker* and displays a poster; he also supplies and stocks Mr. Foote's publications.

J. M. M.—The moral sense and the moral judgment are useful phrases for theological jugglers. Finding that "the voice of conscience" differs all over the world, they shift their ground from the "voice" to the feeling with which it is associated. You feel you must do right, they say, and that feeling is implanted by God. But that feeling is a social product; it is generated in the individual by heredity, and the constant pressure of the social environment. Jurisprudists sometimes say that conscience is a residuum of law. In the large general sense, taking law written and law unwritten, this is quite true. Morality, in short, both on the intellectual and on the emotional side, is the reaction of society upon the individual.

OTTO THOMSON (Stockholm).—Your fraternal greetings are reciprocated.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

We have a letter from Georges Brandes which, with our comments, has unavoidably to stand over till next week.

A. B. MOSS.—We will wait as you suggest. Many thanks.

GEORGE LEWIS.—Why do you send matter for the *Freethinker* to Miss Vance? Don't you know who the Editor is? Or can't you read the standing notices printed in this column every week?

E. PACK.—Woffendale is as right about Robert Taylor as he was about John Stuart Mill. Ask him for his evidence that Taylor "returned to the doctrines of the Established Church." It is a wonder he didn't say that Taylor became a Presbyterian. Taylor was so badly treated in gaol during his second (2 years) imprisonment for "blasphemy" that his health was seriously impaired. He married a wealthy lady, who thought better of him than the Christians did, and retired from active work until his death, which took place at Jersey on June 5, 1844.

P. FOLDING.—We shall deal with the point. Thanks.

W. T. FENN.—There are female "saints" but no female "angels," we believe. See paragraph.

E. B., whose subscription to the President's Fund is acknowledged this week, sends it as "a token from one who admires the Protagonist of intellectual freedom and unfettered free speech."

G. D.—Will use them if we can.

J. S. EAGLESON.—Better get it printed nearer home. We don't do general printing at our office.

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.

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.

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 delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, to-day (Jan. 31) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. His subjects will probably attract large audiences. In the evening, especially, those who want to make sure of seats should come early.

A good many courses of Freethought lectures have been delivered of late years at Stanley Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd. This served to advertise the place more effectually, and at one time there was talk of the Salvation Army getting hold of it. Some religious body or other was bound to try to put a spoke in the Secularist wheels, and soon after the last course of Freethought lectures the Christian Evidence people made a gigantic effort, and engaged Stanley Hall for nearly all the rest of the winter. A good deal of trouble has been found, in the face of Christian bigotry and spite, in obtaining another hall in the district. Miss Vance has at length, however, secured the Public Hall, St. Pancras Baths, Prince of Wales's-road, for the first, second, and third Sundays in February. These three lectures will be under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd. Mr. Foote will deliver the first and second, and Mr. Cohen the third. North London "saints" are invited to co-operate with the Society's secretary (Miss Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.) in advertising these meetings and endeavoring generally to make them very successful.

Mr. Foote lectures at Glasgow on February 21, and at Birmingham (in the great Town Hall) on February 28. After that he will deliver two special new lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall. During the rest of March and April he expects to be visiting the provinces, and Branches outside London that wish to hear him then should communicate with him at once.

Mr. Lloyd delivers two lectures to-day (Jan. 31) in the big Birmingham Town Hall, and we hope the local "saints" are doing their very best to secure him big audiences. The lectures are at 3 and 7 p.m.; and for half an hour before the first lecture, and three quarters of an hour before the second, a military band of thirty performers will render programs of first-class music. Admission to all seats is free, with collections in aid of expenses. There will be the usual 5 o'clock tea for visitors in one of the Town Hall ante-rooms.

The special course of Freethought lectures at the Shoreditch Town Hall finished on Sunday evening with an excellent address by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, which was much enjoyed by a very good audience.

Praise and thanks must be given to the Kingsland and Bethnal Green Branches for their activity in assisting to make the Shoreditch Town Hall lectures a success. Messrs. Davies, Samuels, Silverstein, and Ramsey also worked hard at the Sunday morning outdoor meetings at which the lectures were advertised.

