

# THE Freethinker

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*Now the sole difference between the faith of Positivists and the faith of the old theologies is that for the Will of God we substitute the Order of Humanity.*

—J. H. BRIDGES.

## A Lost Soul.

ROME, says the proverb, was not built in a day; and Christianity was not built in a century. It took hundreds of years to complete, as it is taking hundreds of years to dissolve. For this reason it is a very complicated structure. There is something in it for all sorts of tastes. Those who like metaphysics will find it in Paul's epistles and in such dogmas as that of the Trinity. Those who like a stern creed will find it in the texts that formed the basis of Calvinism. And those who like something milder will find it in such texts as "Love one another" and "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." It must be confessed, however, that the terrible aspects of Christianity have been most in evidence. Religion had its first roots in ignorance and terror, and it must continue to derive sustenance from them or perish. People were never allured by the simple prospect of heaven; they were frightened by the awful prospect of hell. Of course the two things were always more or less mixed. The recipe was brimstone and treacle, but the brimstone predominated, and was the more operative ingredient.

Present-day sermons tell us chiefly of God's goodness; older sermons tell us chiefly of what is called his justice. Puritan discourses, of the seventeenth century, were largely occupied in telling people that most of them *would* be damned, and explaining to them how just and logical it was that they *should* be damned. It was a sort of treatment they should really be thankful for; and, instead of protesting against it, they should take it with folded hands and grateful submission.

How many preachers have depicted the torments of the damned! How many have described the fate of lost souls! They positively delighted in the task, as corrupted organs of smell will sometimes delight in abominable stenches. Even the average Christian has regarded damnation—especially the damnation of other people—with remarkable complacency, as a part of the established economy of the universe. But now and then a superior spirit revolted against it instinctively. Thus we hear of Gregory the Great, in an age when it was devoutly believed that the noblest Pagans were all in hell, being deeply impressed, with the splendid virtues of the Emperor Trajan, and begging for his release; a prayer which (the legend says) was granted, with a caveat that it should never be repeated. Thus, also, we hear of the great Aquinas kneeling all night on the stone floor of his cell, passionately beseeching God to save the Devil.

This revolt against eternal damnation has mightily increased. Civilised men and women will not—positively *will not*—be damned at the old rate. The clergy are obliged to accommodate their preaching to the altered circumstances; hence we hear of "Eternal Hope," and "Ultimate Salvation," and

similar brands on the new bottles in which they seek to pour the diluted old wine of theology.

Archdeacon Farrar was a type of this new school—at least, in the Church of England. He was a wealthy pluralist; in addition to which he earned a large income as a writer of sentimental books, that immensely tickle the flabby souls of "respectable" Christians. Not quite illiterate, yet nowise thoughtful, these people are semi-orthodox and temporising. They take the old creed with a faint dash of heresy. Hell, at any rate, they like to see cooled a bit, or at least shortened; and Archdeacon Farrar satisfied them with a hell which is not everlasting, but only eternal.

We believe that Dr. Farrar expressed a faint hope that Charles Bradlaugh had not gone to hell. It was just possible that he might get a gallery seat in the place where the Archdeacon was booked for a stall. Dr. Farrar was not sure that all the people who were thought to go to hell really go there. He entertained a mild doubt upon the subject. Nor did he believe that hell is simply punitive. He thought it is purgative. After a billion years or so the ladies and gentlemen in the pit may hope to be promoted to the upper circles. Some of them, however, who are desperate and impenitent, and perfectly impervious to the sulphur treatment, will have to remain in hell for ever. The door will be closed upon them as incorrigible and irredeemable; and the saints in heaven will go on singing, and harping, and jigging, regardless of these obstinate wretches, these ultimate failures, these lost souls, these everlasting inheritors of perdition.

Humanity is growing day by day. So is common sense. Every decently educated person will soon insist on the abolition of hell. The idea of a lost soul will not be tolerated.

A theologian of painful genius (in its way) imagined a lost soul in hell. He had been agonising for ages. At last he asked a gaoler "What hour is it?" and the answer came "Eternity!"

Thoughtful, sensitive men and women, in ever increasing number, loathe such teaching, and turn with disgust from those who offer it to their fellows.

We are not aware that men have souls, but if they have, why should any soul be *lost*? We are not aware that there is a God, but if there is, why should he *let* any soul be lost? Sending souls to hell at all is only punishing his own failures. If he is omnipotent he could have made them as he pleased, and if they do not please him it is not their fault, but his own. Let it be distinctly understood that a creator has no right over his creatures; it is the creatures who have a right to the best assistance of their creator. The contrary doctrine comes down to us from the "good old times" when children had no rights, and parents had absolute power of life and death over them. In the same way, God had absolute power over his creatures; he was the potter and they were the clay; one vessel was made for honor, and one for dishonor; one for heaven, and one for hell. But civilisation has changed our conceptions. We regard the parent as responsible for the child, and God is responsible for the welfare of his creatures. A single "lost soul" would prove the malignity or imbecility of "our father which art in heaven."

G. W. FOOTE.



## The Future of Religion.

THERE is nothing easier in the world—to a Christian—than to write or speak on the religion of the future. The followers of other religions may find the task as easy, but my experience lies chiefly with the believers in one creed, and I confine myself to what I know. Christians, then, find this task an easy one owing to the beautiful simplicity of the procedure. This consists in dooming every religion but one to extinction, and projecting this one into the future as that which mankind will one day universally adopt. I need hardly say that the one selected for preservation is their own. Every variety of Christian is in agreement in the use of this simple method. What is theirs is permanent, and absolutely true. What is of others is false, fleeting, and doomed to destruction.

It may be said that, in so acting, Christians are only doing as we all do when we write about the future. Some truth there is in this retort, but there is a difference that restricts this truth to very sharp limits. To try and detect tendencies that are already at work, and assume their continuance and consummation in the future, is one thing; to take a number of unprovable dogmas and assume *their* permanence is another and a very different thing. That God exists, that he is of such-and-such a character, that man has a soul, and that this soul will continue to exist after the dissolution of the body, are dogmas on behalf of which no real evidence ever has been, or, so far as we can see, ever will be, offered. Catholics rightly laugh at those pseudo-liberal religionists who protest against dogma while laying down these beliefs as articles of faith. They must always be dogmas in the fullest sense of the word. And the only reason for saying that people will continue to believe them is that people have done so in the past, which is assuming all that is at issue.

I have said that the scientific method is to trace tendencies and allow for their consummation. But even this contains an element of uncertainty. If the human mind always worked on strictly logical lines, and if human evolution moved in a uniform direction, the whole question would resolve itself into a simple calculation. So much knowledge having been gained, and so much progress achieved, we need only allow for acceleration of motion and the answer would be given. But, unfortunately, people do not always reason with strict logic, nor is the direction of human progress anything like uniform. Above all, it is dangerous to assume that because we prove to the believer himself that certain of his beliefs are false that we have thereby corrected his particular mental twist. Perception of the falsity of a particular belief may only mean exchanging it for another of the same mental value. The common case of those people who accept miracles in one direction while repudiating those of an identical character in another direction, or the manner in which certain Protestants will argue on the absurdity of certain Roman Catholics while accepting substantially identical beliefs in their own creed, furnish evidence that the famous story of the gentleman who said that he had abandoned the errors of the Church of Rome in order to embrace those of the Church of England is at least true to life. And even when certain forms of superstitious belief are exploded in relation to religion they may still crop up in politics or sociology.

All of which goes to prove that while a certain type of mind persists superstition in some form is inevitable. Just as the origin and development of religious beliefs are strictly historical phenomena, inevitably appearing as the concomitant of a particular frame of mind, so their perpetuation and rejection are dependent upon the same mental type. All the discussions as to what people will do without religious beliefs is thus waste of time. While their minds are fitted for religious beliefs, religious beliefs they will have. Local circumstances will determine their form, but religion itself will remain. And when

their minds have developed beyond the religious stage, they will have shed their beliefs with no more sense of loss than we experience in losing the waste material of the body. And those who take a sufficiently comprehensive view of mental evolution will realise that in the case of those who have developed beyond the religious stage—I mean beyond it in sociology and science as well as in religion proper—that this has not been achieved by any elaborate reasoning process, but because their minds represented a variation from the religious type. All that reasoning has done in their case is to make clear to them where they really were.

