

# THE Freethinker

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*Trifles may be a whet to more serious thoughts, and comical matters may be so treated of that a reader of ordinary sense may possibly thence reap more advantage than from some more big and stately argument.*

—ERASMUS.

## The Cross and the Tomb.

At this season of the year we are specially reminded of the alleged truth that Christianity is pre-eminently a religion founded upon facts. "You cannot have too many facts," says a well-known divine; "they all contain heavenly treasure." The first duty of the student is to get his facts. Having found them, his next duty is to "approach them in the right spirit, in the true heavenly temper." Thus contemplating them he "shall discover that, whatever be their kind, wherever they lie, they are full of high interpretation." He is assured of this on the bare assumption that "the Universe is God's, and that all of it speaks of him." From this it is evident that no one can have a correct conception of the Universe unless he regards it as God's handiwork and temple, and interprets all its facts in the light of that conviction. In other words, facts are not what they seem to the natural man, but what the spiritual man believes them to be. To be understood they must be seen in the light of another world. To interpret them merely in the light of this world is to miss their wealth of meaning, and to be deaf to their gladsome message from the eternal throne.

Now, the very centre of the Christian Gospel is the alleged fact of the Cross. It is its Holy of Holies, to which we are bidden to draw near "with our shoes off our feet and with the Song of the Redeemed on our lips." It is only thus that we can grasp its deep significance and appreciate its unsearchable riches. The curious thing, however, is that when the theologians begin to explain the Cross in the light of another world, scarcely any two of them are agreed as to what exactly that light reveals. Innumerable are the theories of the atonement, and hot and furious has been the conflict between them. Realising this, Professor Peake hastens to reassure us that "it is not our view of the atonement that saves us," and that "it would be an evil day for the future of Christianity when the acceptance of a particular theory of the work of Christ should be made necessary to salvation." But Dr. Peake forgets that apart from the theories of it there is no atonement at all, for the very assertion that the Cross saves implies a theoretical explanation of the death of Jesus. The apostolical declaration that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is but a theory as to the object of the Galilean's life-story; and a most ludicrous theory it is too. Even on the supposition that Jesus was indeed God's beloved son, the idea that his Father could save mankind only by murdering him is so extremely silly that few can seriously contemplate it. "J. B.," of the *Christian World*, frankly admits that "in itself, looked at from the common standpoint," the death of Jesus was a mere earthly tragedy. By the populace who wit-

nessed it, by the soldiers who assisted in it, by the cowed disciples who gazed on it, the death on Calvary was looked upon as a purely human event, or as being "at the farthest remove from religion." "It was to the mob a spectacle, to the soldiery a common execution, to the disciples a catastrophe." It was later, much later, that any religious theory of the tragedy was thought of. At the time, the event was a crushing disappointment, a cruel stroke of fate, and with broken hearts the eleven returned to their former avocations in different parts of the country.

Be it noted at this point that the disciples of Jesus, the only men with whom he had been intimate during his lifetime, were not aware that any special signification was to be attached to his death. The only thought that oppressed them was that his cause was lost, that his enemies had triumphed, and that they would see him no more. They acted as if they had never heard of even the possibility of his dying to secure the world's redemption. Their supreme grief was that he whom they had trusted so fully and loved so passionately had been so violently removed from them. There is nothing to indicate that they ever expected to see him again. Now, when we bear in mind that these were the only men with whom he had been on familiar terms, or to whom he could have communicated his secrets if he had had any, we can see on how flimsy and insecure a foundation the belief that his death was sacrificial and atoning really rests. *The men who ought to have known all knew nothing*; and it follows that the men of subsequent generations who pretended to know all were either conscious impostors or self-deceivers. In any case, the theory that the death of Jesus is the objective ground of the world's salvation is a sheer invention for which Jesus himself cannot be held responsible.

Coming to the account of his burial, we find that there is nothing to show that those who took part in it believed or expected that he would rise again. The disciples were conspicuous only by their absence. They had forsaken him and fled, leaving the last kind act to be performed by strangers, and witnessed only by a few women. Such was the interment of him who was afterwards hailed as the only begotten Son of God and Savior of the world. Whatever the disciples may have thought of their Master while he was alive, their conduct during and after his crucifixion is evidence enough that they had bidden him their final farewell. The Cross and the Tomb separated him from them for ever. "They had looked to him for the emancipation of Israel from Rome, and Rome had put an end to him. Were he only a prophet, that could have been understood, but they had thought of him as the Messiah, and his death seemed to contradict such a claim. Nor was this the deepest note in the tragedy, for he had died on the Cross, he had been hanged upon a tree."

And yet to-day the whole Christian Church, east and west, joyously sings out, "He is risen, he is risen, he hath burst his bonds in twain." If an eyewitness of the crucifixion and the burial, if a friend of Peter or of Thomas, who had listened to their talk about their Lord and about his death, were to return to earth and attend service at St. Paul's this morning, how astounded he would be to hear the news

that Jesus is still alive, and to be invited to join in singing:—

"Come see the place where Jesus lay,  
And hear angelic watchers say,  
'He lives, Who once was slain.'"

He might ask for an interview with the preacher, and we can imagine him saying to the man of God, "How very strange! I was at Jerusalem for three weeks after the crucifixion, and I never heard a whisper of what you call the resurrection. Peter was away, and so were the other disciples. Surely, if Jesus had risen on the third day, I would have heard of it. A vacated tomb would have been the talk of the whole city. Tell me, how do you know that Jesus rose from the dead? Where are the proofs—proofs that will convince me, who was on the spot at the time, and yet never heard of the stupendous miracle?" The clergyman would refer him to the Four Gospels and to the Epistles, saying, "Read these documents in the right spirit, in the true heavenly temper, and you, too, will be convinced of their truth." We can fancy him perusing the records, and being struck by their differences, discrepancies, and contradictions, and dramatic style, and then saying to himself, "This is very ingenious fiction. How my old friend Peter would laugh if he could see it. I can testify that for at least three whole weeks after Jesus's death Jerusalem knew nothing of any resurrection." That there is nothing unreasonable in that imaginary sketch is undeniable from the following extract from Dr. Arno Neumann's *Jesus*:—

"In the first place, Paul, and, with Paul, history, had no information about the empty grave; in the second place, neither was aware that the women took such a prominent part in the events of Easter morning. Again, if the emptiness of the tomb, which at present is made by so many the foundation-stone of their belief, had been a well-known fact in those days, not only would Paul have known of it, but he would have been certain to use the fact as evidence to be laid before the Corinthians. But apart from this consideration, the accounts of the resurrection given by the Gospels, when they come to speak of the places, the persons, and the things that happened, reveal a whole chorus of contradictory voices and statements."

We present that quotation all the more confidently because Dr. Neumann still calls himself a Christian. Like the Virgin Birth, the resurrection is in itself so improbable an event, and the evidence for it so defective, that it is impossible to believe in it without offering serious affront to our intelligence. So Dr. Neumann expresses his disbelief in any physical resuscitation of Jesus Christ. How such a critic is able to avow himself a Christian passes understanding; and that Dr. Neumann is himself sensible of the apparent inconsistency is evident from the following words:—

"In view of the historical fact as now stated, it will be asked again and again, Is not, then, the whole Church founded upon a delusion, and were not the first Christians visionaries and fanatics? This could be said only if we were no longer able to say that the imperishable part of man's nature returns transfigured to God, or that there is any such thing as immortality."

But that is a reckless trifling with words. Nothing can rise from the dead without being first dead. The New Testament statement is that Jesus *died*, and on the third day *became alive* again. In Rev. i. 18 the risen Lord himself is represented as saying, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." Paul's deliberate assertion is "that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," and he offers the alleged fact of the raising of Christ from the dead as an infallible guarantee that the dead shall be raised. If what is called the "soul," or "man's imperishable part," never dies, it follows that Paul refers to the death of the body, and the resurrection of the body. And we confidently affirm that neither of the resurrection of a single dead body, nor of the continued life of a single soul subsequent to the body's decease, is there even the shadow of proof. Does it not follow, then, that the whole Church is founded upon a delusion, or a lie, and that

all Christians are visionaries and fanatics? Why, therefore, should the story of Jesus be treated differently from that of any other mythological God-man? Because no valid reason can be assigned for the difference of treatment we, who cannot join in the superstitious worship indulged in by so many on this Easter Sunday, are content with rejoicing in the glorious revival once more of the vital processes of Nature round about us.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus.

[We present our readers with the following extracts from a discourse by a clerical member of the Critical Society of Essex in the freethinking novel, *Ralph Cricklewood*, just published by the Pioneer Press; the author of the book being himself a retired Christian minister, who has come to see through the imposture in which he once played a part with what Lady Teazle would call "a tolerable grace." These extracts, which are seasonable just now, will give some idea of the vivid thoroughness with which Stephen Fitz-Stephen (the author's pen-name) sets about his work.—EDITOR.]

JESUS certainly did not relish the idea of arrest, for it occurred to him to show fight, when he came to realise the improbability of his remaining a fugitive from justice much longer. Then, perceiving that he and his had well-nigh come to the end of their tether, he counselled such of his pauper following as had a purse to take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that had no sword, to sell his garments and buy one. And then in answer to their remark that they had two swords, he said, "It is enough." And verily it was enough, for swords in the hands of such a set of ragamuffins would merely have furnished the enemy with the means of speedily converting them into butchers' block ornaments. This is not the way one would look for a God to defend himself, but it is very like the way an impostor would think of defending himself. Nor was his cowardly fear of the fate which awaited him—which is supposed to have found its expression in the mythical bloody sweat in Gethsemane—just what one would have expected from an immortal who had deliberately fabricated the scheme of human redemption from a fabulous something, and had willingly come to earth to enact the farce: but it is exactly what one would expect from a terrified impostor in anticipation of dire punishment. Had he been a God incarnate, it were impossible that he should be holden of such a debasing passion as human fear. In the hands of his own creatures—had he chosen to submit—he would have been essentially invulnerable, and his double nature of God and man—yet not two, but one Christ—would have been elated with the sublimest rapture at the near prospect of his finished work, and of his speedy return in triumph to Glory, or to Paradise, or to whatever other unknown place he had come from.