The Burns Anniversary has been celebrated again with some haggis and more whiskey. It is a hundred and fifty years since Robert Burns was born, and it is wonderful what nonsense is still written and spoken about it. The newspapers, of course, carefully hide the fact that he was at heart a most thorough-going Freethinker; his whole character and genius being intensely Pagan. Instead of telling the truth, the newspapers indulge in all sorts of foolish observations on the great—we might almost say the only—poet of Scotland. For instance, the *Daily News* remarked that Burns "never wrote anything quite first-rate in English." This is not true. Burns' strength certainly lay in the Ayrshire vernacular, but he puts some of his finest "bits" into pure English. The famous passage on "pleasures" in *Tam O' Shanter* is one of them.

One of the finest and truest things ever written about Burns was written by his countryman James Thomson ("B. V."), whose birth only was Scottish, his whole training and milieu being English. After celebrating Burns' care-



lessness of churches and creeds, and the earthliness of his outlook, Thomson concluded :—

“ So fearless, stalwart, erect and free,  
He gave to his fellows right royally  
His strength, his heart, his brains ;  
For proud and fiery and swift and bold—  
Wine of life from heart of gold,  
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled  
Full-billowed through his veins.”

His heathen manhood !” That is the exactly right note.

South Wales “ saints ” will please note that Mr. Lloyd’s lectures on February 7 are to be delivered, not at Aberdare, but at the Grand Theatre, Aberaman.

One result of Mr. Foote’s late visit to Nelson is the enrolment of several new members. Another result is the starting of a Discussion Class which is to meet on Monday evenings. District “ saints ” can obtain particulars of Mr. V. Page, 44 Leeds-road, Nelson.

### The President’s Honorarium Fund.

IT seems necessary, or at least advisable, that I should say something about this Fund. It is not a subject that I like talking about, but I have to do many things that I don’t like. I couldn’t be where I am, and do what I do, otherwise. I can’t say I liked going to prison,—but I went.

Mr. Richard Johnson, an old friend of mine, a veteran Freethinker, and one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, writes me a longish letter in forwarding his annual subscription. He does not like to see the Honorarium Fund appearing in the *Freethinker* week after week throughout the year. He says that the original idea was that “ a number of friends should guarantee a subscription and complete the object at once.” Well, if this could be done, I should be as pleased as anybody ; and perhaps it may be tried next year, on the basis of the 1908-1909 subscription lists. But, in the meantime, what else can be done except continuing the appeal in these columns ?

One thing may be done, however, in Mr. Johnson’s direction. Those who intend to subscribe to this Fund may be invited to make an effort to remit during the next week or two,—say during February. If they do this—and I really wish they would—the matter might rest until June, when the party could be asked to make up the balance then lacking.

I must say, though, that I see nothing to be ashamed of, even if the appeal were a thousand times more distasteful than it is. It is honest and above-board. And the personal relation in which it places me and the subscribers is not without its compensations.

While the pen is in my hand, I may say something else—once for all. The £300 asked for is not going entirely into my private pocket. Besides the expenses attending the conduct of my paper, including a considerable amount for books, periodicals, etc., I have now the entire responsibility for the paper itself resting upon me. Whatever loss is involved in carrying on the *Freethinker* and its adjuncts—necessitated by the peculiar conditions of the case—I am now bearing. The auditor of the old Company is retained under this new arrangement, and I expect to let the party know, in due time, the audited extent of the drain upon me in this direction. Altogether, it must be perceived that the President’s Honorarium Fund is—for the present, at any rate—largely for the support, not merely of himself, but of something which is a vital necessity to the Freethought movement.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Advertising in the “ Freethinker.”

WE believe that Freethinkers have never given their weekly organ a fair chance in the matter of advertisements. We are not now asking them to throw

their money away. We are only inviting them to make a trial. If it fails, they will not lose much ; and if it succeeds, they may make a decent profit. We incline to the opinion that they will find the *Freethinker* a much better medium for advertising than they suspected.