Our estimate as to whether religion will or will not persist in the future, or, to put the issue in another form, whether it will strengthen or weaken in the future, should be determined by our judgment as to whether the forces at work are such as tend to preserve or eliminate the religious type of mind. So long as the environment favors the religious type the religious type will persist. That much may be taken for granted. Fortunately, however, the pressure of the present environment is to the discouragement of the religious type to a much greater extent than has ever before been the case. In earlier generations the selective action of the Church sufficed to suppress those mental variations dangerous to itself, while the state of knowledge protected religious belief among the mass of the people. But while on the one hand social and political changes robbed the Church of the power of direct suppression, altered knowledge of nature and of man undermined religious belief as a whole. From the fifteenth century discovery of discovery has with cumulative force been driving home to the human mind the lesson that the supernatural is a pure myth; that the whole universe is naught but a plexus of non-conscious forces. And this has represented an attack on religion that is insistent and inescapable. Insensibly beliefs are modified and outgrown by the pressure of new conceptions of the nature of the world-forces. The God suitable to the pre-Copernican universe became ridiculous to the new astronomy, and still more so when astronomical discoveries were backed by other developments in physical and biological science. The old scenery became quite unsuitable to the new theatre. Religion began to lose its hold on life, not so much because of the reasoned attacks that were made upon it—although they were powerful enough—as on account of the new environment with which the old beliefs were no longer in harmony.

Broadly, then, we may say that the environment is no longer favorable to the growth of the religious type of mind. I am not, in saying this, losing sight of the many social bribes held out to induce conformity, and of the many institutions that work for the perpetuation of religion. But it may be questioned whether these do more than by silence; they can hardly secure conviction. And in addition it must be remembered that this class of institution was always here, backed also by the prevailing cosmic scheme. All that these social bribes may hope to do is, I repeat, to procure silence; but we cannot conceive any such transformation in our surroundings as would make these institutions normal expressions of life. The tendency is for them to become transformed in teaching and character. Every church, and still more every chapel, is to-day talking of a social gospel, while many of them are openly repudiating every specific doctrine of orthodox Christianity. One eminent professor of theology has, indeed, gone so far as to say that the religion of the future will take small account of specific teaching of the nature of deity or another world, but will aim at embracing in a common bond all honest, truth-seeking men and women who aim at a common social service. This may be; at any rate one hopes this is something like what will occur; but it is certainly not Christianity that will then be alive. In his forecast our professor of theology is simply endorsing the opinion that Christianity is doomed.

The practical certainty of the progressive decay of religious ideas indeed, lies in the fact that their chief



enemy is neither a group of individuals nor an organisation. Either of these might be crushed, as such attacks have been crushed before to-day. The adage that truth is mighty and will prevail is not one that holds good of particular cases. As John Stuart Mill remarked, truth *has* been conquered over and over again in the world's history. And if Free-thought depended for its existence upon a person, or group of persons, or an organisation, the story of the defeat of truth might be once more enacted. But the strength of modern Freethought lies precisely in the fact that it is merely voicing tendencies that are themselves the expression of a host of forces which, while they defy particular location and exact calculation, for that very reason defy also destruction. A particular voice may be suppressed, but the cause of the voice lies beyond the reach of the strongest religious organisation that one can ever conceive as existing under modern conditions.

With specific doctrines at a discount in the theological world, with religious organisations pressing themselves upon the people, not on account of their religious value, but on account of an alleged social utility, all that most of the Christian Churches offer us to-day is a vague, nebulous species of Theism. And this can no more hope to permanently survive than specific doctrines. The cultured world no longer stand in awe and wonderment before the God idea. It has been analysed, traced to its origin, and its utter worthlessness exposed. The knowledge that we possess of the origin and nature of all religious ideas cannot be suppressed; civilisation can no more lose it than it could forego the use of metals. On the contrary, one is fully warranted in anticipating its wider diffusion, until, by the spread of knowledge on the one hand, and the modification of the social structure on the other, religious beliefs come to be studied, not as anything useful in themselves, but as instructive reminiscences of a barbaric past.

C. COHEN.

### Does Nature Forgive?

THE forgiveness of sins is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. It is really a portion of another and greater doctrine called justification. In the Shorter Catechism justification is defined as "an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." In justification Aquinas discerned four elements or steps, of which forgiveness was the last. Justification by faith alone is, however, a pre-eminently Protestant doctrine. In its full evangelical splendor it is the great discovery of Martin Luther; and he dug it out of Paul's epistles, where it had lain more than half hidden for upwards of a thousand years. In Acts v. 31 we read that God exalted Jesus with his right hand "for to give forgiveness of sins." The essence of the Gospel as preached by Paul was that "through this man [this risen and ascended man] is proclaimed unto you remission of sin." Forgiveness was a free gift which believers in Christ received from heaven. Says Paul: "In whom [Christ] we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." Such is the doctrine of forgiveness as taught in the New Testament and by the orthodox Church in all ages. The death of Christ on the Cross is represented as the objective ground on which alone God is enabled to wipe out the whole sinful past of all who by faith accept that death as their own. It sounds so wonderfully simple. The man is a notorious scoundrel; he has wallowed in the worst moral filth; his name is a stench in the nostrils of the community; but one day he believes that Christ died for his sins, making atonement to Heaven on their account, and that same moment God, not only acquits him in the eye of the law, not only sinks his past out of sight, but also pronounces him a shining saint, a blameless character.

That there is no exaggeration or misrepresentation in that description is clear from No. XI. of the Articles of the Church of England:—

"We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort."

And the theologian is careful to assure us that forgiveness is a momentary act. One instant, the man is as black as hell; the next, as white as heaven. If the act is condemned on moral grounds, it is explained that it is merely a forensic act, an act that changes a man's legal status, not his moral character. It is in the capacity of judge that God deals with a man in justification. It is a base criminal that is in the dock, deserving of eternal damnation; but the Crucified steps in between the judge and the prisoner, and looking through the transparent Savior what the judge sees is not a base criminal, but a beautiful reflection of his own righteousness. That is exactly what is meant by being "in Christ." No wonder that the Church of England Article says that such a doctrine is "very full of comfort"; but that it is "most wholesome" is, to say the least, somewhat doubtful. To treat a bad man as if he were good, to account him righteous when he is the very opposite, by imputing to him the righteousness of another, may yield him a vast amount of superficial comfort; but instead of being "most wholesome," such treatment would be morally degrading. This ought to be self-evident. And yet the doctrine of forgiveness is preached from a million pulpits every Sunday. Only two Sundays ago a distinguished Scottish divine expounded it anew in a prominent London chapel. He asserted that if the greatest sinner living repented and believed on the Lord Jesus he would, in that same moment, experience the exquisite sweetness of his Father's pardon.

Of course, within the limits prescribed by the sect to which he belongs, a preacher may say what he likes about God and his modes of procedure. God takes absolutely no notice either of him or his utterances. He may speak in the Divine name to his heart's content without being once contradicted. Speaking for a Being who never speaks for himself is the safest profession on earth. But the preacher just referred to ventured to say a word in Nature's name. He made a contemptuous allusion to certain scientific teachers of the day who declare that Nature cannot forgive, that the law of cause and effect is never broken. I need not tell you, he said, that I regard that teaching as utterly false. It is a lie, he exclaimed in a stentorian voice. Nature can, and does, forgive. In a report of the sermon that appears in a religious journal, the writer says: "I was especially impressed by his refutation of the saying that consequences are inevitable, and that Nature is unforgiving. Nature is not only forgiving, she seeks to repair the wrong." The only example of Nature's forgivingness that he adduced was a most unfortunate one. He said that when a man breaks his leg the doctor sets it, and Nature brings all her healing forces to bear upon it. What on earth was there for Nature to forgive in such a case? Nature repairs damages whenever she can, but she does not forgive disobedience to her laws. She never accepts the overtures of mediators, and of substitutes she knows nothing. Indeed, the majority of orthodox divines frankly admit that Nature has no pity, no sympathy, no love. It is God alone, they aver, who can forgive sins.

We confidently challenge anyone to furnish a single instance of forgiveness in Nature. Has she ever addressed a wrongdoer in such caressing terms as these: "I am deeply sorry for thee; I will erase the black record, and give thee a fresh start"? Does she not rather cast him into prison with the words, "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou have paid the last farthing"? Take the law of health, and you will find that in conformity to it there is enjoyment, and in disregard to it suffering and misery. If you are



rash enough to jump into the lake with no knowledge of the art of swimming, Nature will not forgive your folly and bring you in safety to the bank. She makes no allowances for ignorance and inexperience. She treats all alike, without fear or favor. All actions have their harvest of consequences, and Nature never intervenes.

