

# THE Freethinker

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*The advocate of what is false has every reason to make his advances stealthily, and to curry favor with the world. The man who feels that he has truth on his side must step firmly. Truth is not to be dallied with.*

—GOETHE.

## DEATH OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

### Swinburne as a Freethinker.

"O proud Death!  
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell?"

THE death of Swinburne removes one of the few great figures from the field of present-day English literature. This may be said with literal truth, for although he mainly belonged to a former generation he was working to the last, and had even some fresh literary projects in view. Those projects are now in the wallet which Time carries on his back with alms for oblivion. But they were not necessary to Swinburne's record of achievement. He had done a big stroke of work in the world. His many productions in various forms of poetry filled a dozen volumes in the last collected edition; and if we add his numerous prose volumes to the list we have another illustration of the fecundity of genius.

This is neither the time nor the place to consider Swinburne's precise rank amongst English poets. Nor are such questions settled by journalistic discussions. Great poets are tried by a jury of their peers (as Shelley said) empannelled during many generations. When partisan shouting is over, and the dust of controversy subsides and disappears, the verdict will be duly pronounced, and there will be no appeal against it. In the meanwhile, or at least for the present, it is enough to say that Swinburne was undoubtedly a poet of very considerable importance; that his lyrical work is full of all kinds of rich music; and that, if the music sometimes overwhelms the thought, the thought sometimes looks less profound than it is because of its enchanting music. His dramas, though abounding in fine passages, were not dramatic; and to say that is to say all. His lyrical work is what he will have to be judged by. We may be quite sure of that—without anticipating the judgment itself. And it really seems impossible that some of his lyrics can ever be forgotten while the English language endures.

There used to be a tradition in common literary circles that poets cannot write good prose. It was a ridiculous theory. One has only to look at the prose of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron, to perceive its absurdity. Shakespeare himself wrote wonderful prose in *Hamlet*, for instance, which revealed new possibilities in English prosody. The critics who affect to look down upon Swinburne's prose are kitchen-garden journalists who are hardly entitled to look down on anything. They say it was too full and rich,—a fault that they will never fall into. They say it is wanting in moderation. Just as if there were not too many "moderate" writers about already! What one sighs for is life and originality. Swinburne had better qualities than what passes in England for moderation. His early

prose, such as his introductions to Byron and Coleridge, were full of fine criticism, and the style was clear, fluent, and melodious. In after years his style changed, but who shall say it was for the worse? It carried a greater weight of perception and reflection; and if lazy readers could not follow its longer and more involved sentences, whose fault was that? Swinburne's criticisms are peculiarly valuable. They are the comments of a great writer on great writers. His noble volume on Shakespeare is not what the schools call criticism, it is something far higher and infinitely more valuable. How surely he fastens on what is worthy! With what gusto he handles a good point! And with what generosity he praises! Never to praise with enthusiasm, said Vauvenargues, is a mark of a mediocre nature. Swinburne was the last man to whom this maxim could apply. He praised—nobly, royally—not only the dead, but the living. Not a particle of jealousy lurked in his heart towards his contemporaries. Tennyson, Arnold, Morris, and Meredith, were all the subject of his splendid yet discriminating eulogy. One might love Swinburne for this delightful trait in his nature. That and his love of children give him a double passport to our hearts.

My readers will pardon me for indulging in reminiscence. As far back as 1876 I lectured at the old Hall of Science on "Swinburne and Whitman," and James Thomson ("B. V.") did me the honor of reporting the lecture in the *Secularist*. My knowledge of Swinburne, therefore, is not recent. I may go back farther still. My dear friend, afterwards my colleague for seventeen years on the *Freethinker*—Joseph Mazzini Wheeler—spent the day with me once when I was lecturing at Edinburgh. We were both very young then, and we sallied out early to climb Arthur's Seat the difficult way. It was Sunday morning, and when we reached the top we had it to ourselves. I had a body then that nothing could tire, and "Joe" knew it. He threw himself on the ground, and said to me, "Now, George, read me Swinburne's 'Song in Time of Order.'" I stood up and rolled it out at the top of my voice, as though I were addressing an audience on the other side of the Firth of Forth. I had to lecture in the afternoon, and again in the evening, but I let myself go. I enjoyed it thoroughly. And I can see even now the keen pleasure on the face of my dear friend, as he followed the glowing verse that expressed so superbly the ideas of revolt against political and religious despotism over which we were both so enthusiastic. I am not ashamed to say that I can read that fierce "Song" yet with something of the old thrill. Times have changed, and men, but I have not altogether changed myself, and the lines express an eternal truth; the truth that the world is never subdued while one man holds out against falsehood and tyranny.

Swinburne's death has given him his day in the newspapers. That is all a man of genius gets in "practical"—that is, prosaic—England. He misses even that if the newspapers are full of a new sensation. A specially shocking murder, or a particularly spicy divorce case, will throw him into limbo, and make him lose the chance of a lifetime. Not that it matters very much, after all—to the man of

genius; for he will be heard of again. Well, the newspapers have had their say about Swinburne, and a pretty say it is! They have almost begged forgiveness for the old Republican, and they have carefully hidden all traces of the old Atheist. The poor creatures who sell their pens for bread—pens which are often not worth even that—shrink appalled from the confession that Swinburne was, from first to last, a pronounced and uncompromising Free-thinker; that his adoration of Shelley was not only poetical—that he accepted Shelley's main ideas—that he challenged Gods as well as Kings, and hated Christianity with a most perfect hatred. These things the newspapers have concealed, and it is my duty to display them.

The newspapers have suggested that Swinburne should be buried in Westminster Abbey; in other words, that a passionate Atheist should be buried in a Christian temple. Swinburne wrote the following lines:—

“ From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever gods may be,  
That no life lives for ever,  
That dead men rise up never,  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.”

Fancy burying the author of those lines in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection! The very idea shows how much honor is left in modern Christianity.

The “Hymn to Proserpine” in Swinburne's first volume of *Poems and Ballads*—the one that caused such a flutter in the chaste and pious circles of Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Grundy—represents a Pagan poet singing his last Pagan song “after the proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith.” He uses the phrase which was ascribed, falsely enough, by the Christians to Julian “the Apostate” as he was dying: “Thou hast conquered, Galilean.” And here are some of his choice lines on the faith and the priests of the crucified Christ:—

“ Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown  
gray from thy breath;  
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of  
death.

O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and  
rods!  
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!  
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees  
bend,  
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.

Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and  
our forefathers trod,  
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art  
a God,  
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and  
hidden her head,  
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down  
to thee dead.”

It may be argued that this poem is dramatic, and that the Pagan merely speaks in character. Well, the poems in *Songs Before Sunrise* are not dramatic but personal. Swinburne himself speaks in “Before a Crucifix.” It is he who, having “nor tongue nor knee for prayer,” has “a word” of his own to the Christ upon the wayside crucifix to whom women, bowed and distorted by labor and servitude, pray as they pass. And the pungent “dead limbs of gibbeted Gods” is matched here by another expression:—

“ No soul that lived, loved, wrought and died,  
Is this their carrion crucified.”

Let the newspaper scribes, profane and sacred, digest that—if they can.

Swinburne addresses some pertinent questions to Christ:—

“ The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls  
Now deathward since thy death and birth;  
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?  
Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?  
Or are there less oppressions done  
In this wild world under the sun?”

Freethinkers know how these questions must be answered. Christians may reply that the essence

of Christianity is still untouched; that it may be true, even if it has not yet redeemed the world. But this is answered in another verse of the same poem:—

“ Through the left hand a nail is driven,  
Faith, and another through the right,  
Forged in the fires of hell and heaven,  
Fear that puts out the eye of light:  
And the feet soiled and scarred and pale  
Are pierced with falsehood for a nail.”

Faith, fear, and falsehood are the trinity of the Christian priests. And falsehood comes first in point of time. It is the falsehood that makes the faith and breeds the fear. Swinburne gave it a stronger name than falsehood in the “Song in Time of Order”:—

“ We have done with the kisses that sting,  
The thief's mouth red from the feast,  
The blood on the hands of the king,  
And the lie at the lips of the priest.”

That is the absolutely proper word. “The lie at the lips of the priest.” Not a young and dainty falsehood, but an old and brazen lie. That is what Christianity is nowadays. One is reminded of the last line of Browning's “Confessional”:—“Lies, lies again, and still—they lie!” Let there be no mincing of the matter. Freethinkers have to fight a strong, wealthy, and respectable Lie. Those who take part in the battle without recognising that fact might as well be out of it. The great Lie smiles and pays them compliments. It knows they don't understand.

Swinburne was no more a Theist than he was a Christian. Something more than dramatic fitness is discernible in the language of the following extract from *Atalanta in Calydon*:—

“ Who gives a star and takes a sun away;  
Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife  
To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;  
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame,  
And binds the great sea with a little sand;  
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;  
Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;  
Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,  
Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,  
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod,—  
The supreme evil, God.”

This is written in the spirit of Shelley's early impeachments of Deity.

Swinburne makes the spirit of earth in one of his philosophical poems speak thus to men of God:—

I that saw where ye trod  
The dim paths of the night  
Set the shadow call'd God  
In your skies to give light;  
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadow-  
less soul is in sight.”

In another poem he says:—

Sunbeams and starbeams and all colored things,  
All forms and all similitudes began;  
And death, the shadow cast by life's wide wings,  
And God, the shade cast by the soul of man.  
The soul that is substance of nations,  
Reincarnate with fresh generations;  
The great god Man, which is God.

Very finely the same idea is expressed elsewhere:—

“ To the pure spirit of man that men call God,  
To the high soul of things, that is  
Made of men's heavenlier hopes and mightier memories.”

Here is another form of the same idea:—

“ A creed is a rod,  
And a crown is of night;  
But this thing is God,  
To be man with thy might,  
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live  
out thy life as the light.”

There is so much more to be said, and so many fine quotations from Swinburne to justify it, that I am compelled to make two articles of it instead of one.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## Monism and Christianity.