Of course it is no use advertising a purely local business in this journal. Our circulation is not confined to one spot ; it extends all over the United Kingdom, and in a sense all over the world, for subscribers’ copies are posted to nearly every part of the globe. Some of our readers must be engaged in business which, if purely local at present, might be extended by means of the post and the railway. Some of them, perhaps, are engaged in business which mainly depends on advertising. We invite both classes to make an experiment in our columns. They are sure to do some business with our readers, and they may do more than they fancy.

With regard to terms, we are willing to meet them in every possible way. We cannot print and circulate advertisements for nothing, but we will quote the lowest figure we can for a start, according to space and display ; in the hope that advertisers will find that they can afford a better price in time. Some businesses, of course, have to be continuously worked up to be worth anything.

Some of our readers may have things to sell without caring to put down money for a displayed advertisement. To meet their case we propose to run a “ Business Cards ” column, after this fashion :—

BARKER’S BRACES.—Easy and Wear Well. Good Material, Good Work, and Good Value. Try a Pair. Post free, 1s. 6d.—2 Fairplay-street, Honesty-road, E.C.

This dummy advertisement will give an idea of what we mean. We propose to charge 2s. for half an inch or 3s. 6d. an inch in this column. Things for sale, lodgings, professional services,—anything could be advertised under the “ Business Cards ” heading. Will our readers give it a trial ? If they do, they will please remember that a remittance must be sent in with the copy of the advertisement, and that Monday morning is the latest time for insertion in the following Thursday’s *Freethinker*.

We ought to receive twenty of these “ Business Card ” advertisements for our next issue.

And now we have a word for our general readers. We suggest that, considering the too prevalent Christian boycott, it would be a good thing for Freethinkers to deal with each other when they can,—at least, to a certain extent ; and that, in particular, it would be well to give a trial order to those who advertise in the *Freethinker*, and thus help to keep the paper going. There is no need to go on buying goods if they are not worth the price ; all we submit is that the advertisers should be given a fair chance. And we may add, on the other side, that it will be of no use to advertise quack articles or shoddy goods in a journal like ours ; for its readers are a picked body of men and women, and they think.

It is observable that the nature of the understanding is more affected with affirmatives and actives than with negatives and privatives, though in justice it should be equally affected with them both ; but if things fall out right, or keep their course, the mind receives a stronger impression of this than of a much greater number of failures, or contrary events, which is the root of all superstition and credulity. Hence Diagoras, being shown in Neptune’s temple many votive pictures of such as had escaped shipwreck, and thereupon asked by his guide if he did not now acknowledge the divine power ? answered wisely, “ But first show me where those are painted that were shipwrecked, after having thus paid their vows.”—Bacon.

A tendency to superstition is part and parcel of human nature. When we think we have got rid of it, we shall find it is but hiding in nooks and crannies, only to come forth as soon as it has a chance of doing so with impunity.—Goethe.



## Life and Opinions of Darwin.—II.

(Continued from p. 61.)

DARWIN'S father, Robert Waring Darwin, the third son of Erasmus Darwin, settled down as a doctor at Shrewsbury. He had a very large practice, and was a very remarkable man. He stood six-feet two and was broad in proportion. His shrewdness, rectitude and benevolence gained him universal love and esteem. He was revered by his great son, who always spoke of him as "the wisest man I ever knew." His wife was a daughter of Josiah Wedgwood, and her sweet, gentle, sympathetic nature was inherited by her famous son. She died in 1817, thirty-two years before her husband, who died on November 13, 1848.

There is little, if anything to be gleaned from any published documents as to the opinions of Darwin's father. Upon this point Mr. Francis Darwin has been too zealously discreet. Happily I have been furnished with a few particulars by the Rev. Edward Myers, minister of the Unitarian chapel at Shrewsbury.

Mrs. Darwin was herself a Unitarian, and she attended with her family the Unitarian chapel in High-street, Shrewsbury, of which the Rev. George Case was then minister. The daughters were all baptised by Mr. Case and their names entered in the chapel register; but the sons were for some reason baptised in the parish church of St. Chad. Charles Darwin attended Mr. Case's school, and was by him prepared for the Shrewsbury Grammar School. Up to 1825, when he went to the University of Edinburgh, he, with the Darwin family, regularly attended the Unitarian place of worship. But in 1832, after the erection of St. George's Church, Frankwell, they left the chapel and went to church.