But he is at length arrested, and for the sake of a little dramatic effect, Peter slices off a man's ear, and Jesus touches the place and puts it all to rights. Pity he didn't touch his second-cousin, John the Baptist, with a like effect. Then, after a big but very silly brag about praying to his father, and presently getting more than twelve legions of angels (an unnecessary waste of a good prayer, for, since he was God, he could have done the job himself), he is arrested, run in, and, on being arraigned before the Jewish authorities, is charged with assuming to be the Christ the Son of God, and also of claiming to be the King of the Jews. He, a God, is now absolutely helpless before his own creatures. He has lost the power of mounting one of his own old awe-inspiring looks, or of uttering some commonplace phrase in such a bamboozling sort of a way as to make people mistake it for a matchless apothegm. Poor defenceless object! He has lost all superhuman means of protecting himself from insult and mockery—if ever he had any. In the heyday of his fraudulent doings he was quite an adept at dodging the stones of his enraged countrymen, but he is now powerless to dodge the disgusting spittle which is

slung at him from filthy lips, or to evade the fist-cuffs which are rained upon him. Poor polluted object! Not even did one puny little angel out of the twelve legions come to his aid. On the lines of the Christian myth, the abject helplessness of this pretentious carpenter-god, when in the presence of his judge, is pathetic to the last degree. Not only was he helpless, but he was fully conscious of the fact: else, why did he think of showing fight with swords? What had become of all his superhuman powers? He could, according to the mythological gospel, increase the substance of a few loaves and fishes indefinitely, and feed a hungry multitude to repletion, leaving more pabulum over than he began with. Clever fellow! He could swear at a poor harmless fig-tree with more apparent effect than resulted from his father's violent fit of swearing in Eden—albeit, the Anglican establishment affirms he is without passions. He could walk upon water as easily as any Hydrous Piceus—albeit, nature had not evolved him for any such feat. He could fly through the air with his ubiquitous friend, the devil, from the wilderness to an imaginary pinnacle of the Temple, and thence to an exceeding high mountain, and then down like a lark upon *terra firma*: and all the while as hungry as any hunter. For it is not recorded in any of the gospels that his Satanic Majesty invited Jesus to dine with him in the metaphysical Netherlands. All this he could do, according to his lying biographers, but, poor helpless God! he could do nothing in his own preservation. Judging of him by myself—that is, supposing I had had his fabled powers—why did he not soar to the ceiling immediately over his judge's head, and, when that august personage looked up at the divine acrobat floating over him, let drop one of his sandals, heel foremost, into one of his eyes, and give him something of a personal nature to occupy his thought?

Powerless in himself and with none to aid him, this hapless carpenter-God got nailed to a cross between two thieves, in exact imitation of his mythical prototype, Christna, the Hindu Messiah. Who would believe it—who that is still on liberty-side of lunatic asylums would believe in the possibility of such an exact parallel? Surely, never was there such a wicked fraud as Christianity on this earth, and the day is fast coming when all those who have had the courage to expose it will be hailed as benefactors of our race.

There being no contemporary corroborative evidence of the crucifixion of Jesus, it is impossible to state with certainty whether the gospel story is any less mythical than those of his mythical predecessors, who, like Jesus, are all fabled to have been of parthenogenetic and deistic origin. For my own part, I believe that, in the estimation of the Jews, Jesus was a troublesome, pretentious, pernicious, and blasphemous disturber of the orthodox faith, of assumed thaumaturgic power by the aid of their god, and that, after the monstrous fraud over the raising of the putrefying Lazarus, he was executed as an evildoer, and that this communistic tramp was so insignificant and worthless as to be utterly unknown to any contemporary historian. The story about his popularity is indeed a *story*, which is thoroughly refuted by the fact that he was so generally unknown that the authorities were unable to spot him without the services of a betrayer. There is only one satisfactory explanation that can be offered for the continuous lingering through so many centuries of this wretched, bungling, contradictory Christian myth—and that is, the enormous wealth, ease, and idleness it has brought, and is still bringing, to the fraudulent priesthood. But for money, it would have perished long ago. Happily, it is now slowly expiring, and if only those who are duped and swindled by its administrators would but stop the supplies, it would forthwith die of heart failure.

## A Plea for Superstition.—II.

(Concluded from p. 211.)

AS I have said, respect for human life is only emphasised by religious beliefs within the limits of the tribe. And within the tribe religion seems to have given its sanction only to that amount of restriction on homicide that would have existed in any case, while various kinds of killing may be directly attributed to the influence of superstitious beliefs. The practice found amongst some savages of killing elderly people so that they may enter the next world healthy, the killing of slaves on the death of a chief, or of wives on the death of a husband, so that their ghosts may perform the same function in the next world as here, are examples of this. Human sacrifice, which sometimes, as in Mexico, demanded thousands of victims annually, is a case in point. Far from religion having curbed this, its institution is wholly due to religious influences. Amongst the more primitive savages the custom is very infrequent, even if it exists at all. It is found among people of a more advanced stage of culture; and as the greatness of the people increases, and the religious beliefs become more elaborate, so we find the practice assuming larger dimensions. Bearing all these things in mind, together with the pressure of normal social forces, it certainly does not seem as though we have to thank religion for much in this direction.

Mr. Frazer, one may assume from the following passage, is quite alive to the evil aspect of his subject. He says:—

"It might be maintained that no belief has done so much to retard the economic and thereby the social progress of mankind as the belief in the immortality of the soul; for this belief has led race after race, generation after generation, to sacrifice the real wants of the living to the imaginary wants of the dead. The waste and destruction of life and property which this faith has entailed are enormous and incalculable. But I am not here concerned with the disastrous and deplorable consequences, the unspeakable follies and crimes and miseries, which have flowed in practice from the theory of a future life. My business at present is with the more cheerful side of a gloomy subject."

Every author has the right to select which aspect of a subject he will discuss, but all the same one may point out that it is just dealing in detail with this more "cheerful side," while leaving out the side expressed in waste and destruction, "the disastrous and deplorable consequences, the unspeakable follies and crimes," that will lead careless readers to form erroneous opinions, and enable the agents of the "Black Army" to claim a credit for their faith to which it is not really entitled. If emphasis has to be laid on one side only, a much better service is done by emphasising the darker side of a belief which has thousands of paid advocates presenting only a bright side to the public gaze.

What has been said of the relation of superstition applies, with a change of terms, to the other instances selected by Mr. Frazer. Either these institutions have a basis in utility or they have not. If they have not, the justification for their preservation disappears. If they have a basis in utility, their development will be governed by social selection, although the form in which they are expressed will be determined by local circumstances. Thus, when Mr. Frazer says that the task of government has been facilitated by a superstition that the governors belong to a superior order of beings, one is inclined to suspect that this statement only holds good as regards certain individual governors or of the persistence of a particular form of government. It may well be that when a people are led to believe that a certain individual possesses supernatural powers, or that a certain form of government enjoys the favor of supernatural beings, that there will be less readiness to change either than would otherwise be the case. But government and governors—or in other words, a general rule of the tribe—and the admitted leadership or headship of certain indi-

viduals, would remain natural facts in the absence of superstition. So, again, with the desire for private property. This desire has been noted among certain members of the Simian species as well as among men, and so far as it possesses an advantage we may surely credit savages with enough common sense to be aware of the fact, while the mutual give and take of associated beings would secure the recognition of personal rights. Although it may be noted that private property holding is not nearly so developed among savages as among more civilised people. The greatest development in this direction takes place in the more highly civilised societies where, as a matter of fact, superstitious beliefs have least power. So that if we grant that private property is protected and developed by superstition, we have to face the curious fact that its greatest development occurs precisely when the alleged cause has least influence.

The need for checking Mr. Frazer's thesis by biological data becomes more apparent the more one looks into it. Let me take one example only. Professor Fiske pointed out in a highly suggestive essay on "The Meaning of Infancy," that the higher development of humanity was largely dependent upon the feebleness of infancy. The prolonged helplessness of human infancy gives time for the gradual education of the nervous system, and so paves the way for the complex functioning of the adult brain. But consider all that this prolonged infancy means; how it necessitates the family being kept together, the increased depth and constancy of both maternal and paternal love, the closer welding together of the family, the deepened significance of the sex relationship, with numerous other subsidiary consequences; and it will be seen that we have here a factor of far greater consequence than even superstitious beliefs. Moreover, it is a modifying force that is not dependent upon the influence of acquired beliefs, but embedded in the very nature of things. Due attention to this aspect of the case would, I think, lead Mr. Frazer to place much less stress upon the beneficent influence of religious beliefs.

The truth is that Mr. Frazer seems to have fallen into the same blunder as Mr. Walter Bagehot, and to believe that man needed "breaking in" to social law and custom. The fact is that the great need of the savage is not to be broken in, but to break out. The error probably originated in the difficulty experienced in getting him to obey *our* rules; but this difficulty is really very often the other side of his servitude to his own customs. There is no one so fettered by custom as the savage. The restrictions imposed by savage society on its members would be intolerable to a civilised being. And if it be argued that these customs had to be formed, the reply is that, inheriting the imitability of the pre-human gregarious animal, this habit of imitation is the basis on which the tyrannising custom of savage life is built.

One other generalisation of Bagehot's was unquestionably sound. Having framed a custom, he said, the next step in progress, and a far more difficult one, was to break it. It is in relation to Bagehot's second step that we get one of the main influences of religious belief. For of all the conscious forces that operate to prevent man breaking through established custom, religion is the greatest. Once a custom is established, the conditions of savage life are such that they are almost of necessity expressed in terms of superstition, and henceforth to break this custom is to make a gap in the wall of religious observance by which the savage is surrounded. And so soon as we reach anything in the shape of a priesthood there has to be reckoned with the operations of men keenly alive to their own self-interest in the matter.

But superstition does not preserve a custom or an institution because it is good; it preserves them without reference to their beneficial or injurious character so far as society is concerned. This is seen clearly enough in the lingering on of such customs as suttee in India, or witchcraft in Europe. It is seen also in the rooted antipathy of the religious

mind to change in almost any direction. There is not a single branch of social life, or a single department of knowledge, that does not bear testimony to this. The greatest obstacle to man in his upward progress are these superstitious customs that humanity itself has created during its earlier phases of existence. They are like so many hands stretched forth from the grave to drag down the living. If, therefore, we were to grant that religion has played the useful part Mr. Frazer thinks it has in preserving certain valuable institutions, we could not credit it with preserving them because of any rational perception of their utility, but solely because it is in the nature of superstition to resist change and strive to maintain things as they are. And against even the problematical benefits conferred in this direction we have to count the certain evil of the lives lost, embittered, and dishonored by the operation of religious beliefs, the stupid and senseless customs that have been perpetuated, the strenuous opposition offered to reform, and the tremendous waste of human energy in fighting the religious opposition to new ideas. Putting the two side by side, he would be a bold man indeed who would say that the balance of good lies with religion, and that humanity would not have been better off had religion never existed.