It was a sound instinct that led the religious world to brand the Pantheism of Spinoza as Atheism. Equally sound was the judgment of Charles Bradlaugh in resting his Atheism upon a Monistic interpretation of nature. Every intelligible theism involves a dualism or a pluralism, while every non-theism is as inevitably driven, sooner or later, to a monism. With an instinct sharpened by perpetual conflict, the Churches saw that, no matter the terminology in which the monism is disguised, its final outcome is Atheism. For the essence of the Atheistic position is not the establishment of any particular theory of matter, or force, or evolution, but that, given a first principle as a starting-point, all else follows as a matter of the most rigid necessity. It thus dispenses with interference, or, to use a favorite mystifying expression of Sir Oliver Lodge, guidance, at any step of the cosmic process. To call the monism advocated a spiritual monism does not alter the fact; it only disguises it from superficial observers and thinkers. Spiritual or material are mere words, and words, as we have been told, are the counters of wise men and the money of fools. It is the thing, the conception, that matters, and the mechanical conception of cosmic evolution is Atheism, under whatever form it may be disguised.

Monism—too much emphasis cannot be placed upon this truth—admits of no breaks, allows for no interference, no guidance, no special providence. From star mist to planet, on through protoplasm to man, it asserts the existence of an unbroken sequence. If there are any gaps they are in our knowledge, not in things themselves. The promise and potency of all subsequent phenomena is, for Monism, contained in the primitive substance, whatever its nature may be. Every advance in scientific knowledge supports this assertion; all scientific research is based, tacitly or avowedly, upon an acceptance of this belief.

What place does the individual hold in such a conception of things? Clearly he can be no exception to the general principle of causation. The same principle that accounts for the development of the species as a biological phenomenon must also explain the individual as a sociological or psychological product. Either the individual is the necessary product of his antecedents or he is not. If he is, we have merely another phase of a general problem, only in a highly complex form. If he is not, then we have an absolute creation of something, a reintroduction of a disguised supernaturalism, and our scientific principles break down. The greatest genius, the most striking individual the world has ever seen, forms no exception to this universal principle of causation. Indeed, when Sir Oliver Lodge throws at the head of the Atheist the names of Shakespeare or Beethoven, and asks how can natural processes explain their existence, he is needlessly confusing the issue. First, because the problem of explaining the existence of the genius is no greater, fundamentally, than explaining the existence of the fool. Show me how to explain the complex processes that result in the existence of a penny-a-liner, and I will explain the existence of the author of *Hamlet*. The problem is substantially the same whichever we take. And, secondly, to take either the genius or the fool as a finished product, and merely study him, is emphatically not the way to set to work. We could not explain a man, or an animal, or a plant by such a method. Evolution ought to at least have taught us that the explanation of a thing is to be sought in its history. Behind the greatest musician and behind the greatest poet there lies that long history of the race leading to the rude rythmical howlings and guttural ejaculations of the primitive savage, without which, as a starting-point, neither poet nor musician would have existed. The greatest and the littlest of men are links in a chain of being, and can neither separate themselves from all that has gone before them nor from that which will come after them.

I have put the claims of a Monistic conception of nature as strongly and as plainly as possible, in order to meet fairly a challenge raised by the Rev. Dr. Warschauer in a recent issue of the *Christian World*. Dr. Warschauer says that the issue to-day lies between Monism and Christianity, and proceeds to rule Monism out of court on account of its supposed depreciation of the individual. Even were this depreciation of the individual admitted, it might still be argued that the real value of any theory depends ultimately upon its truth. The argument from consequences is only valid if it can be shown that these are in obvious conflict with facts. In that case, we should have to admit that our first principles were faulty, and revise them accordingly. Facts are facts, and sooner or later we are compelled to deal with them. Theories may ignore them, but the consequences follow just the same. It is not merely our duty to face the facts, it is to our interest to do so. All life is an adaptation of organism to environment, and all healthy mental life is the expression of a harmony between our ideas of facts and the facts themselves. And without posing as a philosophical Gradgrind, one may confidently assert that the man or the philosophy that ignores facts will sooner or later come to grief.

Dr. Warschauer heads his article, "Is the Individual Doomed?" and answers that he is if Monism prevails. With Christianity, we are told, the individual is everything; with Monism the individual is nothing. The Christian view of the individual acts as a powerful incentive to progress; the Monistic view "is utterly devoid of the dynamic which can generate any great social reform." While the conception of humanity as an organic structure in which the individual is ultimately merged is brushed aside in the following:—

"The smallest and forlornest actual slum baby appeals to our sympathy immeasurably more than a vast, dim, aggregate of indistinguishable items called the Race, for we have actually met the slum baby, and we have never met—and what is more, we never shall meet—the Race.....No matter by how many times we multiply nothing, the result is still—nothing.....If we wish to be social reformers in earnest, we must take care of the individual and the race will take care of itself."

That the concrete example of a suffering slum baby appeals to us more than an abstract proposition about the race is true; but instead of this proving Dr. Warschauer's case, it is, as will be seen later, dependent upon the fact of race, and is only an illustration of its influence. And to say that we must take care of the individual if we wish to take care of the race is a mere *ipse dixit*, since the question at issue is whether or not we are best promoting the interests of the individual when we keep our mind steadily on the question of race welfare. Finally, when we are told that the conception of man as a mere cell in the social tissue, an item in the long story of human progress is "devoid of the dynamic which can generate any social reform," the reply is that no other factor has shown itself of such inspiring force with social reformers. One need go no further back than the French Revolution of 1789—one of the most "dynamic" events of modern history—to prove this. The schools of St. Simon, Owen, Fourier, with the modern development of Socialism on its higher side, are all permeated by a conception of human development that Dr. Warschauer thinks fatal to social progress. In fact it is next to impossible to point to a great social movement that has not been inspired by the conception of humanity as a slowly developing organism from which the individual springs, and in which the individual is ultimately merged.

Dr. Warschauer may be correct in saying that with Christianity the individual is everything; he is quite wrong in saying that with Monism the individual is nothing. The question is ultimately one of the nature and function of the individual, and to assume that unless we assert that he is independent of the social structure we are destroying him is quite beside the point. We do not annihilate the earth by showing

its place in the solar system; we do not annihilate the cell by showing its place in the entire organism; nor do we annihilate the individual by proving him to be, in Leslie Stephen's phrase, a cell in the social tissue. On the contrary, as I hope to show later, it is only when man is thought of in this sense that we begin to conceive a really healthy and complete individuality.

It has, indeed, been one of the errors of Christianity to appeal to the individual without considering those conditions of which individual life is the expression. It has preached purity in thought and deed while leaving conditions untouched that made purity of life a virtual impossibility. It has taught morality without seeing that morality is not something that is grafted on life, but a thing that springs from social life, and conditioned in its expression by the prevailing form of social existence. All the ethical blunders and failures of Christianity are attributable to this initial error. Dr. Warschauer is quite in line with Christian teaching when he says that we must attend to the individual and leave the race to look after itself; but it is none the less a mistaken teaching. For you can only permanently affect individuals through a modification of the conditions that are summed up in the phrase "social environment." I do not mean environment in that narrow sense which confines it to the merely material conditions, but in the larger and more accurate sense which includes all those mental forces which play so powerful a part in the life of civilised society. If man is to be morally, mentally, and physically healthy, he must exist in an environment which permits health in all these directions. Otherwise we may appeal to the individual as long as we choose; our appeal, in even the most favorable circumstances, is only of the nature of a stimulant which, like all such, is of a merely transitory character. Doctors, scientists, sociologists, all shades of real thinkers, are, in fact, fast realising that it is the race problem that is the vital one, and this not in the interests of a merely abstract entity, the Race, but in the best interests of the individual himself.

In a concluding article I hope to give the scientific reasons for this belief.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

## Faith and Knowledge.

"We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see."

—TENNYSON.

TENNYSON'S faith was sometimes strong, sometimes weak, and once or twice it was well-nigh dissipated by the wondrous revelations of Science. It is beyond controversy that the poet was never an entirely orthodox believer, though occasionally the faith he had was most fervently held. Neither was he invariably self-consistent in the expression of his religious beliefs, if we are to judge by reports of conversations with friends published after his death. But when he wrote *In Memoriam*, his profession of Christianity was not characterised by bright, optimistic certainty. His faith did not madden him. He was like a man walking in a dream. "We have but faith," he said, as if he were not at all satisfied. Then he cried with peculiar sadness:—

"Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust—"

"So runs my dream: but what am I?"

Whatever may be true of Tennyson's attitude to Christianity in later years, it is unquestionable that during the composition of *In Memoriam* he was struggling against unbelief and eagerly wishing his Christian hope had something more substantial to rest upon than mere faith. "We cannot know," he regretfully confessed, "for knowledge is of things we see." Christianity was built alone upon faith, and there is not a grain of knowledge even in the superstructure. Fifty years ago this was a truth specially

emphasised. It was quite customary to quote Paul's words, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love," and then to comment on them thus: "Love is greatest, you know, because it is the only one of the three that shall survive death. Faith shall blossom into sight, or full knowledge, and hope into fruition, the moment we die; but love shall pass through death's cold river without being subjected to the slightest change."

And yet, in spite of this tremendous stress upon faith, we find that, both in the New Testament and in theological literature generally, knowledge is represented as an obtainable possession. Jesus is made to say that eternal life consists in knowing God in the face of his Son, and very often do we read, especially in devotional works, about the blessings which accrue from Divine knowledge. Paul speaks of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and Peter says: "In your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge." According to the latter, faith and knowledge are to co-exist; knowledge is to be added to faith. The Rev. J. H. Jowett, of Birmingham, in a homily on Peter's words, says: "Yes, but what sort of knowledge? First of all, knowledge of God." Then Mr. Jowett devotes two paragraphs to a discussion of this subject, but the conclusion to which he cannot help coming is that the knowledge of God possessed by Christian believers is so slight that it can scarcely be differentiated from ignorance. Though the reverend gentleman talks about God for so many hours every week, this is the confession he is obliged to make:—

"What we know about God is only as the blossom compared with the matured fulness of the autumn fruit. Or our knowledge, again, is like our speech in time of childhood. The speech of a child is full of mispronunciations—here a letter is added, there a letter is dropped; and again, there are half sayings, a mere babble of human speech! And we are just in this elementary stage in relation to the heavenlies! No word is fully spoken; everything is half guessed, and only half expressed. Or, thirdly, the knowledge is like the dim reflection in a metal mirror. It is so dim as to be almost a riddle; there is nothing definite, nothing gloriously clear; we are still in the region of the mist."

This is terribly humiliating to a man whose one business in life is to supply people with information about the Deity! It is as if he said: "I am in the habit of speaking to you for an hour at a time on the subject of God, his nature, his attributes, and his works; I undertake to tell you exactly what he can and cannot do, what he did before time was, and what he will do when time is no more; I stand before you as his messenger, and declare unto you his whole counsel; but, while I thus address you as one having authority, I must to-day be honest, and confess to you how little I know about him, and how dim and broken and elementary are my conceptions of him." But we are persuaded that were Mr. Jowett perfectly honest he would frankly admit that he possesses absolutely no knowledge of any Divine Being. What he tells is only what he believes, and what he believes is merely what he has been told. Of knowledge he has none.