"Dr. Darwin," says Mr. Myers, who succeeded Mr. Case, "was never a regular attendant at the Unitarian chapel, but he went occasionally. Indeed, he never regularly attended any place of worship, and his extreme views on theological and religious matters were so well known that he used to be commonly spoken of as 'Dr. Darwin the unbeliever,' and 'Dr. Darwin the infidel.'"

The question naturally arises, how could Dr. Darwin have seriously intended his son to become a clergyman? Mr. Myers offers, as I think, a sufficient explanation. The Church at that time was looked upon as simply a professional avenue, like the law or medicine; and, as Mr. Gladstone remarks in his *Chapter of Autobiography*, "the richer benefices were very commonly regarded as a suitable provision for such members of the higher families as were least fit to push their way in any other profession requiring thought and labor." But, the reader will exclaim, how was it possible to include Charles Darwin in this category of incapables? The answer is simple. Darwin was not brilliant in his youth. His great faculties required time to ripen. He failed as a medical student because he had an unconquerable antipathy to the sight of blood, and was so afflicted by witnessing a bad operation on a child that he actually ran away. He was always regarded as "a very ordinary boy," to use his own words; and his father once said to him, "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and your family." It was a singularly infelicitous prophecy, but it shows Dr. Darwin's mean opinion of his son's intellect, and enables us to understand how "Dr. Darwin the infidel" devoted his unpromising cub to the great refuge of incapacity.

Either the Rev. George Case belonged to the more orthodox wing of Unitarianism, or the teaching at the Shrewsbury Grammar School must have effaced any sceptical impressions he made on the mind of Charles Darwin, whose early piety is evident both from his *Autobiography* and from several of his letters. And this fact is of the highest importance, since it follows that his disbelief in later years was

the result of independent thought and the gradual pressure of scientific truth.

"I well remember," he says, "in the early part of my school life that I often had to run very quickly to be in time, and from being a fleet runner was generally successful; but when in doubt I prayed earnestly to God to help me, and I well remember that I attributed my success to the prayers and not to my quick running, and marvelled how generally I was aided."

Speaking of himself at the age of twenty or twenty-one, he says, "I did not then doubt the strict and literal truth of every word in the Bible." When a little later he went on board the *Beagle*, to take that famous voyage which he has narrated so charmingly, and which determined his subsequent career, he was still "quite orthodox." "I remember," he says, "being laughed at by several of the officers (though themselves orthodox) for quoting the Bible as an unanswerable authority on some point of morality." Darwin charitably supposes "it was the novelty of the argument which amused them." But why was the argument novel? Simply because the Bible is a kind of fetish, to be worshiped and sworn by, anything but read and followed. As Mill remarked, it furnishes texts to fling at the heads of unbelievers; but when the Christian is expected to act upon it, he is found to conform to other standards, including his own convenience. There can be little doubt that the laughter of his shipmates produced a powerful and lasting effect on Darwin's mind. His character was translucent and invincibly sincere; and the laughter of orthodox persons at their own doctrines was calculated to set him thinking about their truth.

Being a failure as a medical student, Darwin received a proposal from his father to become a clergyman, and he rather liked the idea of settling down as a country parson. Fancy Darwin in a pulpit! The finest scientific head since Newton distilling bucolic sermons! What a tragi-comedy it would have been!

Darwin carefully read "Pearson on the Creed," and other books on divinity. "I soon persuaded myself," he says, "that our Creed must be accepted." He went up to Cambridge and studied hard.

"In order to pass the B.A. examination, it was also necessary to get up Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* and his *Moral Philosophy*. This was done in a thorough manner, and I am convinced that I could have written out the whole of the 'Evidences' with perfect correctness, but not, of course, in the clear language of Paley. The logic of this book, and, as I may add, of his *Natural Theology*, gave me as much delight as did Euclid. The careful study of these works, without attempting to learn any part by rote, was the only part of the academical course which, as I then felt and as I still believe, was of the least use to me in the education of my mind. I did not, at that time, trouble myself about Paley's premises; and, taking these on trust, I was charmed and convinced by the long line of argumentation."