It may be safely assumed that we shall soon find *Psyche's Task* quoted as proof that one of our greatest living Anthropologists believes that the race is under tremendous obligations to religion. Mr. Frazer is not, of course, responsible for all the misrepresentations of his work that may appear, but it may, in view of these probable misrepresentations, be as well to point out that if every statement in his book were accepted it would give no real support to current religion. For his statements as to the useful work of superstition applies to savage life only. Indeed, he hints pretty plainly that only with savages is religion in its proper habitat. In more civilised times Mr. Frazer would readily admit that superstition—which, as I have said, is only another name for religion—is wholly evil. "More and more, as time goes on," to use Mr. Frazer's own words, "morality shifts its ground from the sands of superstition to the rock of reason, from the imaginary to the real, from the supernatural to the natural.....The State.....has found a better reason than old wives' fables for guarding with the flaming sword of Justice the approach to the Tree of Life." Whatever may be its value among savages, among civilised people religion is a glaring anachronism.

But I do not admit the plea for the utility of superstition even among savages. There is far more truth in the statement that superstitious beliefs have been prolonged because of their association with useful institutions than in the statement that these customs owe their preservation to religious beliefs. Utility lies at the basis of all institutions, as it also lies at the base of all organic development. And human evolution is not of such an accidental character as would make it dependent upon the conscious elaboration of any special belief, or even upon the conscious action of any individual. Useful as indications of the course of the stream of progress, these become utterly misleading when taken as proofs of its depth or meaning. And against the supposed benefits of superstition indicated by Mr. Frazer one may place its certain evils. Its sacrifice of life and of human happiness, its conservation of outworn institutions, and its surrounding them with a halo of sanctity; its immense waste of human energy, and obstruction of human progress. Putting the certain evil against the possible good, Mr. Frazer's thesis is more than "a plausible plea for a very dubious client"—it is a plea for a stay of execution against a many-times-convicted offender.

C. COHEN.

Gold is good, but brave men are better than gold.—  
Abraham Lincoln.

## "Jesus Christ, Ltd."

RELIGION is a business to large numbers of people and is worked on thoroughly business lines; missions and meetings are advertised in the same way as patent medicines or theatrical ventures. Revivalists and preachers adopt similar methods to histrionic artistes, with the same financial results. But the purely business side of religion is seen clearest in the methods now adopted in order to raise revenue for the propagation of a religion professedly "without money and without price." The extent to which ordinary commercial means have replaced the voluntary contributions so long in vogue in connection with religious bodies is very significant. The old-fashioned method of collecting "threepenny bits" during the service is no longer considered adequate. Even the sale of work is being largely superseded by more topical and efficient substitutes. So much is this the case, that the trading of religious bodies is considered by shrewd business men as a very serious menace to the welfare of the trading community. Bazaars are held everywhere for the reduction of church debts and the erection of costly places of worship. Missionary and other propagandist societies owe a good deal of their very large income to sales of goods. Not long since, a bazaar was held at Lincoln at which many thousands of pounds were raised for religious interests. A week's missionary exhibition at Southend, last November, realised over £200 clear profit. A common sale of work in South London realised £250, and a score of similar sales brought in considerably over £2,000.

Imagine the many similar exhibitions and sales held annually throughout the country for the various evangelical organisations, Bible societies, and the missionary societies. Add to all this the 13,000 parish churches and 10,000 chapels and tin tabernacles, all of which to-day look to bazaars, exhibitions, and sales as a legitimate and easy means of raising money, and we begin to realise the extent of the practice. Where is all this to end? Its logical outcome is seen in trading of the Salvation Army, which regularly advertises among its members tea, clothing, toys for children, and all manner of requisites, and uses the profits for its propaganda.

The clergy hypocritically pretend to be entirely uninfluenced by worldly considerations. They manage, however, to keep a very sharp eye on the main chance. The salaries of the bishops of the Established Church, for example, amply justify the sneer that Christ died on the cross and these gentlemen live on it.

The Free Church leaders are just as keen after the cash. They take up their crosses and follow their Savior on the salaries of Cabinet Ministers. The bishops often ingeniously suggest that they spend the money they get in the upkeep of the dignity of their position. It is a characteristically untrue statement. If these men spent what they got they could not leave so much behind them when they die. They frequently leave very large sums. The late Bishop of Colchester left estate valued at £60,848. Bishop Creighton, who used to talk of the hard struggles of the wretched bishops to keep out of debt, left £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £85,000, and Archbishop Benson a similar sum. The biggest episcopal estate of late years, however, was that of Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tufnell's £65,800, and Bishop Phillpotts left £60,000; Archbishop Thomson left £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790. Compared with these sums, the £19,361 of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, the £10,000 of Bishop Tozer, or the £12,605 of Bishop Pelham seem small. The princely bishops, it will be seen, follow humbly in the footsteps of "the carpenter." In defiance of the dictate of their "God," they lay up treasure on earth and take their chance of the ravages of both moth and rust. What humbug is like to this, to live by preaching the gospel of poverty and to die wealthy?

VERDANT GREEN.

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Dennis Hird, the principal of Ruskin College, where the row has been going on, seems to have been in the bad graces of the Executive Committee before. He states that they once accused him of teaching Atheism, but the charge was withdrawn. We are far from saying that Mr. Hird should teach Atheism as the principal of Ruskin College, but we have no hesitation in saying that neither he nor most of the members of the Executive Committee ought to regard the teaching of Atheism as in itself an offence. It appears to us that Mr. Hird himself is undoubtedly an Atheist, in the sense in which the term has always been used in the *Freethinker*.

Since the days of John Calvin no one has been prosecuted for "blasphemy" in Switzerland until quite recently. We see by the newspapers that Herr Richter, a Freethinker, of Zurich, has been condemned by the tribunal of Lucerne to two months' imprisonment and eight years' expulsion from the canton for this artificial crime. It is stated that he published "three violent pamphlets against Christianity," which "so shocked the population that the public prosecutor was obliged to take up the matter." We have not seen the "violent pamphlets," but we know that the dear good Christians are very easily "shocked."

The "spirit" is responsible for a curious trouble in Ebbw Vale, South Wales. A member of the British Smelters' Society has received "the light," and is henceforth determined to "live by faith." But there seems to be a good deal of method in his madness. He says he is "prompted by the spirit" to stop paying his subscription to the Union funds. This is all very well for him, but his fellow members can't be expected to see it in "the light" that he does. They refuse to work with him, and have handed in their notices to leave. Unless he makes up his mind to "live by faith" outside, instead of by work and wages inside, he will presently be the sole employee of the Ebbw Vale Coal and Iron Company—which now has a thousand hands.

The Vatican Earthquake Relief Fund amounts to £125,000. Good! Now let us see how it is to be expended. Part of it is to be devoted to the erection of two hundred corrugated iron churches and chapels in the Reggio district. The Pope has also decided to build a big central clergy-house, where parish priests and curates will lead a community life. These objects may be all right in their way, from a Catholic point of view, but fancy their being paid for out of an Earthquake Relief Fund! Why not call it the Clergy Relief Fund straight away?

Christians are always boasting of their superior morality. Sometimes, indeed, if you listen to them you might imagine that they had a monopoly of the article. Yet it is the plain truth that they are too often capable of meanness from which all other people would shrink. How quietly, for instance, the Christians in England acquiesce in the conduct of the Christians in South Africa towards Dinuzulu. After all the charges laid against him, when his white enemies felt obliged at last to bring him to trial, instead of keeping him arbitrarily in confinement for the rest of his life, he has been found guilty only of the most trivial offences in his indictment. One of those offences it is simply infamous to call a crime at all. "It is one," as Dr. Russel Wallace well says, "which any of us would be ashamed of not having committed." He gave shelter to men of his own race who were pursued by their white oppressors. He did not invite them, but when they threw themselves upon his hospitality he did not betray them to what is facetiously called "justice." Certainly it was no part of his business, from any point of view, to act as an informer against his own countrymen in the interest of foreigners. Only the very basest of foreigners could possibly make that a crime. They might conceivably kill him in a moment of passion, but to bring him before a legal tribunal—their own tribunal—and find him guilty *themselves* of treasonable acts against themselves, and solemnly sentence him to a long term of incarceration in one of their prisons, is a prostitution of the law enhanced by the worst circumstances of contemptible hypocrisy. But the South African Christians lick their lips and smile, and the British Christians countenance any wrong that their dear Christian brethren out there may commit. One longs for the withering eloquence with which Ruskin denounced the baseness of the white Christians who shot and smothered unoffending and unresisting Zulus for refusing to help in hunting down their own fugitive king. England had better lose a dozen battleships than do these things or allow them to be done. They belong to the

category of unforgivable sins. They are worse than wicked—they are detestable.

When the news of the death of Shelley reached England, the good Christians congratulated themselves that few people had ever read his works—for most of them had no sale at all worth speaking of, and said to themselves, "There's an end of *him!*" Last week, in Sotheby's sale-room, £3,000 was given for three little notebooks containing matter in Shelley's handwriting. "How the whirligig of Time brings in its revenges."

It is a habit with many Christian apologists to quote eulogistic references to Christianity from non-Christian writers of note. Very often such extracts, being ruthlessly torn out of their contexts, totally misrepresent the real views of their authors; but even when no direct violence is done to their original purpose and connection, it is perfectly clear that they possess no evidential value whatsoever. There is scarcely any religion that has not got some good points; but to acknowledge the existence of such points does not even tend to establish the credibility of that religion as a whole. This point is utterly ignored by the Christian Evidence party.

A case in point is furnished by a sermon recently preached in Islington Chapel, London. The Rev. J. G. Henderson made several quotations from Freethinkers to prove that even such men admit the Divinity of the Christian religion. One was from Mr. Cotter Morison's *Service of Man*, to the effect that "the Christian doctrine has a power of cultivating and developing saintliness which has no equal in any other creed or philosophy." The preacher was careful, however, not to be fair to Mr. Morison, who, after making the quoted admission, goes on to say: "Although the self-devotion of saints is not only beyond question, but supremely beautiful and attractive, yet as a means of relieving human suffering and serving man in the widest sense, it is not to be compared for efficiency with Science." Mr. Cotter Morison regarded Christianity as a colossal failure, and rejected it as fundamentally false and injurious. This is a fair sample of the unscrupulous character of pulpit quotations from Freethought authors.

The Vicar of Plymouth told a Birmingham congregation that "Satan spoiled the handiwork of God." That is to say, the Devil led the first man into sin. But Satan was once an unfallen angel—who led *him* into sin? Who made him a devil? If there is a God, the existence of evil, in angel or in man, is an indelible blot upon his character, an unanswerable argument against his moral perfection.