That this statement is true may be proved from Mr. Jowett's own remarks concerning the conditions of growth in the knowledge of God. "There are three words in the Scriptures," he says, "in which the conditions are expressed, and this is their ordained succession—communion, inspiration, and revelation." Communion centres in the prayer, "Make thyself known to us, O God," or, "Reveal thyself to our hearts, O Lord." "By communion with God," adds Mr. Jowett, "we become inspired; that is to say, we become possessed by a spiritual energy in the strength of which the mists of carnality pass away." It is true enough that to cultivate a strong desire to become or to do a certain thing is an immense aid in becoming or doing it; but it is not true that the people who profess to live in communion with God are, on an average, ethically and socially superior to others in corresponding positions and circumstances who are avowed Agnostics. It is a notorious fact

that some of the most pious men living are the most hopelessly enveloped in "the mists of carnality," while others who have no sense of God at all are possessors of beautiful and noble natures and doers of eminently beneficent deeds. Was not Professor Huxley quite as philanthropically inclined as his distinguished opponent, Bishop Wilberforce? And yet the latter communed with God and the former did not. Now, look at the case as stated by this popular preacher. It is this, in a nutshell: Commune with God, and "the mists of carnality" will pass away; and when "the mists of carnality" have lifted you shall know God. But how on earth is it possible to commune with an unknown God? If communion is the condition of knowledge, what, pray, is the condition of communion? Unbelievers in the Deity do not and cannot commune with him. He never reveals himself to Atheists. This is a most curious and significant fact. Before you can have any dealings with the Deity you must *imagine* his existence. The initial act is always man's. But you must imagine strenuously and vividly before you can commune with the object imagined. And, then, your communion with him must be at once "serious" and "persistent" before it can ripen into familiar knowledge. "There is so much of what we call prayer," Mr. Jowett informs us, "that is flippant, irreverent, careless, and which can never be expected to make any exploration, or any deep soundings among the things of God." But why is prayer ever "flippant, irreverent, careless"? Simply because faith is feeble and flabby, because the picture of God painted by the imagination is indistinct and blurred.

Is it not absolutely undeniable that an imaginary object can never become an object of knowledge by merely concentrating one's thoughts upon and presenting formal petitions to it? Yet what Mr. Jowett seems to teach is that if a man believes in God with sufficient vividness and strength to enable him to hold serious and persistent communion with him he shall be rewarded by getting to know him as an objectively real person. We maintain, on the contrary, that if an omnipotent and all-loving God existed the knowledge of him would be universal. It would be impossible for him to hide himself. Of all objects he would be the best known. Not one of his children would ever have occasion to say to him, "Why standest thou afar off? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" Of all beings he would of necessity be the most in evidence—the perfect Father at the head of a perfect family. The God of the Bible and of Christianity, however, is a radically different being. Isaiah addresses him thus: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior." His own chosen people were marching headlong to destruction while he, their Father and their Savior, remained in hiding. Such a description of the Deity annihilates him. A genuine Savior turning his face away from the perishing is an utterly impossible being. A moment's reflection shows how unspeakably absurd the Christian idea of God really is. He is proclaimed as the Father of a fallen and sinful race, who yet, in spite of its woeful condition, loves this race with a love that is stronger than death, and who in his love has provided a way of salvation through his Son Jesus Christ. To receive this salvation, however, the race must come to Christ, and this it cannot do unless it is drawn to him by his and its Father. Now, Christians are those whom the Father is alleged to have drawn to and saved through the Son; but as yet they are the very smallest of minorities. And there they are, on their knees at the foot of their Father's throne, beseeching, coaxing, passionately pleading with him to stretch forth his mighty arm and redeem the world. He makes no response, alas, but remains through all the ages immovable, silent, and inactive, proving thereby that he is a purely imaginary being, an object of faith and not of knowledge.

Tennyson was quite right when he exclaimed, "Behold, we know not anything" outside the realm of Nature. God, Christ, the Holy Ghost, and unseen world are the creatures of the human imagi-

nation quickened into activity by ignorance touched with fear; and because they cannot be converted into objects of knowledge the belief in them is dying out with the ignorance in which it was conceived and begotten. In proportion as knowledge of the natural grows faith in the supernatural decays. The most golden ages of Christianity were the darkest ages of the world's history; and now that Science is in the ascendant Christianity is decidedly on the wane. Therefore, "let knowledge grow from more to more" and become the supreme guide of life, and let faith in supernatural beings, who cannot be known, become faith in man who can be known, genuine faith in whom shall blossom into transforming social service.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Remission and Baptism.

BY HOMER EDWIN GARVIN.

A FEW days ago one of the numerous murders that have made our Christian city notorious throughout the civilized world was being discussed on the streets.

One man remarked that the murderer seemed very little concerned about the matter, believing as he did that a few moments and a few pennies spent with his religious adviser would suffice to wipe out all moral responsibility on his part for his horrible deed.

Perhaps the law does permit such a crime-breeding doctrine to be taught publicly, but there is a law that ought to apply to those engaged in this practice of forgiving sins, and that is the law of obtaining money under false pretences, for the idea is just as immoral and just as dangerous to-day as when Martin Luther remonstrated against it.

However, it is not this old Pagan idea of priestly intercession for the remission of sins that will be discussed, but another idea just as false and just as prevalent in this city to-day. It is the belief that the Supreme Maker and moral ruler of the universe will contravene in answer to prayer and nullify his unchangeable law that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," and we speak of this as God's law, not because it is in the literature of the past, but because it is a fact of observation that needs no claim of inspiration to support its validity.

We believe that neither God nor man can wipe out the consequences of sin, and for that reason regard sin as so much more to be avoided. Our concern is not so much to have our sins forgiven us as to have our sin-producing ignorance removed from us.

The old heathen idea of a god who punishes or forgives sins committed against him has been supplanted by the modern scientifically inspired idea that the greatest punishment that could be meted out to man would be to live in a state of ignorance that would cause him continually to commit sins and mistakes against himself and his fellow man. We conceive the unfortunate plight of a sinner to be his condition just before he commits a sin or makes an error. The result of his sins are often more directly disastrous to his fellow man than to himself.

The majority of Christian Churches teach a cunningly devised system of remote and uncertain rewards and punishments, and forgiveness of some sins for some people, sometimes, all of which tends to obscure the nature of sin, and even to encourage its committal, for in their fear lest man shall be justified by his works instead of his faith, they have ignored the study of ethics and the consequences of sin here and now. They go so far as to say that belief in certain histories or legends about Jesus is more important than to actually put into practice certain moral teachings of his that appeal to our reason and experience as practical and valuable. And they teach the discouraging doctrine that man's goodness is evil in the sight of God.

What doth it profit a man if he believes the whole world of myths and fables about Jesus, if he thereby

loses his own mental and spiritual insight into his teachings, and his own superiority over the superstitious people who invented and circulated these unprofitable legends about Jesus?

Who can estimate the good that might have been done in the last nineteen centuries if the Churches had taught ethics, the science of right and wrong, with the same energy they have devoted to trivial and meaningless stories about Jesus and the horrible doctrines of blood atonement and forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of an innocent victim?

What do we Unitarians mean by sin? Is it some mysterious influence of Adam? Is it non-observance of some "holy days" that we understand have followed each other at regular intervals of seven days since some black tribe of Northern Africa first regarded them as holy? Does hell yawn for those who neglect a careful study of almanacs? We must admit that such kind of sins as these might easily be forgiven by any kind of a man or God.

But it is when we consider the more serious offences of which the law takes cognisance that we realise not only the difference between real and imaginary sin, but we notice that civilised men believe in other punishments than those the old theologians taught would be visited upon sinners after death.

Is there not, in this positive attitude of the law toward certain sins, and its negative attitude towards others, a clear recognition of the fact that mankind does not firmly believe in future punishment, and does regard forgiveness of sin as a weak and dangerous policy? Civilisation could not exist if we did not look upon the crimes of theft or murder as sins against man to be punished here and now, instead of sins against God, to be punished in some doubtful dreamland of the future.

We cannot reconcile modern punishment of criminals with the commonly professed belief in the forgiveness of sins.

At what point, we are tempted to ask, does the belief of our orthodox brethren touch or harmonise with our present-day civilisation? Thank God, we have repudiated their doctrines as applied to both law and government. With scant respect, we ignore their fundamental beliefs in our schools and colleges. The Bible is no longer used as a text-book on geology or astronomy, and the theory of evolution now held by every scientist of any distinction has relegated the Adam and Eve myth to the realms of near poetry, if it can be allowed even there. Our mightiest intellectual giants are not lying awake nights figuring on problems involving Noah's Ark, nor are they lying in the daytime about the necessity or relative importance of going down into the water, or being sprinkled with the water, as an aid to the forgiveness of sin and development of character. Indeed, our modern un-Christian scientists would be about as much interested in the effect that either performance, sprinkling or immersion, would have upon the water used as it would upon the character of the victim of these hoary old theological pranks. You smile at this idea of baptism, although, after all, it is really little more than a doubtful form of humor or religious hazing that is practiced upon the unsophisticated.

But the orthodox view of forgiveness of sins is only one of their untenable and contradictory positions that have affronted the reason and intelligence of man for nineteen hundred years. One whom they conceive to be the Prince of Peace is immediately introduced as one who came not to bring peace but a sword, and so on through an endless variety of contradictions. The aim of the early fathers of the Church seems to have been to whipsaw the market and completely control the visible supply of truth, for we find them seeking to occupy both sides of almost every question, as do the devotees of Bibliolatry in our own time.

Is it not strange in these days, when so much of the happiness, and indeed the safety, of mankind depends upon clear thinking and upon definite and dependable knowledge of the laws of nature, that

man should refuse to accept the crude judgments of the past as authoritative guides to conduct, or the contradictory doctrines of the churches as constructive philosophy. And if so many conflicting ideas can be drawn from the Bible, it is easy to explain the failure of the Church to contribute any valuable aid toward the solution of any practical human problem. This failure was apparent as to slavery in the middle of the last century, and it is particularly noticeable in their present peculiar attitude toward the liquor problem.

Pages might be filled with the illogical attempts of Christian churches to make their inspired beliefs of the past square with modern ideas and conditions.