The same law of cause and effect operates in the moral sphere also. When a man has a weakness which has made him its slave, what gospel of hope can you honestly preach to him? There he is, a young man of twenty-two, with the fires of passion burning within him at white heat. He sincerely repents that he has allowed them to have no change in their way with him so often, and he beseeches God to forgive him, and strengthen him to keep them down for the future. Who kindled those fires? His ancestors. He may repent and pray for pardon as fervently and continuously as he likes, but no gracious God of love will ever come to *his* rescue, and pluck him like a brand from the burning. He is in Nature's hands, and his only hope of relief is by assiduously cultivating other and nobler departments of his nature, and so gradually dampen the perilous passions. Occasionally we witness what appear to be magical emancipations, but they do not last. No one can permanently cheat his constitution, or transcend the law of sequences. The preacher mentioned the case of a man in Yorkshire who fourteen years ago was a notorious drunkard. He is now a total abstainer. "You think I am different," the man said to him, "and so I am. When you saw me last I was what I was; now, by the help of God, I am what I am." But, really, has it not once occurred to the preacher that such an illustration of the efficacy of God's help reflects no manner of credit on the Supreme Being, but rather shows him in a most unenviable light? There is no mystery at all about the fact that here and there we come upon a reclaimed drunkard, who ignorantly attributes his reclamation to Divine help, but there is the deepest mystery imaginable in the thought that, if Divine, supernatural help is an available reality, it should be withheld from multitudes of drunkards and others who passionately cry for it. This is the mystery of mysteries—if the Christian religion is true.

We hold that Divine help and Divine pardon and Divine redemption are figments. As Mr. Bernard Shaw says, "You can no more have forgiveness without vindictiveness than you can have a cure without a disease. You will never get a high morality from people who conceive that their misdeeds are revocable and pardonable, or in a society where absolution and expiation are officially provided for us all. The demand may be very real, but the supply is spurious." There is no God who sinks black pasts, blots out evil records, annihilates wicked deeds, and treats a devil as if he were an angel. He is a pure fiction of the schools. The only power with which we have to reckon is Nature, who cannot forgive because vindictiveness is not in her, and who cares not whether we swim or sink. All that she insists upon is obedience, and this many of us shall have to learn, if at all, by the things which we suffer.

J. T. LLOYD.

#### BREAK O' DAY.

The Christian fires die out. Through all our clime  
The sacrificial knives grow red with rust.  
And with a touch, powerful and firm as Time,  
The blood-stained altars crumble into dust.

The slavery of the soul long drags its chains,  
And faint the promise shines, and dim the day  
Till Truth's sweet smile hath kindled it; in vain  
Man's fiery zeal till Knowledge leads the way.

Slowly as children that first cross Life's floor,  
With patient, halting feet the way is trod,  
Until fair Knowledge opens wide the door  
And Man with freedom casts aside his god.

—Thomas Moulton.

#### "All Things Confess His Strength."

HE trembled at the rustle of a leaf. The murmur of the breeze sounded to his ear as the voice of an enemy in ambush. At the sight of the whirling stream that hurried to the sea he was smit with awe, and he kneeled to the Power of the Waters. A distant peal of thunder struck terror into his soul. When the sun set, life became a nightmare. The sun that sank low on the winter horizon seemed to presage the death of the world. If pain shot through a limb or an organ it was the malignant token of devils, and gloom and horror threatened him in the forms of the vulture and the serpent. Even love was transformed into torment, for when the woman, the child, the parent whom he cherished was dead, the pale ghost gibbered at the grave or sought menacing entry across the old threshold.

Such was the infant feebleness of Early Man. Nature stood over him as a despot, elephantine in strength, tigerish in spirit, a very giant of indifference or of majestic cruelty. He kindled fire, and it was stolen fire, and he shook at the sight of his courage. Every tool he made was a theft, and he quivered at his own broken speech, dreaded the magic of the very words he breathed, and dared not claim the invention of his crude music and chant.

"They gave me all I have," he whispered, and pointed to the forest where goat-faced Pan dwelt, and the heaven where the gods sat in council and feasted on nectar and set aside a few crumbs of bounty for the weakling Man.

Never did such timidity make such omnipotences. Who would have imagined that this poor worshiper who gave bull or lamb to the flames of the altar, and humbly begged for a little of the corn or the cattle he had himself reared, could have produced from his heart such mighty figures of divinity? This quaking wretch it was who placed Yahveh on Mount Seir amid the lightnings, and Zeus on the throne of Olympus, and Osiris on the seat of judgment, and Marduk in the radiance of the Sun, and Brahma in the illimitable field of the skies, and Allah in the mansion of the stars. This fearsome child of earth, cowed by his own dreams, nevertheless wove the very spells that affrighted him. He shaped a million devils with his cunning fingers, and peopled paradise with angels. He hung over the cauldron and the witches' broth of his seething ideas, and saw in its fume and lurid exhalations the outlines and misty forms of creeds and doctrines. Muttering endless incantations, uttering mystical thoughts with pain as of a woman in childbirth, he produced theocracies, churches, theologies, faiths, divine codes, divine dramas, divine epics, divine revelations, decretals, Bibles, the crashes of Apocalyptic thunder. And he bowed before his own gods. He knelt, he grovelled, he half rose, he cried a cry of defiance, he shouted a free thought, he cursed himself, he fell, he lay as one sick, he was delirious, he sprang to his feet and laid violent hands upon whatever appeared to threaten the authority of his gods, he paused, he doubted, he wept, he protested. At his right hand, his gods,—the reflection of his own soul—held over him the sceptre of monarchy. At his left hand the spirit of Fear chattered its teeth, and moaned that a step forward meant death and hell.

No rest; there was no rest for the spirit of Man. He watched Nature even out of the dungeon of his terror, out of the burning fiery furnace of his agonies and diseases. He gazed at things, mistook them, gazed again, counted, miscounted, weighed, misweighed, thought to find gold where only lead was, and made a false plan of stars and worlds, and swore with an oath that this was God's truth and eternal science. He repented; he observed again, and wrote and erased and re-wrote, and affirmed and denied, and spat in the face of fact, and then glorified the fact he had sought to abase. At length, he held in his hand a book,—a little book,—of the secrets of nature. And the Soul of Mighty Nature knew that the puny child was winning moves in the subtle



game. And the gods began to fade in the new light, and the spirit of Fear commenced to loose its grip on the shoulder of Man. And there was heard, in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of the human heart, the faint melody of a Hymn of Triumph.

The hero of a million defeats, he attempted to build up Home in a place of famine and frost, and a State in the planet that harbored wild beasts. The very apes and bees and beavers might have laughed at his efforts to found a family, a village, a city, a government, a society. The houses that he constructed were consumed in the fires of war. The babes he begot were cut in pieces by the bronze and iron of his own moulding, or sold into slavery by the fellow-men who alone could combine with him for the creation of republic, kingdom, empire, world-federation. Dreaming of peace and fraternity, he devised instruments of torture. Singing of love, he dragged the heretic to the cells of Justice and Freedom, he burned witches, cropped the ears of honest rebels, and decreed starvation to the teller of truth. Drunk with the glories of Heaven, he framed the hellish system of wage-slavery and sweating, and shrieked the blessings of his God into the gratings of prisons, and the dreary wards of workhouses.

But there was plot within plot, and wheel within wheel, and, amid the incessant hurly-burly of error and passion, the essential Spirit of Man had never stayed its operation. It had never rested in its quest for the Holy Grail of Love. Amid the storm of folly and devilry and anarchy, the child-mind of Humanity was meekly but unflinching spelling out the lessons of the True Life. It fashioned customs that made for health, laws that tended to order, manners that fostered chivalry, ideals that protected the child, and surrounded woman with respect, and extended pity to the outcast, and made a clear space for the proclaimer of new thought. The gods rose about the Man like a phalanx of infinite threat and warning; and the hand of Fear clutched nervously at his sleeve and bade him call a halt in his defiant progress.

But the blood of Man was up. The craven child of the early ages was become adult, and the lips that once quavered a deprecation at the altar now damned the admonitions of Fear and bade the gods begone. He that once crawled now strode. And he that once salaamed at the door of divinity now clapped the gates to, and bade theology lie in its temple for a tomb, and went out to survey the estate of his power.