The Vicar ended his discourse by reminding his audience that there are two sad, terrible things of which a man can be guilty. The first is, "to live year in and year out, to pass by the church door, and never come within the House of God." This is a fearfully black sin against heaven. But the second sin is more dreadful still, namely that of hearing the Gospel of Christ without believing it. "That is of all things the worst." From a clergyman's professional point of view, no sins could be greater; but, from a common sense point of view the reverend gentleman's teaching is indescribably absurd. If God exists, churches and ministers and preaching must be an insufferable offence to him. It is only on the assumption that *he* does not exist that *their* existence is in the least degree intelligible.

The *Catholic Times* is not satisfied with the result of the Italian elections. "Taken all in all," it says, "we must conclude that the General Election of Italy has been a fiasco as far as the Catholic body is concerned, for what is a paltry group of sixteen Catholics among five hundred and eighty deputies in the Chamber?" Our contemporary does not see the moral of all this. It is very simple. The time has gone by for fighting political elections on religious grounds in civilised countries.

There is a Christian Democracy movement in Italy, something like the New Theology Socialism in England, and no doubt just as logical. Its leader, Don Romolo Murri, a priest and also a Deputy, reckons himself a good Catholic, but he declines to submit to the Pope's dictation in political matters; and as he is obstinate in this attitude the Holy Roman Inquisition has launched against him the greater excommunication. He is therefore cut off from the Church. Two or three hundred years ago this would have meant being cut off from the earth. Now it is little but an idle formula. Jove roars but he has lost his thunderbolts.

Catholics allow no liberty where they are in the majority. Even at Malta, which is a British possession, they object to

Protestant meetings being held. Where they are in a minority they clamor for religious freedom. They have got it now in France, but they are discontented, for they used to rule the roost there, and they don't like being equal with "infidels." One result of this state of mind is that they talk the most violent nonsense; and we see that some of it has crossed over to England. The *Catholic Times* actually has the impudence to say that "attendance at Mass is in the eyes of the little despots who are in office a serious crime," and that females in the Post Office are dismissed "on account of their religious opinions." Such is the foolish dust raised to blind Catholic readers to the true state of affairs. The late Postal strike in Paris turned almost exclusively on the question of promotion. The system of seniority was supplanted by one of part seniority and part merit, and the contention of the rank and file of the service was that the latter led to favoritism. The last thing the strikers had in their minds was freedom to attend Mass.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch of the Lord's Day Observance Society held its annual meeting recently, with the Rev. A. Phimister in the chair. This gentleman, if he is reported correctly in the local *Evening Chronicle*, stated that the Sabbath was a divine gift, and ought to be duly observed. It should be kept on the statute-book; nay, it should be made "impossible for any one to plead that he could not attend the house of God on the Lord's Day because no such day was given to him." From which it is easy to see what the reverend gentleman's interest in Sunday Observance. It is obviously professional. His object is to get the people into the house of God—in which place of business he himself keeps a stall.

Dr. Straton, the Bishop of Newcastle, who sent a letter apologising for his absence, said that "he was convinced that complete rest on one day in the week was absolutely essential for man physically as well as for man spiritually and intellectually." We quite agree with him as to the necessity of a day of rest. We beg to tell him that Freethinkers believe in it quite as much as he does. It is a Christian calumny that they want to abolish it. They would rather have two Sundays a week than none. But it is perfectly clear that all men cannot rest on the same day. If they did, the clergy would have to stop preaching on Sunday—and we all know what congregations they would get on other days of the week. The clergy work on Sunday; therefore some *must* work on that day—and the "some" includes thousands of persons in various departments of human activity. Their labors make the general day of rest a real boon to the majority. The minority must rest on some other day. This is provided for by the new law in "infidel" France. Businesses that cannot be closed on Sunday, if the day is to be of any use to the bulk of the population, must close on some other day. Every employee in every business in France is legally entitled to one day's complete rest in seven. If this is what the Bishop of Newcastle means, he is on the right track. If he means anything else, he is striving after mere Sabbatarianism.

A clergyman, we see, has been lecturing on "Fossil Customs." Quite an appropriate subject, of which the lecturer himself would serve as a first-class illustration.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference says that the fundamental problem of the Church in London is how to capture the children. Quite so. When people are old enough to understand Christianity it is too late then to expect them to believe it. Under nine and over ninety are the most likely times to get people to accept Christian doctrines.

"The educated Greek mind," says Mr. R. J. Campbell, "was absolutely independent of all outside authority; it accepted nothing on trust, as it were, or because it was supposed to be the proper thing to do; it inquired into and examined the facts of experience with a certain naive interest and curiosity which had in it no trace of fear or restraint; to the intellect there was no forbidden ground; all was open and free. This was not the case when long afterwards the Christian Church as an organisation was at the height of its temporal power, nor has it been the case since in any thing like the same full and unprejudiced manner." In the main this statement expresses the truth, and it serves to illustrate what a blessing to the world Christianity has been. But Mr. Campbell is in error in implying that the freedom of opinion and expression enjoyed both in Greece and Rome was suppressed when the Church was at the zenith of its power. As a matter of fact the Christian power was built up on the suppression of the freedom of opinion. It was

against it from the first, and when it possessed the temporal power it only put into operation the spirit it had always manifested. We agree with Mr. Campbell when he says that we have not yet recovered the ancient broad and liberal outlook on life, and add that we are not likely to do so while Christianity retains any hold on society.

When the history of Christianity is fully and impartially written, this suppression of mental freedom and consequent distortion of the intellect will be counted as one of the greatest evils of the last two thousand years. Much has been made of the people killed in Christian prisons or at the stake. The taste for verbal pyrotechnics has led orators to enlarge upon this, and audiences to listen with profound interest. And yet it may well be that the killing of people for a difference of opinion, bad as it was, was among the smallest of Christianity's misdeeds. For beyond the killing of a man there was the effect of the constant terrorism exerted by the Church on mankind, the demoralising effect upon the people of living in an environment where independence of thought and honesty of expression were the gravest of crimes. The effect of this, generation after generation, is beyond exact computation, but of its gravity no one who realises the nature of social evolution can have the least doubt.

Mr. Campbell says that "ever since the Reformation we have been slowly throwing off our dogmatic prejudices and learning to let our reason and our moral sense have free play." While that is, on the whole quite true, it is also true that the dogmatism of the New Theology is as cocksure and as contrary to reason as that of the Pope of Rome ever was.

A writer in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* asks the question, "Is it easy to preach?" Judging from the number at the work, and the kind of men who achieve success, we feel inclined to answer in the affirmative. From some points of view, the religious preacher has always seemed to us in an enviable position. In the first place, provided the preacher refrains from doing any serious thinking and keeps on in the orthodox rut, he is fairly certain to get on with his congregation. In a course of lectures an audience looks for something new; in a sermon the congregation expects to hear "the old, old story," and it is only when the preacher ventures on new ground that his troubles commence. We have never heard of a preacher who got into trouble because he kept on repeating what had been said from the same pulpit, in the same manner, for generations. We have heard of preachers getting into trouble who departed from this rule. Secondly, provided the preacher sticks to his main subject—God and a future life—he may proceed with the certain conviction that he knows as much about either topic as any member of his congregation. This is enough to give the most timid plenty of confidence. It is usually thought that an absence of facts is a serious disqualification. This is, however, quite a mistake. Most lecturers must have felt how inconvenient to a discourse is the possession of facts concerning the subject under discussion. All the time he is speaking he is compelled to keep these facts steadily in mind, and they naturally distract his attention. Then when he is about to—rhetorically—let himself go, again the consciousness of these facts is apt to pull him up sharply and unpleasantly. At every step in his discourse he finds himself checked by a subject concerning which definite knowledge exists, and on which any member of his audience may be as well informed as he is himself. From all these distractions the preacher is happily freed. There is nothing to serve as a check to his imagination, and nothing to enable the congregation to check the truth of his statements. All he needs is the ability to talk, and that is not so uncommon as to rouse wonder. Decidedly it is easy to preach, and it may be taken as evidence of providential design that the average church attendant seems endowed with a marvellous capacity for listening.

Speaking in Birmingham, a few days ago, the Rev. J. H. Jowett said that "the Church of Christ lives by the achievement of the impossible." Does it? Let us see. The reverend gentleman continued: "We have got to turn this city of Birmingham into a new Jerusalem." Well, the history of Birmingham goes back to the Saxon period; and during the greater part of that long time it has been a Christian community. What is Birmingham like to-day? "It is just like John Bunyan's 'Vanity Fair' in modern setting." Then followed a horrible description of the condition of "Vanity Fair." The Church of Christ has been in Birmingham at least a thousand years; and yet, on Mr. Jowett's own showing, the Church of Christ in Birmingham has not lived "by the achievement of the impossible." What incredible twaddle a parson is allowed to indulge in by his Christian brethren!

The *Baptist Times and Freeman* affirms, and re-affirms after contradiction, that "the daily reading of the Bible, both privately and in family devotions, has enormously declined in Christian homes." This means that the production of saints is greatly on the decrease, that the old-fashioned piety is dying out, that Christianity itself is becoming extinct. The *Freethinker* has been saying the same thing for years, and has been called a godless liar for its pains. Now, the defenders of the faith are saying it, because the fact can no longer be concealed.

A gentleman said in the presence of a parson: "I don't believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he performed miracles, that his death was an atonement to God, and that he rose from the dead." "My dear sir," replied the parson, "what you lack is faith. These subjects are too sacred for argumentation, too exalted to be reasoned about. Rebuke your haughty intellect, my friend, and humbly pray for faith to believe." How characteristic of the man of God! The layman went his way a more confirmed unbeliever than before.

A well-known, eloquent, melodramatic preacher entered the Temple Library in London. Outside he noticed a band of Hindoos. In the library itself half the students at work were Hindoos, with keen, sharp, clear faces, as though their bodies were the chaste, drilled ministers of their minds. He was taken into a hall where a large number of men were taking their examination for the Bar, and thickly dotted among them were Hindoos, intent upon honor and place. Turning to his companion, the great preacher remarked upon the nearness of the kingdom of Christ, and sang in his heart, "Come, thou long-expected Jesus," feeling that perhaps he had been looking upon the dawn of his salvation. Such is the unreasoning, sentimental, mawkish faith of a Christian minister, as if the mere contact with Western culture were sufficient to convert educated Asiatics to Christianity, and when it is well known that modern culture is demolishing Christianity in the West itself. No, the world is *not* coming to Christ.