We might discuss their invectives and persecutions against those of us who seek to gain inspiration from the living God of to-day as he reveals himself in his many begotten sons and daughters.

But we have especial reasons to rejoice and be exceeding glad at this season, over the birth, not of a redeemer, but of a redeeming idea that seems to have been born in the consciousness of the people of this whole country recently. I could not say that the idea was immaculately conceived, but no matter what our politics may be, we must admit the redeeming quality of the idea, and regard as a hopeful sign the spirit that prompted millions of so-called orthodox Christians to choose a Unitarian for the highest office in the land.

Perhaps the last election was a general admission, or confession on the part of these people, that they could not trust one who was of their own religious belief. Or have they decided that a man's lack of belief in someone's miraculous stories and misconceptions about the history of Jesus does not reflect upon his intellect or morals?

Perhaps we are on the eve of a period when the aroused and enlightened conscience of men and women will force them to declare openly their revolt against their ancient creeds, and cause them to place themselves on record in accord with modern thought.

In conclusion, let us consider one deadly sin that must be avoided. It is committed by thousands of otherwise careful and conscientious men and women of all churches, even our own. That is the sin of compromising with error. It arises from a cowardly fear lest the truth about religion should destroy morality. This contagious taint of hypocrisy is the unpardonable sin against the divinity within us, and against our fellow man, who is influenced by our professed belief. No death-bed repentance can neutralise the result of a life lived under that shadow of insincerity, and no one can estimate the loss of happiness that comes from being thus alienated from the divine sources of guiding and sustaining inspiration.

It is not surprising that such inspired writers as Emerson, Lowell, Longfellow, O. W. Holmes, Bryant and Bancroft were all members of the Unitarian Church. The surprising thing is that men posing as leaders of our time should think it necessary to hark back to the tombs of the past, and color their whole life and discourse with the sombre hues of an age infinitely inferior to our own. Would they prefer to be justified on the grounds of ignorance rather than on the more plausible grounds of hypocrisy? If so, we must assume that their sojourn in the enchanted realms of orthodoxy has incapacitated them for clear thinking, for the saving means of enlightenment and grace are at hand in almost any library, and every Unitarian Church in the land is a hospital for the painless removal of the vestigial remnants of primitive ignorance and credulity.

—Truthseeker (New York).

The only remedy for superstition is knowledge—nothing else can wipe out that plague spot of the human mind.  
Buckle.

## Acid Drops.

General Booth's head gets bigger and bigger. Instead of answering Mr. Manson's powerful criticism, and replying to the Trade Union representations as to the "sweating" which goes on under his Social Scheme, he calls for £1,000,000. His new project is a University of Humanity. This fine name is to cover (and disguise) another Salvation Army enterprise.

General Booth wants to get into Russia. He says he will be a great help to "the authorities." We believe him—and we believe "the authorities" will let him in.

A working miner in Vancouver has sent the Lord Mayor of London £20 for the "hungry starving men and boys tramping the Thames Embankment all the winter nights." "Are there," he asks, "any Christians in England now?" There are. Plenty of them. That is why the problem of poverty is where it is.

An American preacher says that Socialism, as a system, is a most dangerous thing. If it is ever adopted as a form of government, society will crumble into a heap of ruins. But let Socialism be under "the guiding principles of the Gospel," and nothing but good can accrue from it. All "man-made institutions" are bound to fail unless they are taken over and hallowed by Christianity. Let Socialists take warning, therefore, that, unless they forthwith turn Christians, they are only working for the downfall of the human race. The American preacher assures us that he is expressing only what he knows to be true, and that ends the matter.

Another great preacher tells us that Christ is so wonderfully great that we shall not be able fully to comprehend him "until the nimble and dexterous energy of the West, the pensive patience of the East, the strenuous gravity of the North, the tender passion of the South combine to show him forth." Then we fear the World's Redeemer is destined to remain an uncomprehended and incomprehensible being to the end of time. Let us turn our thoughts to other subjects, more easily understood and more practically useful.

Mr. Gomen H. Thomas, J.P., Merthyr, presiding over a Unitarian gathering at Swansea, remarked that "the spread of education made it increasingly difficult for people to believe in the unreasonable doctrines of orthodox religion." "It was for Unitarianism," he added, "to induce them to come back to some form of recognised belief." But how on earth is Unitarianism, as far as it is positive, any more reasonable than other religious beliefs? There is no religion that will stand the test of reason. Every religion depends at last on act of faith. To put the matter in a concrete form, the God who allows Messina earthquakes and cancers, is not, on the face of it, any better than the God who made and fills hell.

There appears to be very little crime at Swansea. At any rate, the police seem to have a lot of time on their hands. The Chief Constable, who is a Sabbatarian, is waging war against Sunday newspapers. He has seized the stock of two street newsvendors—one of them a young fellow who was supporting the family while his father was in the hospital; and these "test cases" will be brought before the magistrates. We are glad to hear that the general public are indignant. One individual was done out of his *Christian Herald*, and cannot forgive the Chief Constable for depriving him of that gay and lively publication.

A Christian Evidence lecturer has been telling a Lancashire audience of "men only"—perhaps he thought women were not silly enough to believe it—about the "rotteness" of Freethinkers in London and "the depths to which men can sink without the power of the Gospel to lift them." This accurate and elegant speaker has also been addressing the prisoners in Lancashire gaol, by request of the Governor, who seems to have mistaken his vocation, or at least to have poached on the preserves of the Chaplain. We dare say there is much sympathy, even affinity, between that Christian Evidence lecturer and the inmates of that prison. For one thing, they have a common Christianity. Official statistics show that, with very rare exceptions, prisoners belong to one or other of the various Christian denominations. Yes, prisoners and preachers have a good deal in common. Sometimes the resemblance is quite striking.

Reviewing a new book by the Rev. Dr. Warschauer, the *Christian World* refers to "the question raised by Kalthoff

and Mr. John M. Robertson amongst others, as to whether the historical Jesus ever really existed," and says that "one wonders to find such views outside of a lunatic asylum." This is foolish sarcasm as well as clumsy expression,—for nobody asks whether the "historical" Jesus ever really existed. What is asked is whether the Jesus of the four gospels is historical. Moreover, this question is not only just raised by Kalthoff, Mr. John M. Robertson, and others. It was discussed to some purpose by Robert Taylor, who was twice imprisoned for "blasphemy," in 1828 and 1831. Nearly forty years before that the astro-mythical character of Jesus Christ was demonstrated in the great work of Dupuis—*L'Origine de tous les Cultes*. That demonstration can now be obtained in a separate form in the little work recently published by the Pioneer Press—*Natural Religion: or the Secret of All the Creeds*.

Dr. Paul W. Schmiedel, who has done so much important work for the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, has written a little book, *Jesus in Modern Criticism*, which may be commended to our pious Fleet-street contemporary's attention. Schmiedel believes that Jesus was an historical character, but he is far too well-informed and thoughtful to talk of those who differ from him on that point as actual or prospective madmen. Listen to this:—

"Doubts as to the reliability of our authorities have recently increased to such an extent that for about six years the view that Jesus never really lived has gained an ever-growing number of supporters. It is no use to ignore it, or to frame resolutions against it in meetings of non-theologians. It is little use merely to say in a vague and general way that the figure of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels could not possibly have been invented. In the case of the Fourth Gospel, a School of Theology of a seriously scientific character does not itself make the contention; and, since it finds very much even in the first three Gospels that is a product of later myth-making, it may easily seem that the advance would not be so very great if the whole record of Jesus' life were referred to the domain of myth."

In the face of this grave utterance by a professional theologian of high standing how silly, as well as ill-mannered, is the *Christian World's* talk about such views being worthy of a lunatic asylum! Such vulgar folly would be impossible in scientific Germany or keen-witted France. It is only possible in countries like England where the deepest problems of criticism are taken charge of by half-educated, badly-trained, and irresponsible exhorters.

The Rev. Dr. Horton relates how "that noble missionary, Sidney Hodge, heard one day a doctor making a boast—he was an Agnostic—that he had not opened his Bible for twenty years," and simply remarked, "More fool you." And Dr. Horton exclaims, "What a wise remark it was"! Be it borne in mind that most Freethinkers do read the Bible, and are thoroughly familiar with its contents; it is because they know it so well that they cannot call it the Word of God; would the Hampstead oracle denounce such people as fools? There are others to whom the associations of the Bible-reading of their early days are so painful that they cannot endure the sight of the book. Is Christian charity of such a texture that when it meets with such people, the kindest, politest observation it can make is, "More fools you"? Evidently so thinks Dr. Horton, who is looked upon as one of the main pillars of the Faith.

And at last Dr. Horton has resolved to take the Bible literally. At least, he says he believes the Bible ought to be taken "quite literally." He believes that every minister of the Gospel may be a spiritual healer of physical diseases. He believes that when a man is sick he should send for the elders of the Church, and get them to pray over him and to anoint him with oil, and that if the elders pray in faith the sick man will be healed. And yet if Dr. Horton himself, or any members of his church, were to act on that belief, difficulties would soon arise, and the law of the land would punish the doers of the law of the Lord. Did Dr. Horton denounce that severe sentence passed not long ago upon some Peculiar People because they obeyed the Bible and gave the doctor the go-by? If not, is not his advocacy of spiritual healing somewhat hypocritical?

Liverpool Territorials marched to Sun Hall the other Sunday for "divine service." On the way, one of the bands played "Stand up, stand up, for Jesus!" Is that the gentleman they are to fight for—if necessary?

The late Professor St. George Mivart, who was eventually excommunicated by the Catholic Church, which he belonged to up to a ripe old age, wrote some articles on "Happiness in Hell." They caused a good deal of excitement at the time, and the Catholic Church told him to shut up, which

he did, only he burst out again in another direction. Professor Mivart's idea was that the inhabitants of Hell were as happy as their own natures permitted; far happier than most people on earth. They did not enjoy the supreme felicity of those in heaven, but short of that they were as happy as the days were long; in fact, their life was a continual beanfeast. This idea, of course, was very attractive to some of us, who had so often been told that we held through (untransferable) tickets to Hades.