The epic has been sung through its first canto. He that made gods will make new fates. He that laid the beams of heaven will plan the republics that will wave their ten thousand flags over the globe. He that shouted in war will sing in industry. He that commanded slaves will delight in serving the universal commonwealth. He that burdened the back of woman will give her the throne of the world's heart. He that crouched as a coward at the rustle of Nature's leaf will march as a conqueror of forces and a master of ever-gathering ideas.

"All things confess his strength," says Shelley. To be on the side of Humanity is to be on the side of music, beauty, poetry, science, co-operation, and love. Yes, of love that organises its life without God or King, and dismisses Fear, and celebrates its victory in the festival of a new social existence.

"All things confess his strength."

"The lightning is his slave, heaven's utmost deep Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on. The tempest is his steed: he strides the air. And the abyss shouts (from her depths laid bare), 'Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.'"

F. J. GOULD.

\* Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*.

## "Gipsy Smith" in Toronto.

For the fiftieth—or probably for the hundredth—time the citizens of Toronto have been "saved," from what remains a little mysterious, but we suppose the saved know what they have escaped, or may be lost. Gipsy Smith seems to be an exceptionally mild evangelist—he is not an orator, and he roars not at all, and his talk is very commonplace "Gospel" or Bible-class talk; but he has been abundantly advertised, the largest hall in Toronto was engaged, and tickets were entrusted to the church workers throughout the city for distribution among the "unsaved."

This last item gives the key to much of the "success" of the revival. Towards the close of the series of meetings there was something of a wrangle between Rev. Silcox, the Toronto preacher, and Gipsy Smith. Mr. Silcox said very few sinners had been brought to the penitents' bench, the fact being that the church workers, instead of distributing the tickets as they had promised to do, had retained them for themselves and their friends; and the Gipsy himself said he had seen the same crowd of faces so often that they were familiar to him. This clearly shows the dishonesty and selfishness of these Christian workers. Gipsy Smith, however, somewhat excused the dishonest workers, and said they were all the better for being converted so often; and if conversion could make them more honest they no doubt needed it.

Gipsy Smith made one good hit at his familiar Christian auditors. He said they needed saving, for though professing Christians and church workers, they had stolen four hundred of his hymn-books.

But the fact that Toronto needs to be "saved" so many times seems to us to show the utter uselessness of the saving. The evangelist comes, holds a dozen or two meetings, takes his pay for the excitement he has created, and the net result is—nil, so far as any perceptible moral improvement is concerned, but a strengthening among the church-goers of the ancient and barbarous notion of eternal torment, which is the great bugaboo used by the evangelist to frighten the weak-minded to the penitents' bench.—*Secular Thought*.

Philadelphia has two hundred million dollars' worth of property exempt from taxation. The largest untaxed holding is that of the University of Pennsylvania, valued at \$4,500,000. By some sort of graft the Masonic Temple, worth about two millions, escapes taxation. The other offenders are the churches. The Philadelphia *Record* mentions that a valuable property owned by a religious organisation is that of the Friends' Meeting House and Penn Charter School, on Twelfth-street below Market. Although a valuation of \$500,000 has been placed on it, it could probably be sold for more than \$1,000,000. St. John's church, Thirteenth-street above Chestnut, is valued at \$450,000, with its actual value more than double that amount. The Cathedral, on Logan-square, is estimated to be worth \$450,000. All the churches in the Rittenhouse-square section have high valuations placed on them. Holy Trinity, at Nineteenth and Walnut-streets, is appraised at \$350,000; St. Mark's, in Locust-street, above Sixteenth, at \$340,000; St. James, Twenty-second and Walnut-streets, \$250,000; the Second Presbyterian church, at Twenty-first and Walnut-streets, at \$280,000, and the First Baptist church, at Seventeenth and Sansom-streets, at \$240,000. The Academy of Notre Dame, on Nineteenth-street, below Walnut, is estimated to be worth \$350,000. The Rodeph Shalom Synagogue, at Broad and Mount Vernon streets, is valued at \$180,000, while the Temple of the Keneseth Israel congregation, on Broad-street above Columbia-avenue, is considered to be worth \$150,000. These are only a few of the wealthier churches. From the pulpits of churches worth from half a million to a million, preachers inveigh against what they call the "materialism" of the age and the mad pursuit of wealth. The pursuit is mad enough, truly, but the pursuers may at least plead that there is nothing inconsistent between their acts and their professions. They are out for the dollars, while the churches are out for souls and not for filthy lucre, but, nevertheless, have gained fewer souls than dollars. The churches increase their wealth faster than they do their membership. They would eject a man or sue him if he defaulted in his pew-rent; but themselves are defaulters in the matter of taxes, which are to a municipality what the pew-rents are to a church. Claiming immunity as charitable institutions, how few of them disburse as much in charity as they take from the city and State in the way of exemptions! The remitted taxes of church property in Philadelphia or New York, if paid into a fund, and honestly administered, would relieve all of the suffering resulting from actual poverty in the two cities.—*Truthseeker* (New York).



## Acid Drops.

There seems reason for believing that Professor Ferrer is included among the prisoners at Montjuich. English papers even are referring to him as "the man who was connected with the attempt against the King's life on his wedding day." Ferrer was "connected" with that crime only in the sense that he was accused of complicity in it by persons who wanted to get rid of him. He was tried—and acquitted. The Court of Justice at Madrid had to declare that he had no connection with the crime whatever. Professor F. T. Del Marmol well says that Ferrer is hated by the all-powerful clergy "because he is spending the whole of his fortune in building popular rationalist schools in Spain." If he really is in the fortress of Montjuich as a prisoner he may be tortured or killed. No wonder Professor Del Marmol is concerned about him, for he himself was once a prisoner in Montjuich and narrowly escaped the infamous tortures which many of his fellow prisoners underwent. One of those tortures was of a character which can hardly be mentioned in print.

Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham, who knows his Spain thoroughly, writes to the *Daily News* explaining to Mr. Nevinson why the Barcelona rioters "instead of sacking the town, burned down churches and convents." "After a lifetime's experience of the country," Mr. Graham has no hesitation in saying that "religion is hated by the lower classes in Spain, and priests and nuns loathed." The Spaniard "is not as a rule a robber," but "the hatred of religion as religion is very general amongst the poor classes in Spain to-day." We have already expressed our suspicion that Mr. Nevinson is not ignorant of this fact—only he hasn't Mr. Graham's freedom to say so.

More pious riots amongst the rival Christians at Liverpool. How they love one another! And the great George Wise is doing time. We congratulate the Queen of the Mersey on her noble martyr. We only hope they won't give him the crown. George ought to buy a suit of armor. It would be better still, perhaps, if he kept from annoying his fellow Christians, called Catholics, in the public thoroughfares.

Holbein and Co. have once more failed to swim the Channel. It seems as if the great exploit of Captain Webb would never be repeated. The only way to equal his record may be a supernatural one. Jesus Christ walked on the water, and he said that those who believed in him should do more wonderful works than he had done himself. Here is a chance, then, for the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Bishop of London, or General Booth, or Dr. Clifford, or even the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Let one of these reverend gentlemen go forth in the strength of the Lord. Prayer will do instead of oiling, and hymns instead of bovril and sandwiches; and if the Channel-crosser shows signs of sinking, like Peter, a Salvation Army band on a boat ought to wake him up. You can't sleep near a Salvation Army band, though you may wish ever so much that you could.

The Bishop of Norwich has been describing death as "a fair angel sent by a merciful Father on an errand of life and mercy to translate the soul from the tired body to the paradise of God." "Death," he added, "is only one incident in our lives, and we are best through it. It is only moving from one of God's apartments into another." Curiously enough, his lordship asked his hearers to pray for the recovery of the Dean of Norwich, who was lying seriously ill. So much for the Bishop's consistency! So much, some people would say, for his sincerity! Directly the "fair angel" appears the good Christians try to give him the slip; they really don't want to "get through it"; and as for the next apartment, they would keep out of it for centuries.

The Bishop's and the congregation's prayers did not keep their sick brother in his old "apartment." Dean Lefroy died within twenty-four hours. We wonder what his new "apartment" is like. We shall know better, perhaps, when we see the probate announcement.

Heaven must be in a great flutter over the arrival of Dean Lefroy—if we may judge by the sermons preached on his death last Sunday in Norwich and other East Anglian pulpits. One preacher pictured him as having been "welcomed by crowds of beautiful spirits" and "surrounded by multitudes" of the inhabitants of Paradise. We are assured that he is now "personally associated with his glorious Savior." We suppose he is on the celestial Privy Council.