Christian Missions all boast, and the Central Hall Mission at Manchester is no exception. What is certain about it is that it draws a lot of low-class people (in the worst sense of the words) to the Hall in Oldham-street. We have seen them going in, after marching through the streets, and they seemed to us below even the Salvation Army mob. What is uncertain is the good this Mission does. Reading its reports and appeals, you might imagine it had succeeded in converting tens of thousands of the riff-raff of Manchester, and fairly driven drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution out of the city. But if you inquired on the spot you would find it had done nothing of the kind. It does not even "provide beds and meals for the poor and destitute," as it is supposed to by subscribers to its funds. It acts exactly like the Salvation Army. It gives the "poor and destitute" a bed for sixpence, and a dinner for sixpence. If they haven't got the sixpence they can go to Sheol.

There is a "Brotherhood For God" at 21 Finsbury Circus, London, E.C., particulars of which may be obtained from "the Brother-in-Charge." A correspondent tells us it looks like a fairly flourishing affair. According to one of its leaflets, it started in 1907. A few men, who were acquainted with each other through travelling together by train, made "an appointment with Almighty God" on a certain day. They "met in secret, and secured themselves in such a manner as to prevent all interruption and overlooking." Then they each "prayed aloud to God" and "waited." In a few minutes, one of them "became in a semi-conscious condition" and "gave expression to such things as were quite unusual to him." He received "what have since been proved to be prophetic messages." On this basis the Brotherhood began business. It is an old story retold, and it shows how rampant the spirit of superstition still is. No wonder the bulk of the people are easily bamboozled.

To-day, nearly all the Sunday-schools in Christendom are considering the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and, judging by the preparatory literature that has been in circulation, the scholars will be told the oft-exposed and shattered lie that the Resurrection is "the sanction for Christian ethics." Christian ethics is non-existent, except on the pages of the four Gospels—as non-existent as the Resurrection that sanctions it. Such is the falsehood *actually* embodied in the words within quotation marks. But the lie *intended* is of a much more mischievous character. What will be impressed upon the youthful minds is that, if man is not to live for ever, it is the sheerest waste of time either to talk or even to think about morality. A more damnable lie than this was

never uttered, and it accounts for the low moral tone of Christendom.

Rev. E. Shillito is a clever man and a good writer. But in his eagerness to account for the lamentable failure of Christianity he uses language which implies shocking disrespect to the omnipotent Deity. "The missionary cause," he says, "depends upon the wonder of Divine Grace on the one hand, and upon the mission and calling of the Church on the other. It is impossible if either is lost." Because God does not accomplish anything apart from the Church, Mr. Shillito very naturally infers that he cannot. But has it never occurred to the reverend gentleman that there is another inference more natural still? As there is no trace of God's activity apart from the Church, and as his alleged activity in and through the Church is so utterly unworthy of his omnipotence and love, is it not a logically and ethically irresistible inference that the belief in his existence is devoid of the slightest evidential support?

The Rev. E. Shillito says the element of romance is returning to Christianity from the Foreign Mission field. We quite agree. We have long been convinced that little but romance does come back from the mission field, and that as works of imagination missionary reports deserve to take a high place in English literature.

Referring to the recent revolution in Turkey, the Rev. J. H. Jowett says, "by pacific means and by marvellous sagacity and self-restraint, this Bastille of a country becomes a home of freedom, and songs ascend instead of sighs, and a revolution has been effected unparalleled in the history of the world." There is one thing Mr. Jowett omits to point out to his readers, namely, that the people who effected this peaceful and marvellous revolution were not Christians. The Japanese governing class, too, effected an equally peaceful revolution when it surrendered its long-held privileges for the good of the country. Had either of these people been Christian, bloodshed would have been the order of the day—and night. Christian Russia is a case in point.

Sabbatarianism seems in a bad way in Kalgoorlie, West Australia. The Rev. John Benkers says that some time back all the Churches united in an attempt to protect the community from the "Continental Sunday." Every effort was made, without success, and now Sunday amusements are in full swing. Mr. Benkers writes: "The combined places of amusement can accommodate close upon 10,000 people, and as a rule they are full on Sunday nights just when the churches are open. Cricket matches are on every Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon, and these things make our work very difficult." We quite appreciate Mr. Benkers' difficulty. While people can go elsewhere they are not likely, under ordinary circumstances, to go to church. The reverend gentleman is suffering from the prevalence of free trade in amusements, and he runs a concern that can only flourish under the most rigid protection. Poor fellow!

Henry Lacey, of 126 St. Paul's-road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, was secretary of the P. S. A. carried on at the Sparkhill Primitive Methodist Church, Stratford-road. Being charged with embezzlement of the P. S. A. funds, he pleaded guilty and asked to be dealt with as leniently as possible. He was committed for trial to the next Worcester Assizes. There is no particular moral, except that godly men sometimes go wrong.

Jack Johnson, the black pugilist, had a tremendous reception on arriving at New York from Melbourne, where he beat Tommy Burns. According to one newspaper telegram, his reception when driving down Broadway almost equalled the ovation accorded to Admiral Dewey on his return from sinking the Spanish ships at Manila. We understand that New York is a Christian city, and subscribes a good deal of money for the conversion of the "hoathen."

Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., has joined the majority. There is a proverb which recommends us to speak no ill of the dead. We will not, therefore, describe the deceased gentleman as a champion liar. We will only say that he had a most creative imagination. He fancied that he had once been an Atheist, he fancied that he knew the leaders of Freethought, he fancied that God had rescued him from the slough of "infidelity," he even fancied that the Lord heard his prayers and obliged him by striking Bradlaugh ill so that he could not fulfil his engagement to lecture in Bristol. When it was pointed out to this pious and preaching lawyer that he was mistaken in all these fancies, he did not correct them; he merely laid low for a little while, and then went

on repeating them. But then he loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and to him that loveth much much shall be forgiven. A few inaccuracies don't count—when they only apply to "infidels."

Lies seem bound to win all the Marathon races if they only get a little start. Obituary notices of the late Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., state that he was once "an agnostic lecturer." We asked "when and where?" during Mr. Reader Harris's lifetime—and never got an answer. We suppose it is useless to ask the question again now that he is dead. The falsehood has taken permanent rank as a Christian truth.

Christians do get hold of some odd notions. We see by the *Melbourne Hall Magazine*, Leicester, that there has been a Self-Denial Week on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society, and some of the incidents related are, to say the least of them, curious. One young lady had only 4s. at the end of the week for the fund, so she studied how to make it more, and "prayed for guidance in the matter." As she prayed—with her eyes open that time!—she looked down and "saw half a sovereign lying on the pavement," which she "took as a special gift, and put it into her envelope." This is a nice way of appropriating money for the Lord. No thought of the person who dropped the half-sovereign. It might have been a widow's all, or the last coin that stood between an unemployed workman and destitution. But what did that matter? The Lord got it. And his missionaries spent it on saving the heathen.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who are appointed by the State to deal with a relatively small portion of the revenues of the Church of England, have issued their sixty-first report, which shows that they hold no less than £23,595,710—£11,048,906 in Government securities and £12,546,804 in cash. How the Christian religion has got on financially since its first cashier "sold" the whole concern for some £3 15s.

Mr. John Kershaw, F.R.C.S., of St. Anno's-on-the-Sea, Lancashire, who died on the fourteenth of February last, left estate of the gross value of £79,195. Over £50,000 of this was devoted by his will to the establishment of a hospital in the town of Royton, with the following conditions:—

"I desire that any such hospital and infirmary may as far as practicable be free and open to all applicants, and that no inquiry be made in any case as to the religious belief of applicants or whether they attend the services of any church or chapel, also that no clergyman or minister of religion or any Socialist or person known to hold or profess Socialist opinions be at any time a trustee, director, or manager of the said hospital and infirmary."

The deceased doctor appears to have objected equally to clergymen and Socialists. Perhaps he thought that they were too fond of running together. And there does seem to be some reason for his belief.

Mr. A. B. Moss brought forward his motion on the Camberwell Borough Council for the removal of the *Daily Chronicle* from the Free Library tables, as having published the Christmas poem which was found so objectionable when quoted in the *Freethinker*. Of course the motion failed; the mechanical majority voted it down without a discussion. One pious member, however, had the audacity to say that it was not the quotation, but the *Freethinker* comments on it, that had been objected to. As a matter of fact, the only comment we made was the observation that "only piety is equal to these things." That was absolutely all. The Camberwell Borough Council bigots, therefore, understand truth as well as they do decercy.

The *Camberwell Times* says that the Libraries Committee ought to have the power to fix some limit to "the influx of ephemeral publications." "Ephemeral" is good. The *Freethinker* is nearly thirty years old. But perhaps the Camberwell ancient needs a dictionary.

The *Daily Mail* reported on April 1 that a woman yawned so at a Barnstaple revival service that she dislocated her jaw and was taken in an ambulance to the infirmary. The revivalist's jaw should have been treated at the infirmary too.

Can the Infinite be supposed to shift the responsibility of the ultimate destiny of any created thing to the finite? Our theologians pretend that it can. I doubt.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, April 11, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, W.; at 7.30, "If Christ Be Not Risen."

April 18, 25, St. James's Hall, London.

May 2, Liverpool; 9, Aberdare.