Darwin probably owed most to the *Natural Theology* of Paley. Writing to Sir John Lubbock nearly thirty years later, he said: "I do not think I hardly ever admired a book more." Perhaps it was less the logic of the great Archdeacon than his limpid style and interesting treatment of physical science which charmed the young mind of Darwin. He had a constitutional love of clearness, and his genius was then turning towards the studies which occupied his life.

Scruples gradually entered Darwin's mind. He began to find the creed not so credible. One of his friends gives an interesting reminiscence of this period. "We had an earnest conversation," says Mr. Herbert, "about going into Holy Orders; and I remember his asking me, with reference to the question put by the Bishop in the ordination service, 'Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit, etc.?' whether I could answer in the affirmative, and on my saying I could not, he said, 'Neither can I,' and therefore I cannot take holy orders." Still he did not abandon the idea altogether; he drifted away from it little by little until



it fell out of sight. Fourteen or fifteen years later, writing to Sir Charles Lyell, he had gone so far as to speak of "that Corporate Animal, the Clergy."

Looking back over these experiences, only a few years before his death, Darwin was able to regard them with equanimity and amusement. There is a sly twinkle of humor in the following passage:—

"Considering how fiercely I have been attacked by the orthodox, it seems ludicrous that I once intended to be a clergyman. Nor was this intention and my father's wish ever formally given up, but died a natural death when, on leaving Cambridge, I joined the *Beagle* as naturalist. If the phrenologists are to be trusted, I was well fitted in one respect to be a clergyman. A few years ago the secretary of a German psychological society asked me earnestly by letter for a photograph of myself; and some time afterwards I received the proceedings of one of the meetings, in which it seemed that the shape of my head had been the subject of a public discussion, and one of the speakers declared that I had the bump of reverence developed enough for ten priests."

The Rev. Joseph Cook, of Boston, accounted for Matthew Arnold's scepticism by the flatness of the top of his head. Mr. Arnold lacked the bump which points to God. But how did Mr. Cook account for the scepticism of Darwin, whose head was piously adorned with such a prodigious bump of veneration?

While at Cambridge, studying for the Church, Darwin made the acquaintance of Professor Henslow and Dr. Whewell. He read Humboldt "with care and profound interest," and Herschel's *Introduction to the Study of Natural Philosophy*. These writers excited in him "a burning zeal to add even the most humble contribution to the noble structure of Natural Science." Humboldt's description of the glories of Teneriffe made him desire to visit that region. He even "got an introduction to a merchant in London to inquire about ships." Soon afterwards he became acquainted with Professor Sedgwick, and his attention was turned to geology. On returning from a geological tour in North Wales with Sedgwick he found a letter from Henslow offering him a share of Captain Fitzroy's cabin on board the *Beagle*, if he cared to go without pay as naturalist. The offer was accepted, Dr. Darwin behaved handsomely, and the young man sailed away with a first-rate equipment and a pecuniary provision for his five years' voyage round the world. This voyage, says Darwin, "has been by far the most important event in my life, and has determined my whole career."

Readers of Darwin's fascinating *A Naturalist's Voyage* know that his great powers were matured on board the *Beagle*. "That my mind became developed through my pursuits during the voyage," he himself says, "is rendered probable by a remark made by my father, who was the most acute observer whom I ever saw, of a sceptical disposition, and far from being a believer in phrenology; for, on first seeing me after the voyage, he turned round to my sisters and exclaimed, 'Why, the shape of his head is quite altered.'"

During the voyage Darwin was brought into close and frequent contact with "that scandal to Christian nations—Slavery." This was a matter on which he felt keenly. His just and compassionate nature was stirred to the depths by the oppression and sufferings of the American negroes. The infamous scenes he witnessed haunted his imagination. Nearly thirty years afterwards, writing to Dr. Asa Gray, he wished, "though at the loss of millions of lives, that the North would proclaim a crusade against slavery." His impressions at the earlier date were recorded in his book, and it is best to quote the passage in full:—