The preacher's words can hardly mean less than that. But the Lord only knows how the preacher knows it.

Dr. Clifford praises the Budget for its Christianity. It is a Budget after God's own heart, a thoroughly Christian Budget. As Dr. Clifford pretends to be on such intimate terms with the Deity, perhaps he will be so kind as to explain to us why all former Budgets were allowed to be so far below the Christian standard. If Christ is the king of men, why has he waited two thousand years to inspire a Chancellor of the Exchequer to prepare a righteous Budget? If Mr. Lloyd George's Bill is a Christian product, what a tragic failure the Christian religion has been.

General Booth is an orthodox theologian, but he has his lucid intervals. "We are all criminals," he said at one place during his recent tour, "the only difference being that those inside the prisons have been found out, and those outside haven't." We suppose the old fellow includes himself. At another place he said: "Punishment, punishment, punishment, it is always punishment; but there is no merit in pain to change the human heart, and that is what we must do if we wish to reclaim the criminal classes." This is what Freethinkers have been saying, substantially, for many years. General Booth says it as the clock is nearly striking twelve. Yet although he finds that punishment is a wrong method, he believes and teaches that God will punish most of his own creatures for ever and ever, without a chance of improvement or a hope of relief.

Sabbatarianism is sometimes a very funny thing—especially in Scotland; witness the following story told in the *Daily Chronicle*. Two Englishmen took refuge from the rain in a small country hotel; after lunch they went into the billiard-room and played a game; but in came the landlord, in a very drunken condition, upbraiding them for their unseemly conduct, and insisting on their leaving the billiard-room. The explanation was given by the apologetic landlady. Her husband always got drunk on Sundays, but he had got drunk on Thursday for once, and force of habit made him believe it was Sunday. He thought they were playing billiards on the blessed Sabbath.

Talking about the Scottish Sabbath, we all know from Buckle's great work, if from nothing else, what a horrid thing it was two and three hundred years ago. Even in the early eighteenth century, according to another authority, the state of affairs was bad enough. "Sometimes the minister himself," this writer says, "when he got a colleague to preach for him, would make the rounds, accompanied by an elder, to spy with his own eyes the sins of the absentees [from kirk]. Here one man is found romping with his bairns; another, as the minister peeped through the window, was detected kissing his wife; two men were found drinking ale; and one was found with his coat off, as if he were going to work; and still another was seen eating a hearty dinner. All were pulled up before the session or the kirk, and repentance forced upon each." Good old days in godly Scotland! It was this sort of thing which led Heine to say that the Scotsmen were Jews born in the north—who ate pork.

Portrush piety is up in arms against the Sunday Concerts in the Pavilion. They are "sacred" concerts, but that fact doesn't matter to the bigots, and especially to the men of God, who object to free trade in public entertainments on the Lord's Day—which means their day. We see that a protest meeting was held the other afternoon on Ramore Hill under the auspices of the Portrush Evangelistic Mission. One of the speakers declared his firm belief that the "motive at the back of these concerts was purely a financial one." Not wholly, perhaps; but what harm, after all, is there in a financial motive? What motive is it that animates the great majority of these gentlemen in the clerical profession? Are they not after all the money they can get? How many of them would be in the profession if there were no money in it? As to the concerts being "illegal" that all depends on circumstances. It is easy enough to bring them within the bounds of legality. We hope the citizens of Portrush who love music and freedom, even on Sundays, will not be bluffed out of their rights by these dog-in-the-manger Sabbatarians.

A little girl was charged the other day at Westminster Police-court with begging. She carried a collecting-box belonging to some institution, but confessed that she meant to appropriate the money to her own use. The *Methodist Times* draws from this the moral that boxes should only be entrusted to authorised hands. With so many institutions that abuse the gifts of the charitable public, the moral does



not strike us as a very impressive one. Whether the money goes into the pockets of individual collectors, or, as often happens, into the pockets of officials, is not a distinction of great public importance. The important moral is the evil of entrusting children with collecting cards or boxes for any purpose whatsoever. Nothing could be worse for children—short of teaching them to steal—than to send them from door to door, or parading the streets, soliciting money. And in this matter religious organisations are grievous offenders. Many churches and chapels even go so far as to offer prizes for the child who succeeds in collecting the largest sum of money. If all people would resolutely decline to give money to children, no matter the purpose for which it is solicited, the churches would soon alter their tactics. Nothing would so quickly convince our spiritual guides of the evil of the practice as the recognition that it did not pay.

It is evident from an article in the *United Methodist Magazine* by the Rev. S. Pollard, who has done missionary work among the Mios, that these people often show what Christianity must have meant to the credulous Christians of long ago. Some of them got deeply bitten with the craze about the second coming of Christ. Definite dates were fixed upon when he might be expected, and the true believers in the prophecy "neglected their farm work and gave themselves up to singing and waiting for Jesus. One party betook themselves to a loft, and with lighted lamps or torches stayed up all night expecting the King every moment." These poor people, however, were apparently not as foolish as the Christians who go on believing in spite of every disillusionment. As date after date passed, and Christ did not arrive, many of them "gave it all up." Mr. Pollard puts it that they "returned to the blackness and despair of the old life," but that is written from *his* point of view, not from *theirs*. They returned, in fact, to their old ancestor worship, in which Mr. Pollard admits that "there was something certain," and provided at least "a link with the generations who had gone."

An American minister, the Rev. W. R. Newell, complains that "It is easier to preach the Gospel in Shanghai than in London." He says that in London Mr. R. J. Campbell "denies penalty, denies the atonement, denies the deity of Christ." You cannot talk to a cabby or a 'bus-driver about his soul but that he says, "Don't you know Mr. Campbell at the City Temple has disposed of all that?" The picture of the situation has all the customary exaggeration of a religion story, but it expresses a certain view. We have no doubt but that Mr. Newell could, to the class of Chinamen likely to have listened to him in Shanghai, preach his gospel with much greater ease than in London. But it is quite a mistake to attribute this to Mr. Campbell. Mr. Campbell is little more than a species of barometer useful for indicating the pressure of modern thought on orthodox religious opinions, and his is only one of the names that may be cited as evidencing to what extent Freethought has made headway even in the pulpit. And what Mr. Campbell is saying—shocking as it is to the orthodox world—is only a faint echo of what really robust thinkers accept as true. For these, Christianity as a system of definite doctrines is played out. It is only protected from a complete exposure to the crowd by the use of vague and meaningless generalities. And one day these, too, will have outlived their serviceableness, and then will come the deluge.

Mr. Campbell, by the way, thinks it unlikely that there are as many people who disbelieve in a future life now as there were in the mid-Victorian era. We imagine the wish is father to the thought. At any rate, while there is, of course, nothing in the shape of figures to go upon, reflection and experience seem to point in the opposite direction. It is true that some forty years ago our leading scientific men were more outspoken on the subject, while to-day they are silent. But, in a way, their silence is more eloquent than their speech, for the condition of thought that induces them to be silent would encourage them to speak if any evidence were available. But, so far as the mass of the people are concerned, there seems little doubt as to the waning of belief in that quarter. Freethought is to-day immensely more widespread than ever it was before, and even the growth of the modern labor movement, with the concentration of attention on social problems, is a sign of the waning interest in an after life.

Mr. Campbell admits that few people pay any attention to the idea of a Judgment Day and an actual resurrection from the dead, but he does not realise that the more attenuated form of the belief in a future life—such as he himself advocates—is a mere survival of the cruder form. It is, in fact, a stage in the process of disappearance. Religious beliefs do not come to maturity in a day, and they do not disappear in

a day. Their decay is gradual, and during the process they assume increasingly attenuated forms. Between the after-world of the primitive savage and Mr. Campbell's own conception of a future life there is an unbroken connection, the various stages between the two extremes representing the pressure of the various accretions of knowledge on a primitive superstition. And the last stage rests upon no other and no stronger foundation than the first. Ingenious apologetics may delay the recognition of this truth, but it cannot destroy it.

Mr. R. J. Campbell's logic is still on the down grade. A lady, "having watched a beloved father through a long illness which terminated in death, recognising the inevitableness of the issue, could not at the time pray for his recovery, or even for the alleviation of his sufferings." The effect of this experience upon the lady is that, for her, "the force of prayer is gone." Mr. Campbell informs her that "the very acceptance of the dreaded blow was a prayer," and that her "loving solicitude and care was a prayer." What wicked trifling with words. The woman says: "I did not pray; reason stifled the cry of faith." Mr. Campbell retorts, "You *did* pray; your devoted services to your dying father were a prayer." What next?