When we opened the *St. Austell Star* and saw the starting headline "Hell is Love" over the report of a sermon in that town by the Rev. Arthur Baker, M.A., of Truro, we naturally expected to find something like the cheerful view of Professor Mivart, perhaps with certain improvements. But we found that the reverend gentleman's idea is that hell is as hot and uncomfortable as ever. He believes in "a hell of infinite agony and torture and shame," but he also believes that "God is love." The fire of hell is meant to burn the selfishness out of those who fall into it. But everybody has *some* selfishness; even the Rev. Arthur Baker—though we say it, we hope, with a proper appreciation of his high character and his holy calling. The preacher on "Hell is love" will, consequently taste the sweets of the place as well as the saddest dog in the congregation that listened to him. They "all go into one place," as the Scripture says. Nor is that the end of the matter. The reverend gentleman ought to see that his *hell* is equivalent to the Catholic's *purgatory*. He is thus a day's march nearer Rome.

It seems to us that the Rev. Arthur Baker's idea of hell is not very consistent with the terrible language of Jesus Christ and of the New Testament generally. Jesus Christ declared that he himself would come again to judge the world; that he would divide the sheep-saints from the goat-sinners, the former going above and the latter below. To those who were bound for the wrong place, he would say, "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But what he ought to say to them, on the Rev. Arthur Baker's theory, is this: "Go through, ye poor sick sinners, to the Hades Sanatorium, where you will be set you up to run the Marathon race in Glory."

We don't think the Truro preacher's idea will catch on. We can hear the "Cornish pilchards" saying, "Not to-day, Baker."

A village of 547 inhabitants in Massachusetts has been found to have three Protestant churches and one Catholic church. The Catholic church competes with the three Protestant churches collectively. The three Protestant churches compete collectively with the Catholic church—and severally with each other. Thus there are four railway stations in one village which book passengers through to heaven. Good old business!

Rev. R. J. Campbell prints parts of a "remarkable letter" he has received. The writer quotes some verses, which refer to—

"The blatant voice of braying doubt."

"Braying" is distinctly good. It is also most elegant. It is likewise a fine display of Christian manners.

Second thoughts, however, suggest that there is something wrong about "braying"—in this connection. We confess we never heard of a real live jackass on a Freethought platform, but the Bible tells us of one who was divinely inspired. It belonged to the prophet Balaam. Scripture says that "The Lord opened the mouth of the ass"—and it spoke accordingly.

Here is another yarn about the late Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., founder of the Pentecostal League. Currency is given to it in the *Christian Commonwealth*:—

"As a lad of twenty, he heard Bradlaugh in the Hall of Science, Finsbury, and was so greatly impressed by these words: 'Christians do not believe their own Bible. They say that the Sermon on the Mount represents an ideal which can never be attained. We say that it can be realised in practice.' Under the influence of Bradlaugh, Mr. Harris became a total abstainer and a non-smoker, and he sought with untiring diligence to carry into his daily life the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount."

People who heard Bradlaugh lecture know that "those words" never came from his lips. Bradlaugh did *not* believe that the Sermon on the Mount could be practised, or that it would be any good if it could. And there is another little difficulty. Bradlaugh was *not* a total abstainer—and

Bradlaugh was *not* a non-smoker. The whole yarn is imaginary. No doubt it emanated from that department of the late Mr. Reader Harris's pious brain which he mistook for the seat of memory.

We see by a cutting sent to us from Bridgetown, Barbados, that a fifteen-mile Marathon foot race was run at Trinidad on Sunday, March 7, and that "Queen's Park Savannah was lined with spectators." Sunday! They are getting on over there. A Sunday foot race here would pretty well shock both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Rev. John Clifford into their graves.

An English newspaper pokes fun at the Chinamen who wear five buttons on their coats to remind them of the five principal moral virtues which Confucius recommended—humanity, justice, order, prudence, and rectitude. These virtues, of course, do not need any stimulation in Christian countries.

"Kissing the Book" will be done away with under the new Oaths Act. Witnesses will swear, in Scotch fashion, with uplifted hand—a gesture which is presumably more agreeable to the imprecated Deity. Certainly it will be more hygienic. And cleanliness is at least next to godliness. Freethinkers, of course, go in for the better way. They simply tell the truth without swearing or hand-lifting or any other hocus-pocus.

Herbert Hodgson, who writes to the *Daily Chronicle* from Finchley, might almost have written from the cemetery—he is so old-fashioned. He offers a new reason why Germany and England should love each other. They are both Protestant countries. True. But that is no guarantee of peace; for most men, as Swift said, have religion enough to make them hate each other.

Mr. Asquith will introduce a Welsh Disestablishment Bill on April 21. How the Nonconformists will rejoice! It is meat and drink to them to see parsons getting into trouble. They "love one another" still.

"There will be no such exodus from Bath to-day as there was upon the eve of Good Friday a hundred years ago. Some prophet or prophetess, it was universally understood, had predicted a terrible earthquake for that Friday, during which Mount Beacon and Beechen Cliff, hills at opposite ends of the city, would meet and overwhelm every living thing between them. The prophecy was variously attributed to Joanna Southcott, to a prophet who had been with Noah in the Ark and was now living near Bath, and to a local fortune-teller. But it was generally regarded as infallible. And so people rushed out of Bath by hundreds and thousands, some pretending that they had dying aunts to visit, others frankly admitting their terror. Then, when all the panic was over, it was discovered that two local cock-fanciers had engaged to match their birds, named Mount Beacon and Beechen Cliff, on Good Friday. Some careless listener, hearing of this, had turned a cockfight into an earthquake."—*Daily Chronicle*, April 8.

Dr. Horton is a great favorite of the Lord—at least, so he tells us. The Lord called him to Hampstead, where, against all human probabilities, he has built up a great church. The Lord's guiding hand never failed when he was "weakened and brought low by repeated attacks of influenza," or when for "ten years it was a battle against ill-health and a wrestle with the unscrupulous hostility of the Roman Church"; and even when he was broken down, and had to be sent away for long weeks of idleness, the Lord was good enough to do his work for him. A marvellous record! But does Dr. Horton seriously think that he has performed any superhuman feats during his thirty years at Hampstead? There are other clergymen in the same district with much less prosperous churches: will Dr. Horton inform us why the Lord has smiled on him and frowned upon them? There is something very suspicious about the reverend gentleman's story, to say the least.

Amy Bradshaw, a professional nurse at Liverpool, aged 36, returned from church on Sunday evening, and half an hour later was heard singing hymns in her bedroom. The next morning she was found dead on the hearthrug with her throat horribly cut. There is no moral. There would have been a big one if she had been to the Alexandra Hall.

The *Daily News* called the end of Swinburne's "Hymn of Man" *bombastic*, and then gave its own reading of the text, which made it look silly.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, April 18, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, W.; at 7.30, "God and Humanity."

April 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, £169 9s. 6d. Received since.—F. Smallman, £5 (this subscription was accidentally omitted from the April 4 list); Capt. Hanks, 2s. 6d.

Correction.—A. E. Maddox, £1, acknowledged last week, should have been credited to Shilling Month, and is so acknowledged in this week's list.

H. TUCKER "hopes the full 5,000 shillings will be subscribed by the end of April."

T. H. SMITH.—Orders should be sent direct to the business Manager, as stated every week in this column, not to Mr. Foote, who has the trouble of passing them over, or even posting them on to their proper destination.

N. FINNEY.—Pleased to hear that you and your husband read the *Freethinker* with great interest.

ROSE BENNETT subscribes as "a trifle off a huge debt that I owe to you and your colleagues for the intellectual enjoyment that I derive from your splendid paper and lectures." We specially value such tributes from women.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever-welcome batches of cuttings.

A. G. ROYSTON.—Unfortunately the further volumes of *Crimes of Christianity* have not got printed yet. Since we became President of the National Secular Society, in 1890, we have had so little time for literary work outside the *Freethinker*; and the loss of our old friend and sub-editor, J. M. Wheeler, eight years later, threw a fresh burden of work upon our shoulders. Looking back, we see it was no wonder that we broke down, nearly to the death, in 1902. We should be able to do more book work now if only the *Freethinker* paid well enough to enable us to engage an assistant in the editorial office. A sub-editor like our lost colleague we are not likely to find again. Thanks for your compliments and good wishes.

R. B. STEPHENSON.—There was no article from Mr. Foote's pen in last week's *Freethinker*, but he was responsible for more than seven columns of small type, all the same. You see the ease he has when he idles.

S. CLOWES.—Wishing it were more adds to the moral value of the subscription.

W. McLAUREN.—We note the promise. Thanks for "best wishes."

ROGER RUSHWORTH.—Have read your letter with interest. You are a perfect Ulysses for wanderings. The "Secular meeting-place at Sheffield" you refer to has closed, we believe. It never had any connection with the N. S. S. and was carried on by a few veterans who never got into touch with the new generation, and their enterprise declined and expired with them.

S. COWLAND has taken the *Freethinker* for three years and "derived great pleasure and instruction from its pages."

A. BNALE.—Mostly guess work.

W. J. PARNALL says: "More power to your elbow—and may the shekels roll in!" It would please us to see both wishes realised. We should be glad, of course, if that "Freethought millionaire" did come along. We would wake London up a bit then, anyhow—if he only came along before we get too old for the task. Meanwhile there is greater satisfaction, from one point of view, in relying upon the smaller contributions of a wide circle of supporters.

JOSEPH CLAYTON.—We know this is not a very prosperous time, but it is impossible to wait for ever; funds are wanted now. We note your promise of further donations.

L. H. MANN (West Indies).—See paragraph. Thanks. You will have seen, by Mr. Moss's articles and our own paragraphs, what has been done in the Camberwell matter. The bigots are too many for us at present. London is under the harrow of reaction generally, and it looks as though the whole country would soon be in the same predicament.

T. W., who is subscribing 2s. 6d. towards Shilling Month, sends two instalments at once. "Next week," he says, "being a holiday week, I might spend the money if I do not part with it at once." Circumventing oneself! And not a bad exercise either. This correspondent wonders at our acknowledging "these modest offerings." This policy involves work, but it saves misunderstanding and disarms misrepresentation.

G. DURANT.—We understood that John Burns was still a pronounced *Freethinker* only a few years ago. It astonishes us to hear that he has joined a Nonconformist church at Battersea. It is impossible that he can believe what is preached in any Christian church.

R. STEVENSON.—Too late for this week; perhaps next.

JAB. CLARK.—A "chestnut." We printed it some twenty years ago.

J. PORRITT.—We quite understand, and wish you better luck.

Mr. W. H.—We dealt with H. Musgrave Reade's case four or five years ago, and don't think it worth dealing with again. He is a nobody. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

A. STRINGER.—Yes, you know what a brotherly thing religion is in Belfast.

C. BUCHANAN.—Glad this journal is so much to you. We know so many have little or nothing to give. That is one of the blakest curses of poverty. It is enough to madden a generous nature.