## To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 25, Greenwich.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £165 12s. Received since.—Mr. and Mrs. James Neate, £1; James Baker, 2s. 6d.; A. E. Maddox, £1; L. Himmell, 5s.; J. Wilson, 2s. 6d.; R. D. Scoular, £1; W. Ainsworth, £1; J. P., 7s. 6d.
- R. YATES.—We should be glad to see more activity in Wigan, but it is not possible to take the initiative in London. The local "saints" must move.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—You wish you were a Carnegie, for if you were you would help us along financially and "make things hum." We believe you would.
- W. TURNER.—We note your hope to send more Easter Eggs before the end of April. You could obtain the numbers of last year's *Freethinker* from our publishing office. They could be bound up in cloth for you at 3s. extra. We do not bind up volumes for sale ourselves.
- A. T. FARMER.—The handiest, and for all useful purposes the best, edition of Fitzgerald's "Omar Khayyam" is published in Macmillan's "Golden Treasury Series" at 2s. 6d. Readers should be on their guard against non-copyright editions, which are only reprints of the first edition issued in 1859. This was afterwards amplified and much improved. The little work we recommend contains the full text of the first and fourth editions, and the various readings of the second and third.
- A. D. HOWELL SMITH writes: "As one who admires your earnestness and ability in a cause which is dear to us both, I wish to contribute my shilling towards the Easter Offerings Fund. I hope you may be spared us many years yet to carry on your strenuous battle against Superstition and Reaction."
- A. D. HOPPS sends "every good wish for the future of the *Freethinker*."
- E. RAGGETT.—Glad to hear from one who was a good Methodist five years ago and would now sooner be without any other paper than the *Freethinker*.
- JAMES NEATE, vice-president of the National Secular Society, and member of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd., writes: "I enclose annual subscription from Mrs. Neate and myself to the President's Honorarium Fund. We are sorry it is not ten times larger. We should like to see the full amount reached by June this year."
- W. H. HARRIS "hopes all Freethinkers will deem it a pleasure to respond" to our Shilling Month appeal.
- G. PHILLIPS.—It seems to be clerical etiquette that one parson should not preach in another parson's parish without saying "By your leave." Bishop Gore says it is the law too. We leave him and Canon Henson to fight it out. It doesn't much concern us. Does it? If all the three men of God involved never preach again in any parish we should not wear mourning.
- J. R. LICKFOLD writes "Three years ago I was a communicant in the Church of England, but now, thanks largely to your journal, I am a Freethinker; and, although I have read much of the best literature on both sides of the question, I know of no writers more able than your staff." Fortunately our staff have strong heads, or we should have to present them with bigger hats.
- E. W. HARRISON.—Glad you and your workmates "have derived much benefit from reading the *Freethinker*."
- G. L. SIMMONDS.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- D. McLEAN.—Subscription passed over. Thanks for cuttings.
- R. SPENCER.—Glad our last week's article gave you "great pleasure." We have already answered another correspondent re Omar Khayyam. Yours must be the early non-copyright edition.
- D. GILLESPIE subscribes to Shilling Month "With continued and increasing appreciation of your work, and thanks for many intellectual benefits received."
- R. DANIEL.—Yes, the 5,000 shillings would be easily raised if all did but a little. Thanks for good wishes. We would rather be fighting at the front than hanging round Aldershot.
- H. GRAHAM says: "I quite agree with you that the *Freethinker* is good value for its price, and I think all ought to give what they can afford."
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for valued batch of cuttings.
- D. GLASS.—Sent as requested. Thanks.
- W. DODD.—We found the longer winter after Christmas a bit trying, but kept tolerably well, and always at work save for one broken lecturing engagement.
- R. D. SCOLAR.—We will try to look into the matter of the cuttings. It is never safe to trust even decent Christians, much less rabid Christians, when they speak or write of Freethinkers. Thanks for other enclosure, divided as desired.
- C. HEATON says: "I do hope the rank and file will respond to your appeal. Surely there are thousands who could spare a shilling."

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER (Birmingham).—A very pleasant form of acknowledgment. Special thanks to the daughter for her interesting and encouraging letter. What we long dreamt of is being realised. Freethought is taking hold of the half of the human race on which priests and priestcraft have chiefly depended. This is the most hopeful sign of the times.

M. RINGROSE writes: "My wife, whom I married a short time ago, introduced the *Freethinker* to me, and at first I was shocked to know she admired it so much, but on perusing it myself I fell in love with it also, and now read it most eagerly every week. I thank you heartily for your work and the rich intellectual treats you give us. You always hit the nail, and it always goes home." We call this a manly letter—and we congratulate the wife.

H. J. SHARP.—We never heard of Stanley the traveller being an Atheist at one time. If he was, he kept it to himself.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings, etc.

T. FLINN.—Glad to hear that you and your wife, who have read the *Freethinker* for ten years, retain a warm place for us in your affections. The Christian Evidence speaker, called Baker, you heard at Barrow, and regard as a first-class liar, must belong to London. It is a recognisable description.

D. P. SWEETLAND.—You would have to order the *Truthseeker* direct from its office, 62 Vesey-street, New York City. Annual subscription 3½ dollars, post free.

N. BARNARD.—We will see.

J. LAZARNICK hopes "all Freethinkers will support the April fund," and makes a suggestion which he will be written to about.

JANE SPEIRS.—Pleased to have your compliment and good wishes.

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

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.

## Sugar Plums.

A capital beginning was made on Sunday night with Mr. Foote's special course of lectures at the beautiful new St. James's Hall in Great Portland-street. A good number of Freethinkers who were expected to be there were *not* there. Our appeal had made no impression upon them, and we note the fact and pass on. But many old familiar faces *were* present, and there was compensation for the absentees in the presence of a very large proportion of strangers—brought there, of course, by the extensive advertising—who were thoroughly interested in the lecture and joined heartily in the applause. As is customary now at Mr. Foote's meetings, there was a most gratifying contingent of ladies, whose brighter attire and more animated faces gave a welcome touch of color and animation to the assembly. Mr. A. B. Moss occupied the chair, and in response to his invitation several members of the audience—two or three of them being ladies—put questions, which Mr. Foote, departing from his usual practice, answered seriatim. The large meeting eventually broke up in the best of tempers, and handshaking and congratulations went on for some time amongst the "saints" in the vestibule.

The advertising of the St. James's Hall meetings is being continued, but Easter Sunday is not generally a favorable date for large audiences, and we therefore invite our friends to do all they can to counteract the possible slump of the holiday season, which takes so many people out of town. Mr. Foote's subject this evening (April 11) is entirely apposite—"If Christ Be Not Risen." The chair will be taken by Mr. John T. Lloyd. We have to add that a competent musician has been engaged to play on the grand piano during the half-hour preceding the lecture—from 7 till 7.30.

Mr. James Neate writes us: "I paid my first visit to St. James's Hall last Sunday. What a grand place it is! Every Freethinker within ten miles should make it a special point to render your course of lectures a success. My wife and a lady friend and myself enjoyed your lecture very much, and we intend to come to the whole course."

"Shilling Month" subscriptions are not flowing in as freely as they ought to, or as we hoped they would. Perhaps a good many "saints" mean to get in before the month ends, and think there is no need to hurry. Well, we hope they won't be too late. It is not easy for us to add much to what we have already said on this subject. We can't say it this week, anyhow. We will let a veteran Freethinker speak instead. Mr. F. Smallman, who sends us a hundred shillings, writes us a cordial, encouraging letter, from which we venture to quote the following sentences: "I am glad to see you are 'at it again' in attempting to get a little more financial support from the Freethought party,

on whose behalf you have devoted all your best, and I am bound to say successful, life's efforts; and it would, in my opinion, be nothing short of disgrace if an adequate response were not made. Considering what every convert to Free-thought saves in the way of pew-rent, contributions to various church and chapel funds, the escape from which is simply impossible in the majority of cases, he will find great economy results from his change of views, and the least he can do when called upon in behalf of the cause he has adopted is to respond liberally—I won't say to quite the same extent that he would have done under the old order of things. Though a person's feelings and environment are, and must be, the sole arbiters in such a case, yet the consciousness of relief, a happy release from superstition, should powerfully prompt him to do whatever in him lies to assist as far as possible the emancipation of others. With this feeling paramount in his mind, no Freethinker worthy of the name could, I imagine, fail to respond to your eloquent appeal; and I shall look forward to seeing at the end of the month that at least £200 has been subscribed." This is a subscriber's appeal to other potential subscribers, and it is good enough to hold the field this week.

The West Ham Branch holds a concert and dance on Saturday evening, April 17, in the Forest Gate Public (Small) Hall, Woodgrange-road. A capital program has been arranged, and all Freethinkers will be welcome. There will be no charge for admission. Proceedings start at 7.45.

The Wood Green Branch is holding regular Sunday evening meetings indoors, but will soon be taking to "the agitation of the streets." Mr. E. Burke, a local speaker, lectured with much acceptance last Sunday evening on "Christianity, Insanity, and Science." The Branch holds a "Social" and Dance on Good Friday at 5.30 p.m. Mr. Maclaren, an Australian Freethinker, lectures this evening (April 11) on "Reconciling the Irreconcilable." We hear that the Branch finds a brisk demand for the *Freethinker*.

Now that Mr. Joseph Bates is acting (under the Secular Society, Ltd.) as Free-thought propagandist and organiser in Boston and the surrounding district, it is desirable that an effort should be made at Hull, Grimsby, and other towns within reasonable distance of Boston. We have therefore to ask "saints" in those places to communicate with the general secretary in London—Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.—who will advise them how they can assist in the work sought to be done.

The Bethnal Green Branch starts its open-air work in Victoria Park on April 18 at 3.15 p.m., when the lecturer will be Mr. W. J. Ramsey. Mr. C. Cohen starts the Sunday evening meetings there on May 2. Local "saints" please note.

An effort has been going on for some time to re-form the forces of Free-thought in Liverpool under the banner of the National Secular Society. All the causes, and personal occasions, of the old unhappy division have disappeared, and it is foolish to stand upon mere inherited grievances. The N. S. S. Branch, which had been beaten about by a long succession of difficulties, has been wound up, and an entirely new Branch is being organised again in connection with the Alexandra Hall. The fifty-two members who have already joined the new Branch include "saints" on both sides. We do not intend to say a lot about this matter, but we earnestly appeal to all Secularists in Liverpool and the district—where, by the way, the *Freethinker* has now a considerable circulation—to join in this effort of reconciliation and progress. It is no use talking about old troubles. The faces of those who really care for Free-thought should be set towards the future. The real business of the Liverpool Branch is to convert Liverpool to Free-thought, and keeping a steady eye on that aim will be the best safeguard of the new enterprise. Mr. Foote is going down to Liverpool to deliver two lectures on the first Sunday in May, and he calls upon all loyal-hearted Freethinkers to rally round him—and peace, and amity, and the old flag—on that occasion. Meanwhile the interests of reunion are safe in the hands of Mr. John Hammond, the Branch President, who is throwing himself heart and soul, as the saying is, into the new movement. Veteran "saints" like Mr. John Ross and Mr. G. Roleffs are amongst the fifty-two—which we hope will be a hundred by the end of May.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will be held this year—on Whit-Sunday, as usual—at Liverpool. The business sessions, morning and afternoon, will take place in the Alexandra Hall. The place of the evening public meeting has not yet been fixed. There seems to be fresh difficulty in the hiring of halls at Liverpool. But we hope to make a satisfactory announcement next week.

## The Lecturer in White.

At the mouth of the river Nile, where the shore of Egypt touches the great Midland Sea, stands the port of Alexandria. Some 2,200 years ago, on low mud-banks, Alexander the Great began the building of this city and called it by his own name. In its early days it was four miles across, and fifteen miles round. Two wide streets cut each other in the middle of the town. Temples, palaces, and villas gave grandeur to the roads. Citizens exercised in large gymnasia. There was a vast theatre. In the Museum was housed the most extensive library in the world. Here lecturers spoke to crowded audiences on philosophy, science, medicine, poetry, etc., and late in the history of Alexandria, one of these lecturers was the celebrated lady, Hypatia, of whom we have an attractive portrait in Charles Kingsley's novel. The population was very mixed, including Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians. Merchants from Arabia and India, and ships from Rome and the West brought a wonderful medley of languages, ideas and religious customs to this seaside city. The free citizens numbered at one time 300,000, and there were as many more who were slaves. On one side of Alexandria was a race-course; on the opposite side, a necropolis. Fronting the ocean rose the famous Pharos, a lighthouse 400 feet high. To-day a modern lighthouse stands on the same spot, and flings the rays of its revolving lamp twenty miles out to sea.