The *Christian World* is angry with Mr. Hall Caine for a wonder. He is getting positively too kind to Mohammedanism. He would actually "check, if not suppress, Christian missionary propagandism" in Egypt and the Soudan. Whereupon the *C. W.* remarks, in a high and haughty manner, that "Lord Kitchener and Lord Cromer know as much about Egypt and Moslemism as Mr. Hall Caine, and they permitted and even encouraged the establishment of missionary work and Christian education by institutions at Khartoum." We confess we do not understand this reference to Lord Kitchener. Complaint was made again and again that he would not allow missionaries to work in the Soudan. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury joined in the remonstrance against this "high-banded" interference with "the work of Christ." As to Khartoum, the *C. W.* is clearly wrong. Lord Kitchener raised £100,000 to establish the Gordon College there, and he deliberately provided against the introduction of Christianity or Christian teachers. Which shows that he is a man of affairs and not a zealot.

The reference to Lord Kitchener is bad enough, but the *C. W.* goes one worse. It says that Christian missionary work is necessary "if only for the purification of Mohammedanism." Which is enough to make a well-informed person shiver at the writer's ignorance—or impudence. But that is not all. "The people who know," the *C. W.* says, "declare that it is the infusion of Christian humanitarianism and ideas of liberty and equality into Turkish Mohammedanism that created the force which has set Turkey on the path of progress." The people who know! Who are they? The people at the *C. W.* office, of course. They know. They know a good deal more than is true. The leaders of the Young Turk party learnt something else than "Christian humanitarianism" at Paris. Liberty and equality they might have learnt there. They couldn't possibly have learnt it from any Christian book or Christian teacher.

The fact is that professional Christians are getting waxy over the splendid behavior of the Young Turks. What right have Mohammedans to act in that way? What business have they to falsify all the statements and prophecies of Christian missionaries? It is positively shameful. People will begin to think that Christianity does not possess all the truth and all the virtues. And a thought like that is simply shocking. Yes, after all, the *Christian World* has our sympathy. We know how it must suffer.

It was openly regretted by many of the English papers, at the time when the late Sultan was deposed, that the leaders of the Young Turks were anything but religious. Like the Japanese, the Young Turks were quite willing to take as much of Western science and progressive science as suited them. But they left Western religion severely alone. Moreover, when we look at the condition of pious Spain and holy Russia, the talk of Christian humanitarianism and ideals of liberty becomes quite farcical. The Mohammedan religion does provide a machinery for the deposition of a ruler that abuses his trust. It also teaches explicitly that a ruler is to be selected on grounds of public utility and social fitness alone. Christianity provides no such safeguards. It teaches submission to established authority; its Churches encourage, as they once openly preached, unquestioning obedience to the king; and for those who revolt there are Christian prisons and a Christian soldiery to teach the world what Christian ideals



of humanitarianism and liberty are really worth. The only two countries that have within recent years accomplished a peaceful revolution—Japan and Turkey—are both non-Christian. Russia and Spain are examples in the other direction.

Cardinal Gibbons wants religion taught in all the public schools in the United States of America. He says it is the only guarantee of honesty. Some people, however, don't agree with him. A credit clerk expresses a different view in a letter to the *New York World*. "I am," he says, "at the head of the credit department of a large manufacturing business. Daily I am called upon to decide whether we shall give credit or not to over a hundred new customers. I never take into consideration the religious views of these customers. I want to know if they are honest, if they are thrifty, if they have enough capital. They might have been educated in doctrines and beliefs from their earliest childhood without influencing my mind in their favor. In fact, some of the worst frauds we have on our books are of the sanctimonious sort."

Feelers are being thrown out for another Torrey Mission in this country. It is said that the brazen Yankee libeller of his own countrymen is to be invited over here to save souls (few of which can be as "lost" as his own) for a couple of years. Nonsense is talked about "the great success" of his mission a few years ago. The London part of it, anyhow, was very far from being a success. It was a considerable failure. London was a fatal place for Dr. Torrey. He had to meet our pamphlet exposing his infamous libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. He had also to meet Mr. Stead's sharp criticism based upon our pamphlet. And if he comes to London he will have to meet these things again; for he cleared off without expressing regret for his dirty slanders. We shall give him no peace if he dishonors England again with his presence. Creatures like Torrey suggest the exclamation of Emilia concerning the wretch who slandered Desdemona.

How many times we have said, during the past thirty years, that if Jesus was a superhuman personage he cannot possibly be our exemplar. How can we imitate a God? How can the sinful imitate the sinless? The idea is absurd. And the absurdity of it is now being perceived by the New Theology people, who are simply Christians somewhat infected with the spirit of Freethought. One of their prominent advocates, in the leading article in their weekly organ, expresses himself as follows:—

"If it was by reason of superhuman elements in him that Jesus saw what he did, then his visions can have no meaning for us who are not superhuman; if it was by reason of some superhuman elements in him that he became what he was, then his ideal cannot be ours. The theorists who put the fundamental element in the consciousness of Jesus somewhere outside the pale of humanity, slay him for the world far more effectually than ever his enemies did."

Precisely. This is only a less pointed way of saying what we have always said. Now Theologians steal our thunder and advertise new fireworks. But we don't mind. They push some of our ideas about—and that's all right. Isn't it?

Lord Provost Wilson, of Aberdeen, has confessed why the local clergy were not allowed representatives on the governing body of the Technical College. He has been driven into explaining that it was considered that the new Board would get on better without the ministers. He did not care to tell the Presbytery so, and therefore kept silent, but as they have forced his hand he now lets them know the truth. He says that he finds it very difficult to get on with ministers, and he is sorry he cannot admit that all of them are men of liberal education. They know now.

Reginald John Charles Julian, the Truro divinity student who committed suicide because he had not passed his B.D. examination at King's College, left a letter for his father in which he said "I go to a life beyond human conception." He was not an Atheist, anyhow; yet, according to Talmage, Torrey, and such preachers, it is Atheism that leads men to self-destruction.

Rev. A. E. Foster, vicar of St. Luke's, Preston, divorced his wife and wanted to marry again. Preparations were made for the nuptial ceremony to take place in his own church, but the Bishop of Manchester intervened to prevent it, and it has been indefinitely postponed. The poor parson has a right to marry again under the law of the State, but the State Church refuses to recognize his right. It is a nice dilemma. Either the State or the State Church will have to go to the wall.

The *Daily Chronicle* will have to look after its paragraph writers. One of them stated the other day that "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor" is a "Biblical injunction that is ignored by practically every Christian." It went on to say that "to act upon it is considered evidence of insanity" in Anstralia. The Melbourne Hospital has been applied to by the Master in Lunacy for the return of £1,150 donated to the institution by a gentleman who "wished to denude himself of his estate in accordance with the dictates of Scripturo." This is very interesting. It would be still more interesting if our contemporary would answer this question: "If it is insanity to follow the teaching of Jesus, what was the state of mind of the teacher himself?"

When the hot weather came at last it came with a vengeance. "Providence" seems like a rusty old weather-cock, which refuses to move as long as possible, and finally lurches round to the other side of the compass. It has been far worse in America. The New York people have been wanting to go to hell to cool off.

Rev. Dr. J. Warschauer ought really to be above the kitchen-garden Christian Evidence lecturer's cry of "Where's yer ospitals?" In last week's *Christian World* he said: "When our Ethicists and Agnostics can show us the hospitals they have built, the orphanages they have founded, the philanthropies they have called into being, we shall take their claims to give us something better than Christianity more seriously than we do at present." One would think that Christians were the only people who subscribed to hospitals, orphanages, and other philanthropies. Take the case of hospitals. They are not built by Christians as Christians. They are built by citizens as citizens—and it is high time that they were all supported and controlled by the municipalities. What the Christians do is characteristic. They monopolise the management of these institutions. They make them places of Christian bigotry and proselytism. Christian chaplains are paid to worry the patients into the kingdom of heaven. The very nurses have to be Christian worshippers. Nurses who happen to be Freethinkers, and let it be known, are chased out of the hospitals. We have known many such cases. For an applicant to say that she is a Freethinker would be to ensure her rejection. That is what the Christians do for the hospitals—confound them!