"On the 19th of August we finally left the shores of Brazil. I thank God, I shall never again visit a slave-country. To this day, if I hear a distant scream, it recalls with painful vividness my feelings, when passing a house near Pernambuco, I heard the most pitiable moans, and could not but suspect that some poor slave was being tortured, yet knew that I was as powerless as a child even to remonstrate. I suspected that these moans were from a tortured slave, for I was told that

this was the case in another instance. Near Rio de Janeiro I lived opposite an old lady, who kept screens to crush the fingers of her female slaves. I have stayed in a house where a young household mulatto, daily and hourly, was reviled, beaten, and persecuted enough to break the spirit of the lowest animal. I have seen a little boy, six or seven years old, struck thrice with a horsewhip (before I could interfere) on his naked head for having handed me a glass of water not quite clean; I saw his father tremble at a mere glance from his master's eye. These latter cruelties were witnessed by me in a Spanish colony, in which it has always been said that slaves are better treated than by the Portuguese, English, or other European nations. I have seen at Rio Janeiro a powerful negro afraid to ward off a blow directed, as he thought, at his face. I was present when a kind-hearted man was on the point of separating for ever the men, women, and little children of a large number of families who had long lived together. I will not even allude to the many heart-sickeningly atrocious which I authentically heard of;—nor would I have mentioned the above revolting details had I not met with several people, so blinded by the constitutional gaiety of the negro, as to speak of slavery as a tolerable evil. Such people have generally visited at the houses of the upper classes, where the domestic slaves are usually well treated; and they have not like myself, lived amongst the lower classes. Such inquirers will ask slaves about their condition; they forget that the slave must indeed be dull who does not calculate on the chance of his answer reaching his master's ears.

It is argued that self-interest will prevent excessive cruelty; as if self-interest protected our domestic animals, which are far less likely than degraded slaves to stir up the rage of their savage masters. It is an argument long since protested against with noble feeling, and strikingly exemplified, by the ever-illustrious Humboldt. It is often attempted to palliate slavery by comparing the state of slaves with our poorer countrymen; if the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin; but how this bears on slavery, I cannot see; as well might the use of the thumb-screw be defended in one land by showing that men in another land suffered from some dreadful disease. Those who look tenderly at the slave-owner, and with a cold heart at the slave, never seem to put themselves into the position of the latter;—what a cheerless prospect, with not even a hope of change! Picture to yourself the chance, ever hanging over you, of your wife and your little children—those objects which nature urges even the slave to call his own—being torn from you and sold like beasts to the first bidder! And these deeds are done and palliated by men who profess to love their neighbors as themselves, who believe in God, and pray that his Will be done on earth!"

The sting of this passage is in its tail. Darwin must have felt that there was something hypocritical and sinister in the pretensions of Christianity. He must have asked himself what was the practical value of a creed which permitted such horrors.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued)

## How Our Work Succeeds.

[We publish the following letter without asking the writer's permission, but we have omitted a few words that might disclose the writer's identity. We regard this letter as very interesting in several ways, and we dare say many of our readers will share our opinion.—EDITOR, *Freethinker*.]

DEAR SIR,—

I have the honor to enclose my Annual Subscription to that worthy object the President's Honorarium Fund. I am pleased that I am able to double my last year's payment.

Sometimes in thinking over the power that money exerts in the modern world I feel savage and wish I could inherit or otherwise become the honest possessor of, say £10,000 a year—a modest income from the point of view of a very rich man, but what a power the proper use of such a sum could be in the interests of Freethought. If I had that sum I would cheerfully devote the major part to the furtherance of that cause. I would like to see much more financial support given to the movement, and it appears to me to be an extremely sorrowful thing that it should be necessary and so difficult to get together a sum of even £300 a year for a



leader of your great capabilities and earnestness. This is a paltry sum compared to a Cabinet Minister's income. You are worth more to the world than a politician.

I should also like the circulation of the *Freethinker* to at least equal that of the *Daily Mail*, so that other people could derive the same benefit that I have been privileged to enjoy. There are many, unfortunately, who never even hear of the existence of Freethought literature, and blindly concur in what they are taught in regard to religion.