In this city, about the year 200, a prominent lecturer was the Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria.

Clement was brought up in the faith of Greece and Rome. To him, as a youth, Zeus was the Father in Heaven; Apollo was the lord of light and health. He had learned the poems of Homer, and filled his mind with scraps of learning from Plato and other Greek philosophers. His mind was quick and eager in drinking every sort of ideas. Having become a Christian, he travelled in Greece, Italy, and the East, and then settled down in Alexandria as a preacher. So full are his works (the *Stromata*, or *Patchwork*; the *Pædagogus*, or *Moral Instructor*, etc.) of quotations from poets, philosophers and Biblical Scriptures that one imagines he must have been constantly running into the Museum to copy out extracts. Clement combined his Greek equipment with his Christian doctrines. He was not one of those narrow-minded snobs who thought everything was bad that was not Christian. He said philosophy was the work of Divine Providence. There was truth in the teaching of Plato and other wise Greeks just as a good nut is enclosed within a shell. Plato had affirmed happiness to be obtainable by the knowledge of God and of the Divine Ideas of Justice, Wisdom, etc. The Christian faith affirmed likewise. "The pure in heart shall see God." The man who thus approximated to God was the Gnostic, the Knower. The Gnostic, said Clement, loves the Good for its own sake, and not from fear of punishment or hope of practical benefit or reward. "He who reverences God reverences himself." One must acknowledge the superiority of Clement to many of his patristic colleagues.

Clement possessed a gift for powerful description of Alexandrian social life. In his lesson-book, the *Pædagogus*, he embraced the full round of behavior, and, in so doing, recorded vivid scenes from contemporary experience. He spoke scornfully of "the useless art of making pastry," and sarcastically enumerated the sauces, rare poultry, expensive fruits, etc., that adorned the banquets. The gluttons seemed always surrounded with the hissing sound of frying-pans. Such men (he said with dreadful literalness) were nothing but jaw! Recommending water, he yet allowed a little wine at supper. For costly vessels and furniture he had a great dislike. A cheap wooden bed, he asserted, was as good for sleep as a couch of ivory, and an earthenware pan was fine enough for washing in. Christ did not bring a silver foot-bath with him from heaven. Table

manners were carefully regulated by the Instructor. People, while dining, must not talk too loudly, or whistle to the waiters, or sneeze too explosively. He would not allow the use of scents and ointments, though ointment might be employed for medical purposes. Beds must be plain, and not too soft. Purple quilts were forbidden; so were feather mattresses. He had an objection to colored clothes, especially to Indian silks; and he recommended a white gown. Shoes or sandals must be white; gold ornaments and gems on the footwear were vetoed. Precious stones were not permitted, and Clement burst out at the pearls worn by vain women:—

"The wretched creatures are not ashamed at having bestowed the greatest pains upon this little oyster, when they might adorn themselves with the sacred jewel, the Word of God, whom the Scripture has somewhere called a pearl, the pure and pellucid Jesus."

Men also he admonished, and he scolded all who shaved the chin, or dyed grey locks. He advised the simple life of the barbaric Germans, or of the Scythian nomads who lived in caravan-waggons and hated luxury. The headings of Clement's manual of etiquette were such as these,—Clothes; Earrings; Painting the face; the Modest Maiden; Amusements and associates; Public spectacles; Going to church; Kiss of charity; Government of the Eyes. Certain counsels were so candid that the modern translators veil them in Latin. The Christian churches would appear to have been popularly attended, and certain disorders had crept into church manners. Clement earnestly advised women to cover their faces all through the service; and, when the worshipers left the meeting-place, they were begged not to go off to flute-playing, dancing, and wine-parties. It is manifest that Clement was what later ages called a Puritan, both in his sourness and in his sincere hatred of what was coarse and effeminate. He lived in a city which was a sort of London, Paris, or New York of his time, and Clement, like a Father Vaughan, felt called upon to denounce the vice and idleness of Society. His Puritanism was a reaction against indulgence and luxury. The Gnostic, or Perfect Man, of Clement was narrow, but worthy,—he praises God when he tills the field or sails the sea; he is well-pleased with all that happens; he takes no oaths, preferring affirmation; he owes no grudges, relieves and encourages the afflicted, and so on.

I have made some search in Clement's writings to see what is his attitude towards the slaves and working-class. We have noted that this class composed half the population of Alexandria. I do not find that Clement has anything specific to say of these people at all. The Christians he speaks of seem to be in fairly good circumstances; and, from the way in which he talks of affluence in food, dress, and furniture, it looks as if he himself moved in comfortable social circles. In that case he did not live in the same sphere of thought and feeling as Jesus, whose associates were proletarian. Perhaps Clement resembled the Evangelicals of to-day who journey to Switzerland and the Lake District to attend Holiness Conventions, and are quite earnest persons in their limits, but are apt to regard the lower brethren of the working-classes with an eye of patronage rather than fraternity.

Clement has nothing to say on politics. How was Alexandria governed? What sort of men were its officials? What was the sanitary condition of the town? Such things it was not his province to consider. Of course, he lived under the Roman Empire. He had less power to criticise the government than has even a Hindu under Lord Morley's rule in India. All the early Christians lived in a religious world alone. We have nothing to learn from them on political subjects. We can learn far more from the Greeks and Romans whom the Christians usually despised as heathens.

Another gap in the philosophy of Clement is his want of outlook on the earthly future. To us modern Humanists one of the most inspiring ideas is the

idea of posterity. To serve posterity is a living part of our politics and ethics. To Clement and the other early Christians this motive did not appeal. The world was soon to close its history. The Son of Man would appear on the clouds, and sit in judgment on all the nations of the earth. It is different with us. I heard a man at a public assembly sneeringly ask the other day, "What has posterity done for me?" His hearers ignorantly laughed. That laughter is in a great measure the moral attitude of a considerable proportion of the public. It is a mean attitude. We are ourselves a posterity. Ill would it have fared with us if our fathers had not taken thought for the future, and made many a rough place smooth, and pioneered the way to many a liberty. Let us reverence the labors of the past for its posterity. Let us raise the dignity of the civic and industrial life of the present. It is the highest maxim of the Religion of Humanity to "live for others." By others we mean both the men and women of the public now living, and of the posterity that will succeed us in our citizenship.

F. J. GOULD.

### Facing the Enemy.

WHEN, three months or so ago, I wrote an article for this journal entitled "Watching the Enemy," I did not think that I should be called upon so soon to face the enemy in open warfare. I had said, however, that the Moderates on Camberwell Council had been on the look-out, ever since they had been returned, to see if they could find anything in the columns of the *Freethinker* to which they could take serious objection; indeed, they had given evidence, very early in their career as members, that they had a positive dislike to such an outspoken journal as the *Freethinker* being allowed to have a place on the tables of our Public Libraries. Nevertheless, on the evening of the 18th January, when I attended the Libraries Committee in the usual way, I was rather startled to find that there was a motion down on the paper of business for the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the Dulwich Library. At first I wondered who could have been the author of the offending article, and imagined that perhaps I had said something in my article that had offended the tender susceptibilities of some of the more bigoted members of that body. Soon, however, I learned that it was not I who was the offender, but the Editor of the *Freethinker* himself, who had had the audacity to criticise a Christian poem that had appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on Christmas Eve of last year. The offending paragraph was pointed out to me by a pious member, who professed to be very much shocked at it; and he failed to be impressed when I told him that the offending words were a quotation from the *Daily Chronicle*, and that the Editor of the *Freethinker* had merely said that the so-called poem was poor stuff from a literary point of view, and as for its taste—"well, well! only piety is equal to these things."

At length the motion for exclusion was reached, and it was really very interesting to me to hear the speeches denouncing the *Freethinker* for calling attention to the objectionable line in the poem of the *Daily Chronicle*. As one after the other the pious members got up and gave vent to their bigotry in speeches of the most vehement character, I could not help thinking that the old spirit of religious persecution was very far from dead, and required but a little of the old enthusiasm to kindle the smouldering fire into a great flame. One member, who is not only a religious zealot, but is regarded by many as a sort of political Don Quixote, said that if he had seen the objectionable line in the *Daily Chronicle* he certainly would have moved for the exclusion of that journal as well as the *Freethinker*—a remark, however, that did not meet with the approval of certain Progressive members of the Libraries Committee,

who are staunch Liberals in politics, but narrow-minded to a deplorable degree in religion. In reply I made a strong speech, in which I declared that the *Freethinker* was a pure publication; that if it was excluded from the Dulwich Library it would only be a logical step to exclude the works of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, or the poems of Shakespeare, Shelley, Byron, Burns, and others; and that if the members were determined to show their bigotry, I might be driven into the position of asking for the exclusion of the Holy Bible, on the ground that it contained some passages that were so shockingly indecent that no self-respecting father would read them to his children and no clergyman dare read from the pulpit. I noticed that the Church of England clergyman member of the Committee winced a bit when I made this statement. However, when the matter was put to the vote, the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the Dulwich Library was carried, two members only holding up their hands against the motion.

When I remonstrated with one of my progressive friends for not holding up his hand against such a motion, he merely said that he did not vote on the question one way or the other—which, apparently, he thought was a negative way of rendering me some assistance.

Having succeeded in carrying their motion in respect to "the Dulwich Library," one Councillor offended me to the quick by describing the *Freethinker* as a journal somewhat after the character of the *Pink'un*, and then moving that it be excluded from all the libraries simultaneously. This I prevented by pointing out that there had been no complaints from any of the other libraries, and that unless a notice of motion was given for the exclusion from other libraries such a proceeding would be out of order. For a fortnight, therefore, the matter remained in abeyance; but at the following meeting of "the Libraries' Committee" Councillor George Scott, whom I described as a "Publican by trade, a Christian by profession, and, according to the Christian philosophy, a sinner by heredity," duly came forward with his motion to exclude the *Freethinker* from all the Camberwell Libraries—six in number. Councillor George Scott is a genial sort of fellow in his way, but as he is a professed Christian I suppose he thought he ought to do something in the way of upholding the faith that was in him, and he thought he could do nothing better than getting a wickedly heretical paper like the *Freethinker* excluded from all our Libraries. He confessed that he knew nothing of the paper himself, that he never saw the paper until the particular paragraph in question had been shown to him; but he said, with an air of supreme satisfaction, that if that journal was not fit to be on the table of one library it was not fit to be on any—a conclusion which no sane person would be disposed to dispute if you once granted the little word "if" and all that it implied.