We beg Dr. Warschauer to consider these facts. James Lick, who built and endowed the great Lick Observatory, was a Freethinker. He also built the Paine Memorial Hall at Boston. Stephen Girard, the founder of the great Girard College, was a Freethinker. He ordered that no minister of religion was to enter the premises on any pretence whatever. But the Christians have got hold of the Trust; they operate it themselves, being in the majority; they have actually set up a chair of divinity in the College; and when they are asked if this is honest they laugh. That is what the Christians have done for Girard College. And we wonder if Dr. Warschauer is proud of the fact.

We may conclude by telling Dr. Warschauer that Freethinkers are after something else than charity. They are after justice. They are sick of the everlasting Christian collecting-box.

#### A DEFINITION.

Tommy: "Pop, what is retribution?"  
Popley: "Retribution, my son, is something we are sure will eventually overtake other people."

#### UNLUCKY NUMBER.

Minister's Wife: "Do you think the hairs in the head are numbered?"  
Clerical Husband: "Certainly I do."  
Minister's Wife: "Well, I've got dark hair and here's a blonde one on your coat; what number is that, do you suppose?"  
Clerical Husband: "I reckon that's No. 13."

#### APPROPRIATE.

A clergyman went to have his teeth fixed by a dentist. When the work was done the dentist declined to accept more than a nominal fee. The parson, in return for this favor, insisted later on the dentist accepting a volume of the reverend gentleman's own writing. It was a disquisition on the Psalms, and on the fly leaf he had to inscribe this appropriate inscription: "And my mouth shall show forth thy praise."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 5, 12, 19, 26, St. James's Hall, London.  
 October 3, Glasgow; 10, Leicester; 17, 24, and 31, St. James's Hall, London.  
 November 7, Manchester; 14, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £231 6s. 6d. Received since.—W. P. Kennedy, £1; D. J. D., 10s.; C. J., £1; R. E., 10s.

THE "BLASPHEMY" DEFENCE FUND.—C. J., 5s.

THE BOULTER FUND.—We have received;—C. J., 5s.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—See paragraph. Thanks.

W. P. KENNEDY, subscribing to the President's Fund says: "Your paper seems to improve with each issue."

D. McLEAN.—Will be useful. Thanks.

G. LEADER.—Have handed it over to our shop manager for best attention. We do not issue a weekly contents sheet, but we have a standing poster. Thanks for your effort to promote our circulation.

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

H. E. VOIGT.—Report already in hand. Pleased to see your letter in *Morning Leader*.

A. E. STRINGER.—The cutting is amusing, but a bit off our beat. More amused (and pleased) to read of your efforts to promote our circulation in "the wilds of Co. Clare."

J. BOWEN.—Shall be sent.

H. J. WEDLAKE.—Thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter. We have often said that our readers could do much privately to extend our circulation.

ELIZABETH LECHMERE writes: "We Anti-Vivisectionists will be for ever grateful to you for your splendid article."

R. CHAPMAN.—Tuesday morning is too late. Next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

London Freethinkers will remember the Sunday evening lectures (under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd.) at the beautiful new St. James's Hall during September and October. This is, of course, a daring enterprise, and we hope the party will give it their energetic support, both by attending the lectures themselves and by securing the attendance of as many as possible of their friends and acquaintances. They might also circulate the neat printed announcements which can be obtained from Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Mr. Foote delivers the four lectures in September; he will be followed by Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd, and he will then conclude the course in October.

Mr. N. J. Evans has started open-air lecturing at Seven Sisters' Corner, Tottenham, on Sunday evenings at 7 o'clock. Good audiences gather, and the gospel of Freethought is listened to attentively. Mr. Evans thinks a working N. S. S. Branch could be established at Tottenham, and perhaps also at Enfield.

The Wood Green Branch is carrying on successful outdoor meetings this summer. They are held on Sunday mornings at a spot known by the not too delectable name of Spouters' Corner.

But the Freethinkers can't help its name. The Branch secretary, Mr. W. Stewart, 117 Langham-road, West Green, desires us to ask all the local "saints" to join the Branch and help forward its work.

"Abracadabra's" articles on "The Narratives in Genesis" are being produced, with proper acknowledgment, in the *Searchlight* (Waco, Texas).

"Anti-Infidel" work seems to pay. We understand that it has brought the Rev. J. A. Douglas the living of St. Luke's, Peckham, and we suppose North London will know him no more. The reverend gentleman is announced to debate at Clapham Common this afternoon (Aug. 22) at 3.15 with Mr. Boulter on "Is There a God?"

Mr. G. Bernard Shaw writes us with respect to the paragraph in last week's "Acid Drops." "The *Clarion*," he says, "which ought to know better, seems to be the responsible party for the statement commented on in the *Freethinker*. I give you what was actually said, both question and answer, from the verbatim note. You will find it enclosed on a separate slip. You will see that there was no 'should' in the matter at all." The following is the passage from the verbatim report:—

"Question.—Should you consider that things which all mankind admit as grossly indecent should be prohibited or stopped from performance?"

Answer.—Well, you know, there is nothing which all mankind would consider grossly indecent. But I think you must accept as a necessary thing that there are certain things which the community will not tolerate. Even with the strongest conviction that you must allow liberty of speech and liberty of conscience, there are certain things which would create an irresistible demand to have them prosecuted under the ordinary law dealing with blasphemy or obscenity. But I contend that the ordinary laws, so far from not being stringent enough, are, on the contrary, far too stringent, especially the blasphemy laws, which would put us all in prison if carried out."

It is perfectly clear that, as we hoped, Mr. Shaw was misreported. He did not say that there *should* be blasphemy prosecutions, but something very much to the contrary.

"As a matter of fact," Mr. Shaw continues in his letter to us, "the really good point about the blasphemy laws is that they say nothing about blasphemy (if I recollect aright) but do satisfactorily and definitely lay down the particular points of doctrine that you must not deny. This may be an oppressive law; and the things which it punishes you for denying may be falsehoods; but it is not bad law in the technical sense. Under it you know where you are. You may utter an appalling, heartbreaking, and elaborate blasphemy like King Lear, or you may express some scepticism as to the efficacy of prayers for rain; but you cannot in either case be prosecuted under the statutory blasphemy laws. Under some of the American laws, as under our censorship, the judge may pronounce any mortal thing that a human being can utter, to be blasphemy, and any conceivable action to be indecency. I had to rub this into the Select Committee. My point was that I was willing to come under the law, but not to come under the caprice of an individual. If Blanco Posnet is blasphemous, if Mrs. Warren is obscene, then prosecute me for blasphemy or obscenity if you like; but do not put it into the power of a single irresponsible man to prevent these plays being performed because he does not happen to like them." On the last point we are at one with Mr. Shaw: the censorship is an absurdity, and the prohibition of his last two plays is a positive imbecility. There is no other word for it. Mr. Shaw is right, too, with regard to the Statute concerning "blasphemy." It does lay down what you are not to deny or dispute—and it lays down nothing else. But it is different with the Common Law of Blasphemy, which is now laid down as not concerning itself at all with the matter, but only with the manner, of attacks on Christianity. This gives the judge and jury the power to say that "any mortal thing a human being can utter" is blasphemy.

### The Boulter Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £19 14s. 6d.—Greevz Fisher, 5s.; C. Bridger, 3s.; R. Miles, 2s.; M. Quidet, 5s.; G. J. Lang, 1s.; G. L. Simmonds, 1s.; Hon. Ernest Pomeroy, £1; P. R. Domoney, 1s.—N. J. EVANS (Hon. Treasurer), 122 City-road, E.C.



## Some Ingersoll Letters.

By consent of the Ingersoll family, the *Truthseeker* (New York) publishes, in its issue dated July 24, a number of letters from the pen of the late Colonel Ingersoll, and some from the pens of distinguished correspondents of his, including Walt Whitman and Bjornstjerne Bjornson. Nearly all very interesting, and we congratulate our contemporary on its good fortune, which we have no hesitation in sharing.

The first letter is from Bjornson, who is the greatest figure in Norwegian literature since the death of Ibsen:—

“Paris, rue Faraday 15, Nov. 1, 1884.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, ESQ.

My Dear Sir,—

I am flattered and delighted at having received your letter and your splendid book, the handsomest in my library. It contains many powerful and heavily loaded words, each of which is sufficient to give the priest a staggering blow. On your account I also (innocent as I was!) got into a squabble with a priest not long ago. Then I wrote that I was glad that Robert G. Ingersoll had got a priest more in his triumphal procession. Like the eagle, when he has plundered the raven's nest, satisfied and quiet he sails away, followed by the screaming, furious ravens.