J. L. HAMMOND.—Thanks for warm good wishes.

F. GAMBETTA ALWARD.—Hope we have your first initial right. Delighted to hear from a son of our old friend G. L. Alward, and pleased to hear you "never miss reading the *Freethinker* from cover to cover." For the rest, never fear. We were not born to "throw up the sponge." We shall have to be knocked out. And we fancy only Death will do that.

N. RICHARDSON hopes all *Freethinkers* will respond to our present appeal.

JOSEPH BATES.—Sorry to hear that the bigots at Kirton resorted to disgusting violence, but glad to hear that the Boston "saints" who went over with you managed to protect you from personal assault. We cannot say more, as it is Tuesday morning, which is always late for reports, and especially so this week.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Sugar Plums.

Easter Sunday is about the worst Sunday in the year for audiences, especially in London, from which there is such an exodus of holiday-makers if the weather is at all favorable—and this time it was divinely favorable. Nevertheless there was a capital audience at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered the second of his special course of Freethought lectures there on the subject of "If Christ be not Risen." Mr. John T. Lloyd took the chair, and introduced the lecturer with a finely-worded eulogy. Mr. Foote's discourse was followed with close attention and warmly applauded, particularly the peroration, in which Jesus Christ and Giordano Bruno were contrasted. Questions and discussion were waived for once, the audience having cheerfully acceded to Mr. Foote's request that he might be allowed to return to his home that night, instead of being hung up in London, so that he might do justice to the article he wanted to write on the death of Swinburne. There will be ample opportunity for questions and discussions after the third and fourth lectures of this course. The half-hour's piano music before the lecture will also be continued.

This evening's (April 18) lecture at St. James's Hall will be on "God and Humanity." London "saints" should do their utmost to bring their less heterodox friends and acquaintances to this lecture. Should it prove to be necessary, Mr. Foote will have something to say about what, as we are writing, is only a proposal, but may take actual shape; namely, the burial of Swinburne's dead body in Westminster Abbey. In any case, Mr. Foote will read a large part of Swinburne's magnificent Atheistic poem, "The Hymn of Man."

A slight change will be made in the arrangements at St. James's Hall. The free seats will be at the back of the body of the hall, under the balcony. The balcony itself will be kept for paying seatholders, as many prefer to go up there rather than sit behind on the ground floor.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference is always held on Whit-Sunday. The place of meeting this year is Liverpool. We hope the Scotch friends will make an effort to be present on this occasion. Liverpool is easy of access from the South of Scotland, as it is from the North of England and the Midlands. We hope Branches of the N.S.S. are making arrangements to be represented at the Conference. Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must be sent in to the general secretary—Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.—by May 8 at the latest. The financial year closes on April 30—absolutely.

The Tivoli Theatre has been engaged for the evening public meeting in connection with the N.S.S. Conference. The Tivoli is centrally situated, in Lime-street, and well appointed. There appears to have been obstacles in the way of obtaining Picton Hall, and it is just as well to let the public authorities see that there are other halls in the City.

The Liverpool Branch has arranged to have its annual dinner on Saturday evening, May 1. Mr. Foote, who is lecturing at Liverpool the next day, has promised to travel down earlier than usual and attend the dinner as a guest. Tickets for this function are obtainable of the Branch secretary, Mr. Chas. Daw, 57 Sunbury-road, Anfield, Liverpool, or at Alexandra Hall after any lecture.

As we are going to press we learn that this function is to take the form of a complimentary dinner by the Liverpool Branch to the President of the N.S.S. All local Freethinkers who desire union and harmony, love the old flag, and wish to support Mr. Foote in his efforts, are earnestly invited to attend. The dinner will take place at the Bee Hotel, St. John's-lane, at 6 p.m. The tickets are 2s. 3d. each. There will be music as well as speeches after the dinner.

Mr. Foote's lectures at Liverpool on May 2 will be delivered in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. It is not so large as the halls he has been lecturing in lately, but there are special reasons for his going there this time. For one thing, he wants to address the local Freethinkers in a paternal way about some matters. There will be no charge for admission at the doors, but tickets, price 1s. and 6d., will be sold beforehand, and all who wish to secure a seat should take the trouble to do so in good time. Tickets can be purchased at the Alexandra Hall at Sunday meetings, or of the Branch secretary, Mr. C. Daw, 57 Gunbury-road, Anfield.

The Wood Green Branch had a successful "social" on Good Friday. Sixty sat down to tea. The brisk demand for the *Freethinker* continues.

The *Searchlight* (Waco, Texas) reproduces from our columns Mr. J. T. Lloyd's recent article on "The Moral Sense."

Mr. C. W. Hole, in his presidential address at the annual conference of the National Union of Teachers, declared that Secular Education was the only solution. "He had been driven to the conclusion," he said, "that in this solution lies the largest measure of practical justice and equity that could be meted out to contending claims." This declaration aroused some marks of dissent, but more cheers.

### Shilling Month.

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

#### THIRD LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Dane Hill Atheists, 5; Robert Avis, 10; Roger Rushworth, 2; W. McLaren; Sidney Clowes, 2; W. J. Parnall, 5; T. W., 5; Joseph Bryce, 2; J. Lucas, 3; S. Copland, 2; A. Beale; J. Clayton, 2½; N. V., 2; H. Tucker, 5; Mr. and Mrs. Finney, 2; W. Challis; J. Pruett, 2; Rose Bennett; D. Wright, 2½; P. M. W., 5; J. Jones, 2½; A. Stringer, 2; C. Buchanan, 3; W. R. Dayton, 2; Jas. Railton, 2; Newrick Richardson, 5; F. Gambetta Alward, 20; J. L. Hammond, 2½; J. L., 20; G. G. Athalyo; A. E. Maddox, 20; W. E. Hopper, 5; Elizabeth Lechmere, 2; R. D. Williams; A. Cayford; Manx, 2; Geo. Dixon, 5; R. Stevenson, 2;

### Socialism and the Churches.

THE question raised in the *Freethinker's* "Acid Drops," March 28, the relation of Christianity and the Churches to the Labor and Socialist movement, is one that will have to be openly discussed. Perhaps the *Freethinker* can do good service in this matter just now; the feeling against speaking out is strong in most Socialist circles, and Freethinkers in the movement are in danger of being silenced by the more aggressive Christians.

Those who, like myself, are inside the Socialist party, who write and lecture for Socialism, and are loyal working members of some Socialist organisation, see plainly that the Churches are trying to capture the Socialists. Christian-Socialist groups are being started inside every Church: the Church of England, the Wesleyans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, and other religious bodies have such groups at work, not only in their own Churches, but also among the Socialists.

In our own Socialist press a handful of parsons get more attention paid to them than hundreds and thousands of hard-working propagandists who have nothing to preach but Socialism. The *Labor Leader* is great on parsons. The *Clarion* seems to be weakening in its attack on Christianity as an economic evil and a moral barrier. Even the *New Age* has been captured by the Church Socialist League. *Justice* alone refuses to be flattered by the Socialist clergymen of all denominations, and when the Rev. R. J. Campbell some months ago made the impudent assertion that Atheists had no right to be in the Socialist ranks, and gave out the challenge that either the Christians would drive the Atheists outside or the Christians would leave the ranks, *Justice* alone answered him as he deserved to be answered. (I may say here that I have never been a member of the S.D.P.)

In the actual work of the local branches of the Socialist parties this Christian influence is becoming too much for the Freethinkers to bear much longer. Members of the party who happen to belong also to some Church and are local preachers, perhaps, are allowed to talk by the hour nothing but theology with a little tinge of Socialism, and we poor meek Freethinkers have to listen to the childish twaddle about Socialism being only early Christianity and Christianity only Socialism, and so forth; and have borne it for years in a spirit of fair play, with the hope that all would come right in the end. Even direct attacks on Atheism made in public meetings by some preacher or parson asked to speak on Socialism have not provoked us to open retaliation, even though we knew by experience that if ever we should incidentally refer to Atheism, to interest the Atheists present in the audience, as Christians talk at full length of religion to interest the religious, we should soon be told we were wrecking the movement, and perhaps be formally censured by fellow-members at the next Branch meeting. We must and we can deal with the evils of capitalism, of course; but if a Freethinker should think it necessary to complete his argument by showing that the Church is almost as great an economic burden upon the nation as capitalism is, there would be a storm; and if we tried to show that the teachings of religion have done and still do more than anything else to keep the suffering poor contented with their miserable fate, we should raise a hurricane of criticism. In this way both Socialists and their opponents never see one of the leading social factors in the world's history and in contemporary society. When they consider the slow progress made they are puzzled. "Why don't the people rise and be free?" they exclaim. But we must not tell them we think the deadweight is the Church, with its vast influences, moral, economic, social, political. Robert Blatchford's independence allows him to point out that the Church blocks the road, but few others dare as things are.

Now the question I wish to ask again, and have never got an answer to, is: Why will not the parsons and their followers help Socialism as men, not as religionists? We want their help, but why professionalise it; why preach and rant as if they were in a pulpit, and sicken one-half of their audience? Above all, why do R. J. Campbell (who will probably object to seeing his name without the "Reverend") and scores of others everlastingly tilt at the Atheists, insult us, and challenge us to become Christians or Tories?

I will now go a step further and warn my Socialist comrades that the Churches are not helping in the movement for nothing. When recently the English Presbyterians in conference decided to start a Church and Labor department, they stated publicly they did not mean to help either labor or capital, but only to benefit themselves as a Church and save working men for the Church. That was plain, honest, understandable; but do we imagine the other Churches have no private ends in view?—just as when a Church starts a debating society, or football club, manifestly to keep their young members in the Church, and not out of love for football or debate. For instance, the Church Socialist League; can it deny that it attempts to Socialise the Church in order to Christianise the Socialists?

Why, indeed, form all these Christian Socialist Leagues, Unions, Societies? If their members really want Socialism, and Socialism only, why split Socialism up into more sects than it has already—why not join the I. L. P., the S. D. P., the Clarion Fellowship, or the Fabian Society? Why not Christianise Liberals and Conservatives, who would then be, according to the argument, Socialists, if Christianity is Socialism? There must be a solid reason for this policy of the split, for this extreme anxiety to save the soul of the workingman just when he has at last found a key to the salvation of his class from Capitalism.