For my part, I am pleased to say that principally through your contributions to the *Freethinker*, and your books and pamphlets, I have been considerably enriched in knowledge of religious matters, and, in addition, I am conscious of owing you a deep debt of gratitude for having been the means of introducing me to grand fields of study in philosophy, etc. It is, therefore, my desire to send you a written expression of my sincere thanks, and to inform you that I shall always entertain a great fondness and respect for your character.

While reading this, you may say to yourself: "Yes, but I wonder if he helps the movement by any personal effort of his own?" The answer is, that I do to the best of my ability by means of what you have called the underground movement. None of my friends, I believe, are in any doubt about my anti-Christian principles because I try and inculcate our fraternal Secularist views into their minds. I am a ——— and do my best in conversation with my brother officials to show up the hollowness of Christianity, and I am glad to say a great many of them are, practically speaking, *Freethinkers*. Then I have entered into several written battles with parsons and laymen. With one or two exceptions, however, it has been difficult to keep these religious people up to the scratch. But I believe I have been able to accomplish some good. I have also been consistent in introducing the *Freethinker* to others, and for this purpose I buy two copies every week.

At the risk of boring you, I should like to give you a little personal history before I finish. My father and mother are life-long Christians and brought me up assiduously in that faith, and right up to the time I was about twenty I attended Chapel and Bible Class, in the latter holding office. Before I heard of the existence of anti-Christian literature I was sceptical of what I was being taught. Afterwards, I found out the *Freethinker* and decided to study the subject of religion thoroughly for myself and to be cautious of accepting as true, without examination, what the Bible or its adherents taught. The result is, that I have been able to completely throw off all the shackles of religion. In addition, I feel confident in entering into controversy with any Christian, and find I am able easily to hold my own. As I have indicated, I owe a great deal to you for this great alteration which has been effected in me in quite a few years (I am now twenty-seven).

I trust you will not consider this an egotistical letter. There is certainly a great deal in it about myself, but this is entirely relative to a sincere attempt on my part to show the great influence your work has had over me. You have greatly helped me in obtaining a scientific basis for my present outlook on life—which is strength indeed—and in the various controversies I have had, your advice and arguments have been of the greatest assistance. You will not wonder, therefore, at my desire to send you my heartiest thanks.

Will you kindly accept from my wife (who also has a great admiration for you) and myself our very best wishes for your happiness.

Yours sincerely,

[We particularly like that last paragraph. We are always highly pleased to win the sympathy and support of good women. It is to them that we look chiefly for the best success of Freethought in the future.—EDITOR.]

An Uncommon Prayer.

O, THOU infinite, invisible nameless One, whom men must name, and naming call Thee God. If thou art, why may not men know Thee as Thou art? If Thou art not, why should the thought of Thee embitter and pervert the hearts of men?

Thy worshipers are guessers, and guessing at the Divine Riddle, men, like children at play, fall out and quarrel, turning happiness and joy to strife and tears.

In Thy name they have built dungeons—piled fagots and devised tortures from which life fled to the cool embrace of death, the last and only friend. They have called Thee Maker of Paradise and Hell, Thou the Infinite, and have said the glory of Thy throne shone more refulgent, the music of celestial joy was sweeter for the cry of anguish and the sobs of pain which rose and reached the heartless happiness

of the blest. In Thy name men have trampled into the mire the sweet earth with blood—touched with fingers of hate every nerve of pain—violated every holy human right cursed the world with every crime, and in Thy name. Listening for Thy unspeaking voice, men have been heedless of the cry of a suffering world; reading the revelation they said was Thine, they have been blind to truth, deaf to reason and enemies of knowledge. Following Thee they have gone astray—serving Thee they have burdened their fellowman. Dwellers in huts have built Thy cathedrals and overlaid them with barbaric gold. Wearers of rags have woven purple and fine linen for indolent tyrants claiming to act for Thee. Priests have fattened while children cried for bread. And Thou art God? Hadst Thou been mother the cry of children had touched Thy heart. Mary's tears, as she watched the death agony of the cross, were kinder than Thy silence in the skies. Help us to forgive Thee. If thou wouldst have Thy name revered on earth, make kind and gracious those who embroider it on their garments and banish it from their hearts.