The motion was accordingly put, and, though a few Progressives held up their hands against it, the motion was carried with a large majority. When I got home that night I got out my copy of the *Bible Handbook*, by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball, and wrote out a long list of chapters and verses of passages from "the authorised English version of the Holy Bible"—from the New Testament as well as the Old—and sent in a motion for the exclusion of the Bible from all our libraries, on the ground that such passages were either indecent, immoral, or obscene, and that in its present unexpurgated condition the reading of it was calculated to corrupt and demoralise all who read it—old and young alike. When I sent this motion I knew it would produce a sort of consternation among the officials, and I could, in imagination, see the Town Clerk sending for a copy of the Bible to see if there was any ground for my motion, and verifying, one after the other, all my references. In a few days I received a courteous letter from the Town Clerk saying that he had no feeling in the matter, but that he could not put down such a motion on the Agenda without first of all bringing

the matter before the Libraries' Committee, and getting their sanction for putting down all the references to these passages on the paper of business. This, I thought, as I reflected upon that letter, this undoubtedly is what Shakespeare calls "a hit, a palpable hit"; and Christians will learn in time that they cannot strike the *Freethinker* without expecting some very cutting retorts by way of reply.

In another article I will give the sequel to this motion, and some further details of the fight for justice and fairplay for all controversial journals in the Libraries of Camberwell.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### "The Ultimate Potentiality."

SOME call it "God," some call it the "Immanent God," some call it "the Infinite," some "the Absolute," some "the Great First Cause," and others call it the "Ultimate Potentiality." What is that to which men apply these names? Some declare it is a "person," man-like, but far superior to any man; others say a being, but not anthropomorphous; some say "Being," with a big B, but not a person. But all mean, if I understand them at all, the power which was immanent in, or existed above or behind, the chaotic, unmoving matter of the cosmos before it became an orderly, active universe, as it appears to us now.

These appellations are used by people who are trying to account for "the beginning" of all things; but who base all of their theories upon one fatal error which they never so much as suspicion to be an error. They begin by assuming that there ever was a "beginning" of the cosmos. And they fail to see that they in this way account for the origin of but one half of the cosmos even if their hypothesis be true; for they fail to account for the origin of "God," of the "First Great Cause," or of the "Ultimate Potentiality."

It is just as difficult to conceive of a "Being," personal or impersonal, existing without a beginning as it is to conceive of the universe itself being eternally self-existent. But we have no evidence whatever that there ever was a time when the universe did not exist, or that there ever will be a time when it will cease to exist. Therefore the preponderance of probability, to say the least, is in favor of the hypothesis that the universe as a whole is eternally self-existent—beginningless and endless.

Another error, closely allied to this chief one above referred to, is that of assuming that the things constituting the world are of two distinct orders, "causes" and "effects," and that the latter are dependent upon the former, while "causes" are independent. The truth is, there is no such duality in nature. Every cause is itself an effect and every effect a cause of other effects. Whether anything may be rightly called a cause or an effect depends entirely upon the relationship it holds to other things which we are considering. Here is a mill operated by electricity. It is said that the electric power is the cause of the mill's movements. Be it so; but it is also the effect of the dynamo's movements, and the mill's movements are the causes of, say, logs being cut into lumber. As to whether a thing is a cause or an effect, then, depends wholly upon its relationship to other things; it is not essentially and exclusively a cause, but relatively both cause and effect. As we trace back from effect to cause, we go step by step alternately from effect to cause and from cause to effect forever—never reaching any cause which itself is not an effect—never arriving at any "first cause," "great" or small.

To my mind, it is self-evident that there is and never was any "Great First Cause." Whatever we may believe about the existence of God or of super-human beings, we are bound to think of them as causes and effects in the endless chain of natural evolution—because we cannot conceive of a causeless cause.

In a recent public debate to which I listened, one disputant based his argument for a personal God on the existence of that which he persisted in calling the "Ultimate Potentiality," as a necessary cause (creator) of the orderly activity of nature, and assuming that in the "star dust" and chaotic substances of the cosmos prior to the birth of nebulae, suns, planets, and the inhabitants of planets, existed a potentiality that was at some time in the eternal past called into activity by the will of a personality who had all of the attributes of matter, mind, and morals—all of the attributes of the highest man and probably many others of which finite mind was incapable of forming any conception.

The correlation of moving matter as ultimate particles ("atoms"), as inorganic bodies, as simple organic cells, as complex plants and animals, as thinking, conscious, moral man, maintains the eternal activity of the cosmos, for motion as well as "matter" is indestructible and impossible of "dissipation into vacuity."

If the aggregate of cosmic forms embrace a personality which we may call the "Supreme Being" or "God," we are bound by the findings of science to conceive of this being as the universe itself, or else to admit that it (or "he") is not infinite. If this Supreme personality is the cosmic aggregation, "he" or it is both good and evil—both God and Devil—for we have the same evidence of evil and malignancy in nature that we have of beneficence and goodness.

—Singleton W. Davis, "Humanitarian Review," Los Angeles, Cal.

### A Judge's Tribute to Ingersoll.

[Judge Edgar H. Sherman has published *Recollections of a Long Life* through Little, Brown and Co., of Boston. One chapter is devoted to "Distinguished Men I Have Met"—among them being Colonel Ingersoll, of whom he writes as below. We are indebted to our Freethought contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, for the extracts.]

In the summer of 1880, Colonel Ingersoll was for nearly three months at the Bass Rocks Hotel, near my cottage at Bass Rocks, Gloucester. I had met him casually before, and I had heard him lecture. During that summer I came to know him and the whole family intimately. The family consisted of Mrs. Parker (Mrs. Ingersoll's mother), Colonel and Mrs. Ingersoll, the two daughters, Eva and Maude, Mrs. Farrell (Mrs. Ingersoll's sister), her husband, and their daughter Eva.

I was at the hotel to see the family almost every day, and the Colonel, with or without members of the family, was nearly as often on my piazza.

I never knew a happier family. From Mrs. Parker to the little Eva, they each and all seemed to enjoy life to the full. They were quite popular at the hotel.

Ingersoll was a great lover of nature and independent in his views of religion, which he seldom intruded upon others (minutely); he was a great and lovable character.

While the Star Route trials were going on in Washington I called upon Colonel Ingersoll, who was of counsel. He introduced me to the presiding judge, a strong believer in religion. At the intermission the judge invited me into his lobby. As we talked about Colonel Ingersoll, the judge said: "When I learned that he was to take part in this trial I was unhappy. I regarded him as a blatant infidel. After three weeks of the trial of the case I have become a great admirer of his. He can bring more sunshine into a court-room than any man I ever saw."

I would enlarge the statement (says Judge Sherman) by saying that he has brought more sunshine into the world than any man I ever saw.

### THE NILE AND THE CREEDS.

So the men change along my changeless stream,  
And change their faiths; but I yield all alike  
Sweet water for their drinking, sweet as wine,  
And pure sweet water for their lustral rites:  
For thirty generations of my corn  
Outlast a generation of my men,  
And thirty generations of my men  
Outlast a generation of their gods.

—James Thomson ("B. V.").

### Shilling Month.

#### SECOND LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Figures after the names of subscribers indicate the number of shillings they send. No number means one shilling.

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Correction: L. Himmell, 5, last week, was included in error.

### East Anglian Notes.

"PROVIDENCE" has been very unkind to me during the past week, the weather being simply abominable and effectually putting a stop to all outdoor work. Things cleared up somewhat though during the latter part and enabled me to break fresh ground at Kirton, where I delivered the first Freethought lecture. As was perhaps to be expected, I met with a mixed reception. It is an agricultural district, and the priest has a thorough grip on the people. I managed to get in about one hour's address on "Science and the Bible," after which I was continually interrupted by a dozen Christian bullies, who behaved in the usual manner and answered my arguments by singing the latest pantomime songs mixed up with a few hymns, amongst which was the Doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," valiantly led by a half-drunken individual who, I afterwards learnt, had been in prison many times for various offences. Several members of the Boston Branch accompanied me, so there was no attempt at personal violence. I had a very successful meeting this afternoon (Sunday, April 4) on Bargate Green, Boston. The weather being glorious a large crowd assembled, and were very appreciative. Next Thursday I am at Spalding—a very bigoted place.

JOSEPH BATES.

Wherever and whenever religious agencies succeed, it is rarely because of the driving-power of what is preached, but because the preacher's gospel is glossed over or put in the background. We have popular services by the million, in which devices are used to attract the public which ought not to be necessary if their framers had any real message to declare. But they have not. Popular addresses rarely or never deal with the fundamental problems of life. The last thing one ever expects to hear in such addresses is a real living presentation of the beliefs the preacher professes to hold. He makes passing allusion to them, of course—such as appeals to come to the Cross, and such-like, but they generally sound unreal, and the pill has to be sweetly sugared. The ordinary way of preaching the gospel is to avoid saying much about what the preacher believes the Gospel to be.—*Rev. R. J. Campbell.*

### THE EVANGELIST.

Into our little burg he rolls,  
And sings old hymns to ragtime tunes,  
And talks of men's immortal souls  
As our fat grocer prates of prunes.

He talks of crowns and harps of gold  
As though he had them in his trunk  
He cords us up within the fold  
With other piles of human junk.

And then he takes his book and gong  
To other towns that saving need;  
And ere he has died away his song,  
We ransomed sinners all stampede!

—Walt Mason in the "Philistine."

**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.**

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, W.) : 7.30, G. W. Foote, "If Christ Be Not Risen."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Forest Gate Public (Lower) Hall, Woodgrange-road) : 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The First Easter." Selections by the Band before lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road) : 7, Mr. Maclaren, "Reconciling the Irreconcilable." Good Friday, Social and Dance. Tea at 5.30. Tickets, adults 9d., children 6d.

**COUNTRY.**

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Rooms, 12 Hill-square) ; 6.30, A. Davis, "Peter Kropotkin : his Philosophy."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. Alexandra Hall, Islington-square : 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Jerusalem Ghost : an Atheist's Sermon."

**JOSEPH BATES' EAST ANGLIAN MISSION.**

BOSTON : Bargate Green, Sunday, April 11, at 3, "Modern Science and Traditional Myth."

KIRTON : Market Place, Tuesday, April 13, at 7.30, "Death!"

LINCOLN (near G. N. R. Station) : Easter Monday, April 12, at 3, "Secularism and its Attitude towards a Future Existence."

SPALDING : Market Place, Thursday, April 15, at 3, "The Birth and Death of God."

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