And when we have allowed these Leagues, Unions, Societies, as Christians, as Churches, to help us win the battle of Socialism, will they not demand heavy payment? Will they not claim the reward of recognition in the Socialist State, having helped to found it, not as citizens, but as Churchmen, and expect to be established as the Socialist Church, and thus perpetrate the old economic burden in a new form? Indeed, they are already formulating the demand, and those outside the Churches can see signs that a rivalry is beginning among these denominational claimants for Socialist influence which may develop into the same sort of bickering and fierce antagonism as that now being shown by the sects of Christianity in their struggles for the mastery of the children's education.

Enough has been said for this once, in a brief statement of a serious problem, to suggest this conclusion: that all Socialist parties should accept help only from men and women as comrades, not as Churches or Church groups. If the parson is truly a Socialist he will take off his uniform when he stands on the platform, metaphorically at least. And this other conclusion: that Freethinking Socialists must stand on their dignity and refuse to be spoken to as if they were naughty children; as if they had not as much right to their opinions—and to air them, if it comes to that—as the Christians have to theirs. We should be justified, logically, in going further, in saying that as we do not use the Socialist platform to preach Atheism the Christians shall not use it to preach religion. When my wicked conduct of referring casually to my Freethinking in an open-air meeting was debated at my Branch under a resolution of censure, I offered in future to keep from such references if my Christian comrades would undertake never to refer to Christianity. My critics collapsed. Reason obvious! So will the larger attack collapse if we determinedly set forth the gross unfairness of the way Mr. Campbell and the rest take such a mean advantage of their admission to our ranks. It is a violent abuse of the privileges of membership and comradeship in this

great movement when these men, who, if they were Socialists first and last, would preach nothing but Socialism, use our platform for their pulpit. If they invited us to their pulpits, and we attacked the Christianity of their congregation, what a row there would be! And if this Christianising of Socialism drives the Freethinkers to defend themselves, or even to preach Atheism, as the Christians preach their religion, out of season, and if bitter internal strife is the result, whose will be the fault?

The *Freethinker* is not a political organ, still less is it Socialist; but probably both Conservative and Liberal and all other Freethinkers will agree that the subject dealt with in this article is of considerable importance even to them, and that it is not likely to be discussed fairly in any other paper. In any case, the *Freethinker* has the right, in the interests of Freethought and fairplay, to bring this burning question to the attention of the Socialist parties of Great Britain.

JULIAN ST. OREY.

[Certainly this is a subject for ventilation in the *Freethinker*; indeed, it has often been referred to in our columns. Our editorial policy is neither Socialist nor Anti-Socialist; it is purely Freethought from first to last. Whatever the social system of the future is going to be, we want its members to be Freethinkers; otherwise all the old evils will reappear in fresh forms; and, besides, a society of weak and credulous fools is hardly worth the pains of conserving.—EDITOR.]

## Free Thoughts.

BY LEMUEL K. WASHBURN.

I PRESUME I am somewhat irreverent, as some Christians have intimated, but irreverence, in my opinion, is higher than reverence. I have no respect for the slavery of worship, and a free man is better than a slave to God. It has long been a question in my mind whether there is anything in the universe to be revered, and a man who can look his own soul in the face and not blush has no reason to crawl and cringe before the name of God.

I am still living and I cannot tell whether I want to live again until I get through with this life. Certainly I cannot live two lives in two places at the same time, and the more I think of some other life the more I must rob this one of what belongs to it. The doctor helped me into this life, so I have been told, but I do not see what the priest has to do about helping me into another. We are all in the hands of Nature and we cannot get out of them, if we try to do so.

When a man talks about his "heavenly father" he is talking rot; just plain, unadulterated rot, and nothing else. Man has no heavenly father. He is lucky to have an earthly one. It is generally the case that, when a man has no earthly father, he talks about a heavenly one. This kind of thing ought to stop. The world has been humbugged by it too long. What there is in heaven, we honestly admit that we do not know, and, if everyone else would do the same, a great deal of deception and disappointment might be avoided.

No one gets a Bible in a prize package. A cake of pop corn appeals more to the average intellect.

The present revival in Boston is the most desperate appeal for souls ever made in this vicinity. There is no interest in Christianity, in God or Christ or the Bible, and this fact emphasises the present movement to "win souls to God." But they don't win worth a cent. *Not one man of brains has been converted.*

The passengers on board the ill-fated *Republic* need not praise God for their safety, but Marconi. It was the wireless telegraph, and not Providence, that brought aid to the men and women on that sinking steamship. It is a most solemn fact, that everyone would have perished had not the call for help been hurled through the air by the marvellous invention of Marconi. Honor to whom honor is due, the pulpit to the contrary notwithstanding.

There is not soap and water enough in some religions.

A religion has about as much to do with a man's life as a weather-vane has with the weather.

Was God looking after sparrows when the *Florida* rammed the *Republic*?

If God would save human life here we might believe that he would save human souls hereafter.

Good sense is preferable to good language.

Better that the hands know something useful than that the head be filled with what is useless. To know how to grow good fruit and good vegetables and to make good food, is better than to know all the Latin and Greek taught in all the colleges of the land.

A school will do more good to mankind than a church, and a theatre is better for men and women than a cathedral.

Nothing would give this world a greater shock than the truth.

If Jesus should come to earth he would not shake hands with his followers; rather would he seek out the Marys and the fishermen and those who do not put on the airs of righteousness. The new breed of Pharisees differs but little from the old, whether they are Jews or Christians. Any man can pick out a hypocrite. A denominational label covers a lot of impostors.

You can get more satisfaction out of health than out of sickness, more enjoyment out of morality than out of religion, and more instruction out of man than out of God.

God has never opened his mouth.

When it is said that God said so, it was somebody else.

Where have the fairies gone? Where are the angels? Where are the gods that once visited the earth? Gone, with the fools who believed in them.

Unitarianism is pre-digested Christianity.

What is the difference between Christian virtues and human virtues? We frankly admit that we do not know. Is there any honesty besides honesty? Is there any love besides love? Is there any charity besides charity? Is there any better goodness than goodness? Is it not time to take the Christian labels from human behavior and let every real good, kind, genuine act stand upon its own bottom?

The simple life is too simple for most people to day. The world has outgrown the Quaker habit and the Quaker regime. One cannot always live in drab. That life is too fast in many instances does not prove that amusements are valueless or that the theatre is the direct road to hell. What is wanted more than a simple life for men and women is a happy life, on lines broad enough for enjoyment and high enough to enable one to see the foolishness below and the satisfaction above.

We are not criticising God, or what he does. We are criticising the lies told about God.

The man who no longer believes in hell can no longer honestly believe in a Savior, as there is nothing to be saved from.

A revival of Christianity shows that this religion is pretty near dead.

In Cleveland, Ohio, several thousand young people are trying to live and do "as Jesus would have done." We do not see how these persons can take Jesus as a model, excepting as a worker of miracles, as a preacher, and as a tramp. He had no home, carried on no business, worked at no trade, practiced no profession. We most sincerely hope that the young men and women of Cleveland will treat their mothers better than Jesus did his. No one knows what Jesus would have done had he lived in this age, but millions are doing better than he did in his own time.

Independence is the highest intellectual condition of man. It is the supreme aim of human endeavor. A person dependent upon another is his slave. When Jesus said "Follow me," he struck a deadly blow at manhood. When he proclaimed himself the leader of men, he denied to others the right of independence, and by doing this made himself the enemy of the noblest humanity. His leadership has cursed mankind and armed his followers with a weapon with which to persecute those who could not honestly call him "Master."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

### An Old Bit of Common Sense.

[The following article is taken from the *London Magazine* of November, 1827—a periodical which was contributed to by Hazlitt, Lamb, and other choice spirits. The article itself seems to have been written by some disciple of Bentham. It is remarkable for its common sense at such a period, and is still a long way ahead of the solemn jargon of lawyers and judges to-day; witness the speeches of counsel for the prosecution and of Mr. Justice Phillimore in the late Boulter case. We have pleasure in reproducing this wise and witty piece of writing. It should be mentioned that the Mr. Taylor referred to was Robert Taylor, the "Devil's Chaplain," who had just been found guilty of "blasphemy," for which he suffered a year's imprisonment in Oakham Gaol.]

#### THE LAW OF BLASPHEMY.

THE Law of Blasphemy sorely perplexes the lawyers. They would fain ground on it some show of reason, but the difficulties baffle their ingenuity, and they are compelled to content themselves with offering strings of words and phrases signifying nothing. In old songs, a tol-lol-de-rol-lol is introduced to eke out the measure; in the Law of Blasphemy the same object is accomplished by the words "for Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land." Tol-lol-de-rol-lol would answer all the purposes of sense as well as "for Christianity is part

and parcel of the law of the land"; but in the court of justice sitting before our lord the king at Westminster, "for Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land," sounds better, inasmuch as it is more decifful than tol-lol-de-rol-lol. By the force of the *for*, it sounds like a reason, which tol-lol-de-rol-lol does not. Nevertheless, we could wish that judges would cease instancing as an argument for interfering with opinions on religious matters the too often quoted "for Christianity is a part and parcel, etc.," and sing tol-lol-de-rol-lol instead, because, as it would as infallibly command a verdict, it would more strikingly exemplify the power of the law which is, thank God, superior to reason. We are men of that turn that we are ready to believe anything that any person of authority or a very big wig tells us; and if we were informed that Christianity was part and parcel of an old woman's frowzy flannel petticoat, we would not presume to doubt it; but having acceded to the truth of the fact, we must yet ask what connection there is between it and the desired consequence. If Christianity be part and parcel of the law of the land, does that justify the prosecution of A or B for disbelieving it? or further, to state the extreme case, for attempting to bring it into contempt? Men in the houses of parliament, and many more out of the houses of parliament, are very properly, worthily, and indefatigably employed in bringing the law of the land into contempt, and that without incurring any risk of prosecution. The averment, therefore, that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, will not warrant interference with religious opinions. In charging the jury on the trial of Mr. Taylor for blasphemy, Lord Tenterden sung the old song, with such little verbal variations as were necessary to disguise the vulgar baldness of the tune:—

"He [Lord Tenterden] should not be acting according to the duty he owed his conscience, or the duty required by the office which he then held, if he did not tell them that the Christian religion (he spoke not then of any of the many sects into which opinions had divided it) but the Christian religion in its substance was a part of the law of the country, as perfectly inviolable in that substance, and as fully entitled to protection in every manner and degree, as our civil constitution itself."