If religion is to endure among men, cast out from it the devils of hatred and clothe it with the comeliness of sanity and love. If Thy temples are to remain, open them to the light and make them hospitable to every honest thought. Since Thou art silent, may men speak modestly when they speak of Thee? Since Thou art hidden, may men not claim they see?

And if in the illimitable mysteries of life and death there be those who, seeking cannot find, pondering cannot know—who question the eternal silence in vain, who say at last Thou art not—turn not Thou from them! May honest doubt find favor in Thy sight; reason unfearing walk the earth; character be counted as salvation's very self; the noble purpose and unselfish aim be dear to Thee; virtue unblushing meet Thy searching gaze, and love, the key unlocking all the gates of joy—if Thou art God.

—J. E. Roberts (Kansas).

Toleration implies that a man is to be allowed to profess and maintain any principles that he pleases; not that he should be allowed in all cases to act upon his principles, especially to act upon them to the injury of others. No limitation whatever need be put upon this principle in the case supposed. I, for one, am fully prepared to listen to any arguments for the propriety of theft or murder, or, if it be possible, of immorality in the abstract. No doctrine, however well established, should be protected from discussion. The reasons have been already assigned. If, as a matter of fact, any appreciable number of persons is inclined to advocate murder on principle, I should wish them to state their opinions openly and fearlessly, because I should think that the shortest way of exploding the principle and of ascertaining the true causes of such a perversion of the moral sentiment. Such a state of things implies the existence of evils which cannot be really cured till their cause is known, and the shortest way to discover the cause is to give a hearing to the alleged reasons.—Leslie Stephen, *Essay on "Toleration."*

Obituary.

WE have to record the death of Mrs. Anne Payne, wife of Mr. George Payne, of Manchester, on January 17, in her seventy-first year. The funeral ceremony took place at the Manchester Crematorium on January 21, when Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, an old and valued friend, delivered an address which was highly appreciated by a fairly large assemblage of relatives and other mourners. Mrs. Payne was born in Manchester, and lived there nearly all her life. One of her chief characteristics was love of children, which she had free play for during the time that she was mistress of the Infants' School in Lower Mosley-street, and later in her own large family of twelve children, of whom seven survive to mourn her loss. Another of her chief characteristics was love of music, and another love of truth, in word and deed. These three affections were the most vital elements in an exceptionally solid and beautiful character. Thirty years ago the loss of a charming child, twenty months old, from diphtheria, caused her to reflect deeply on its sad and unmerited sufferings, and completed her acceptance of Freethought views, from which she never afterwards swerved in the slightest degree. To the great grief of her husband and children, who were so tenderly attached to her, she had to pass through seven months of intense suffering before death came with the message of release. She bore her anguish, however, with astonishing fortitude and patience. Yet the consciousness that it is over, and that one of the sweetest of motherly souls has gained repose, mingles as a consolation with the sense of loss in the minds of those who loved her.



**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.**

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Forest Gate Public (Lower) Hall, Woodgrange-road): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." Selections by the Band before lecture.—Wednesday, February 3, at 7.15, Cinderella Dance.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, C. Cohen, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Is Man a Machine?" 7, "God, Man, and the Devil." Tea at Town Hall, at 5.

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

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): John Turner, 12 noon, "Peter Kropotkin: an Appreciation"; 6.30, "God and the State."

HUDDESFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (No. 9 Room, Trade and Friendly Hall): Tuesday, at 8, Branch meeting—Market Cross, Saturday, at 8, Geo. T. Whitehead, a Lecture.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Tate's Restaurant, Vicar-lane): 8, Mr. Chadwick, "Mind v. Matter."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "God's Message to Messina"; 6.30, "The Silence of the Tomb." Tea at 5.

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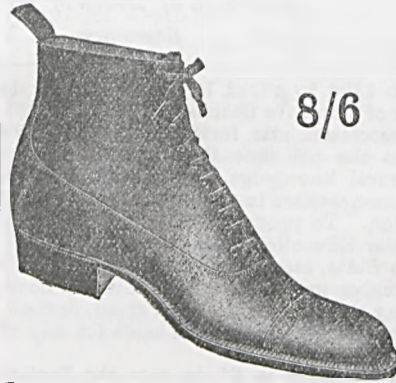
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