One kind of galimathias is a good as another. Let us say that "The Christian religion in its substance is a part of the sirloin of beef, as perfectly inviolable in that substance, and as fully entitled to protection in every manner and degree as our plum-pudding itself." Nonsense; if the Christian religion were in its substance a part of the sirloin of beef, a sirloin of beef is not inviolable in its substance; and so the proposition comes to nothing. True, and if the Christian religion be part and parcel of the law of the land, the law of the land is not inviolable in its substance. Its substance and form are, under the blessing of heaven, undergoing change in every session of Parliament. The Christian religion is neither a part nor parcel of any thing in the world, it is no more a part or parcel of any of the law that it is a part or parcel of Lord Tenterden's wig; it is simply and solely a belief in the truth. It were a great evil to shake men's belief in the truth; but in all things except religion we have such reliance on the power of truth, that we think it unnecessary to defend it with pain and penalties.

Suppose a genius should arise among us, and discover that our astronomy was all wrong, and endeavor by the force of argument and ridicule to prove the error of reliance on lunar observations, and the whole system which guides our sailors over the seas. It would be dreadful were he to succeed in dashing our sextants from our hands, in shaking our navigators' confidence in the nautical almanack, and teaching them to despise the sun, the moon, and all the stars; but yet we question whether the world would see the wisdom of prosecuting this man for propagating his opinions, though the reception of them would be attended with such disastrous practical consequences. Astronomy is "part and parcel" of navigation; but in protecting navigation we have never yet thought it necessary to make a disbelief in the Newtonian System, a misdemeanor punishable with fine and imprisonment. Had astronomy its priests, and were the science established, and improvement in it prohibited, such however would surely be the case, "and crops of infidels would be provoked to doubt that the stars do move." In medicine how many absurd beliefs are propagated, to the perdition of numberless bodies; and would it be proposed to punish fanciful valetudinarians for endeavoring to shake their neighbors' faith in Maton, Warren, and Paris? In all things, spiritual or temporal, sacred or profane, leave to Reason the vindication of its own wrongs; to Truth the maintenance of her own cause.

In his charge to the jury, in the case of Mr. Taylor, Lord Tenterden was obviously much perplexed for a share of argument for his law, and he was compelled to resort to mystifications and definitions absolutely amounting to nothing. Thus, for example, he declared that "every man in this country had a right of private judgment upon every

subject; and however injurious those opinions might prove, either to himself or to others, so long as he continued to keep those opinions to himself, the laws of the country could take no cognisance of his offence." What a brilliant discovery is this! So long as a man keeps his opinions to himself, he cannot be punished. Wonderful! because so long as he keeps them to himself they are undiscovered. Here his lordship touches upon a difficulty. When do a man's opinions begin to be punishable? They are not punishable when confined to his own breast, as they are then unknown; and they are punishable when proclaimed in a public place. Graduating the scale from unknown to declared, where do opinions begin to be criminal? If a man avows opinions to his wife, are they punishable? If he avows them to his family, are they punishable?—to his servants, are they punishable?—avowed to his friends, are they punishable?—spoken in a tavern, are they punishable?—in a theatre?—in a chapel, we know they are punishable. We have the extremes ascertained. In his breast his opinions are innocent; declared in a public room, criminal. It is desirable that the intermediate stages of innocence and criminality should be distinctly fixed.

### Booth's Emigration Scheme.

[From the Official Report of the Ninth Annual Conference of the Parliamentary Labor Party, 1909.]

MR. W. R. TROTTER (Canadian Trades and Labor Congress) said that he was glad to have the opportunity for the second time of appearing before that great assembly and tendering the fraternal greetings of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. He was at the same time very sorry indeed that that body should have found it necessary to send him back again on the same mission as last year. His name had mostly been associated with the question of emigration to Canada, but he wished to assure the delegates that emigration was not the only question that was harassing the minds of the citizens and working people of that great Dominion. A report which had been issued by himself, as the British representative, to the Convention which was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, last September, had been circulated at the Conference to avoid taking up any time from the platform. They had had present last year in Halifax for their friend and comrade Mr. Keir Hardie. They were very proud indeed to have visits of that nature, because they increased the international bond and drew us closely together. Since Mr. Hardie's visit there had, in Nova Scotia at least, sprung up a Labor Party with four Branches. They hoped for much more, but there was a big territory to cover. He wished to draw their attention again to one particular society which was operating at this side of the Atlantic in the matter of emigration—the Salvation Army. In spite of the state of affairs in Canada, those people were again busy. They had issued within the last seven days their program for 1909; and if anybody was to offer prizes for the best way to prevaricate without lying that program would obtain the first prize. Every piece of literature issued from that department of the Salvation Army crucified afresh the Carpenter of Nazareth and placed Ananias on a pedestal. They had had to suffer from the operations of that society, which had told all kinds of stories about colonising in those regions. It was simply, however, sending into another labor market masses of working-class people, who were told that they must accept the very first work which was offered them, and go from that to anything else they might get. There was an unemployed problem from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In the City of Vancouver there were 5,500 unemployed white men. In Winnipeg the charitable societies were at a loss how to combat the evils of unemployment. The Salvation Army had become the Procurator-General for cheap labor for international capital. He hoped his people would be able to combat this great evil and establish such conditions in that great Dominion as would enable white men to live as they ought to be able to live.

He who seeks learning grows from day to day in the eyes of the world. He who seeks reason grows smaller from day to day. He is forever growing smaller, until he reaches the state of complete humility. When he has reached complete humility, there is nothing in the world that he could not accomplish.—*Lao-Tse.*

What can a church do for a people? Look at Spain. What can a country do without a church? Look at regenerated Franco.—*M. M. Mangasarian.*

### Christian Comfort.

THERE was comfort for the Christian in the days of long ago,  
When "believing" was a virtue, and one never craved to "know";  
There was heaven for the holy (those who thought the same as you),  
Heaven, with its glittering pageants, lots to see and naught to do;  
Jewelled seats, reserved and numbered, where the Lord's elect would sit  
Watching wicked unbelievers slowly frizzle in the pit.  
O the meek and lowly Christian, with self-satisfaction crammed,  
Praised the Lord that *he* was ransomed, though the bulk—of course—were damned!

There was comfort for the Christian in reflecting day by day  
That each dastard deed committed would be surely washed away.  
He might cheat and lie and plunder, ruin innocents galore,  
But by "looking unto Jesus" all his sins would be no more.  
Why be honest, why be moral, if thereby he suffered loss?  
Dying faith gave endless glory to the thief upon the cross;  
So would *he* claim absolution when his time on earth was brief,  
And "depart to be with Jesus"—like the late-lamented thief.

At that feast of solid comfort, once the Christian's daily fare,  
Naught but crumbs may now be gathered—soon the table will be bare.  
Heaven fades and Hades passes, "simple faith" is nothing worth,  
Goodly deeds alone are valued, deeds which shed their light on earth.  
"Holy" books no longer bend us to the thoughts of days of old;  
Life, not death, demands attention, *here* shall dawn the Age of Gold.  
O 'tis good to see the Christian, struggling gamely, but in vain,  
To extract some old-time "comfort" from the fragments that remain!

JOHN YOUNG.

### A Quaint Little Habit.

THERE'S a habit that Christians detest with intensity—  
A habit quite small, yet of such vast immensity  
That it causes all sorts of wonderful things,  
Great revolutions and downfall of kings.  
It causes new cycles of thought to revolve;  
The problems of life it may finally solve.  
Gods great and mighty with ease it destroys,  
Exchanging dark fears for pure human joys.  
It has quite destroyed heaven and saints divine—well,  
What of that, as it quenches the dread fires of hell?  
Immortality, too, it has recognised never,  
But its own immortality goes on for ever.  
It establishes kindness and peace with dexterity,  
Binding the earth with the truest prosperity.  
It establishes virtue, while evil it kills,  
And helps to abolish all humankind's ills.  
Cruel plagues and fevers, and each fell disease,  
It has grappled and conquered with wonderful ease.  
It makes the mind tranquil, thoughts happy and bright;  
All true men indulge in it with joy and delight.  
In each home it makes sweet and honorable lives,  
Happy fathers and children, and lovable wives.  
Nations may rise, ay! and nations may fall,  
But this little habit survives through them all.  
It renews the old world with the glories of youth,  
This strange little habit of *telling the truth!*

HENRY STUART.

The legally expressed will of the people is the only rightful sovereign. This sovereignty, however, does not embrace the realm of thought or opinion. In that world, each human being is a sovereign—throned and crowned. One is a majority. The good citizens of that realm give to others all rights that they claim for themselves, and those who appeal to force are the only traitors.—*Ingersoll.*

## 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, "God and Humanity."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Forest Gate Public (Lower) Hall, Woodgrange-road): 7.30, E. C. Saphin, "Proofs that Christianity is Sun-Worship." Selections by the Band.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "What is Atheism?"

### COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon and 6.30, H. P. Ward, Lectures.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Councillor James Sexton, "Woe to the Bloody City."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Mrs. F. M. Eddie, "Familiar Topics."

### JOSEPH BATES' EAST ANGLIAN MISSION.

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S.: Bargate Green, Sunday, April 18, at 3, "Freethinkers in the Chamber of Death: Being a Reply to their Calumniators." Business meeting, Wednesday, 21st April, at 8 o'clock.

KIRTON: Near the Church, Tuesday, April 20, at 7, "What Civilisation Owes to Freethought and Freethinkers."

SPALDING: Hall Place (under the Monument), Thursday, April 22, at 6, "Forty Years' Imposture: A Candid Survey of the Salvation Army and its Work."

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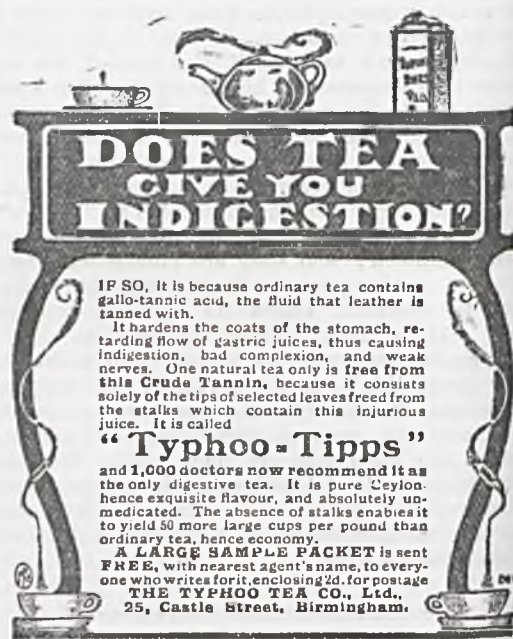
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