You see, one cannot touch against you without himself becoming eloquent. The priest also was eloquent!

I admire free America, where a man can stand forth and say to the Church what you have said in your book. In Northern Europe would a man therefore be placed in prison. With us, the eloquence of the priest is upheld by that of the prison. It is quite suitable that their work for the kingdom of God should have hell for its support. The current of sentiment within the Church which forces the priests to protest against having the help both of prisons and of hell, while they preach communion with God's eternal love as the highest in existence and wish to leave this to speak with his own power—this current is already great with you; with us it has scarcely yet appeared.

Your lectures and books have helped many of our countrymen in America to freedom, and these have since helped many in their old home. It is this which in a natural way has led to the commencement of translations of your works among us; but, of course, in a smothered European form, so as to get past the police, the statutes, the prisons. The old monarchies and their worthy ally, the State Church, could scarcely longer exist if books like yours should go freely about in their natural American form.

I am very sorry that, when I was in America, I did not have the opportunity to grasp the hand of a man who with the sword fought to free from bodily slavery three millions of people, and who has shown the way to intellectual freedom to many millions more.

In respect and friendship,

BJORN. BJORNSON.”

The next letter is from Ingersoll himself on Victor Hugo's magnificent *Les Miserables*—one of the great books of the nineteenth century.

DEAR PALMER,—

“New York, Dec. 30, 1885.

I send you the greatest novel in the world—a novel filled with philosophy, beauty, pathos—with all that is tender, heroic, and dramatic. You will find all the lights and shadows that fall upon the heart—all the buds and blossoms, and all the withered leaves, that belong to Hope and Memory.

This novel goes over the whole field of human experience—war, religion, politics, love, government, crime, punishment, education, history, and prophecy. It is filled with the divine—that is to say, with pity, with love. The good bishop, the sublime convict, the pure “sister Simplicio, the purer Fantino—all these contradictions, are higher forms of truth.

No man can read this book without becoming much better or much worse. This great light will either illumine the soul, or deepen the shadow.

You will read it with wonder and tears.

You will finish it with a sigh.

R. G. INGERSOLL.”

We recollect that Ingersoll subsequently called “Ouida's” *Ariadne* the greatest novel in the English language; but few, we imagine, would endorse his judgment in that case. Jove nods, and Ingersoll himself was not infallible—as he would have cheer-

fully admitted. We think, however, that no man could praise *Les Miserables* too highly. But whether it is the greatest novel in the world is a question which there is no court to decide.

The next letter of Ingersoll's which we reproduce is in a very different vein:—

“JOHN LYLE KING, ESQ., Chicago, Ill.

My Dear Sir,—

I have read your *Fishing on the Nipigon*, and in it find new evidence that it is impossible for theologians to tell the truth about fish. Your bishop claims to have caught a fish weighing six and a half pounds, and yet, when it is opened, it is found filled with stones! This brings to mind the Jonah story, and the celebrated fish in the Apocrypha whose burning liver drove the Devil from the bridal chamber—not to mention the two small fishes that masqueraded with the five loaves, and the fish used by Christ as a pocketbook in which money was carried to pay the taxes. Oh, yes! There appears to be a connection direct between fish and faith. You know that the first is an emblem of Jesus Christ. God has always taken great care of fish! When he killed all the other animals with a general flood, the fish were left, so to speak, in clover. From this I conclude that fish were the only animals not touched or tainted by original sin—the only things God ever made that exactly suited him—and for this reason fish is considered a holy food, allowed to be eaten on the most holy days. For this reason, too, the apostles were fishermen, and their successors, even to the present day, are a scaly set. Hoping that you will have time to follow this subject to a conclusion,

I remain, yours as ever,

R. G. INGERSOLL.”

This is followed by a letter from Walt Whitman, dated Dec. 15, 1891. The letter itself is of no importance, except for its casual acknowledgment of Ingersoll's “noble help” in the shape of 900 dollars resulting from “the Philadelphia lecture” that he had given for the old poet's benefit.

The next letter is dated Feb. 2, 1897, rather more than a couple of years before Ingersoll's death. It was written to a Christian minister who had apparently favored the great Freethinker with a sermon:—

“MY DEAR MR. HASKETT,—

I received and read the sermon, and thank you for your kindness.

The truth is that I have no desire to be a Christian—no desire to be ‘saved.’ I have no fear as to the future, and care nothing about gods.

I am satisfied that we can find nothing about origin or destiny, and consequently we should turn our attention to this life. We should be ambitious to be useful—to be happy ourselves and to make others so. There may be another life, and if there is, and it is good, so much the better.

All this talk about Christ being God—about the fall of man, the atonement, and the redemption of true believers, is to me nothing but superstition.

I know that good men believe these things and good men reject them.

After all, the best way is for each man to live to his ideal and be of real use to himself and others.

I feel that you are actuated by kindness, and therefore thank you.—Yours truly,

R. G. INGERSOLL.”

Two letters, from the young son of James G. Blaine, and from Ingersoll to Anton Seidl, a musical conductor whom he much admired, are of greater interest to American than to English readers. A letter to an old friend at Peoria, who had written Ingersoll (in 1890) “in reference to the Baptist church” there, contains the following:—

“You say it is nearly completed, with the exception of the roof. I do not see why there should be any roof on a Baptist church. You believe in salvation by water, and why they should fight the ‘means of grace’ with a roof is beyond my comprehension.”

Ingersoll proposes as a motto for the Baptist church:—

“The wetter  
The better.”

So wise and humane a man as Ingersoll was sure to be profoundly opposed to the “lynching” spirit, which is the greatest disgrace to America. Nothing can justify or excuse it. It is sheer race hatred masquerading



as justice. Ingersoll had read an article by a journalist on "Race War in the South," and he wrote thanking the writer for it, and giving his own opinion of mobs—even white mobs:—

"The mob is the danger that threatens the republic. Every civilized citizen should do all in his power to destroy the wild-beast spirit that causes and animates the mob. No decent human being ever acted with or justified a mob. The mob is savagery in its lowest and most hideous form. The mob is an aggregation of hyenas, cobras, vipers, and vultures—of all that is malicious, revengeful, cruel, and infamous.

The mob is a heartless hypocrite. The mob in the name of law tramples all law under foot, and in the name of justice burns, butchers, and tortures.

Down with the mob!

Cruelty is the soil in which all crimes grow. Cruelty is savagery.

Down with the mob!"

The Ingersoll letters are followed by "Recollections of Ingersoll" from the pen of Lemuel K. Washburn, who was editor of the brave old (now defunct) *Boston Investigator*. Mr. Washburn went with Ingersoll to Morristown, New Jersey, when he defended C. B. Reynolds against an indictment for "blasphemy." The peccant passages in Mr. Reynolds's lecture were really taken by him from a *Freethinker* article by Mr. Foote entitled "A Baby God." Ingersoll delivered a magnificent speech, but it was wasted on the "respectable" wooden-headed jury, who found the defendant "guilty." But the judge only fined him twenty-five dollars and costs—about forty-five dollars in all, we believe,—which Ingersoll paid himself, satirically observing before he left the Court that he was sorry to see that God Almighty's character had fallen to such a low value in New Jersey. Mr. Washburn adds—what we did not know, or did not recollect—that Ingersoll urged his full right to six peremptory challenges of the jury. The foreman of the jury, who was a baker, admitted having read Mr. Reynolds's lecture and thrown it into the fire. He was excused. So were five others. Even when the panel was complete, Ingersoll asked the Court if he might ask the jury as a whole one question. His request being granted, he put this to them: "If there is a man upon the jury who does not belong to some church, will he stand up?" Not one left his seat. Thereupon the Colonel turned to the Judge and said: "I see, your Honor, that I must try my case before the Church instead of the Court." When the fine and costs had to be paid, Ingersoll said that he would pay the bill himself "if his cheque was good in New Jersey, though his religion was not."

### An Innocent on Shakespeare.

"It is always the people who read Dickens who imagine that Bacon wrote Shakespeare." In these ironic words a lady once summed up the Bacon-Shakespeare nonsense. It is obviously the people who know neither the works of Shakespeare nor Bacon who are so cocksure that Shakespeare has no claim to his own work.

America, which is the breeding-ground of cranks, has produced many ardent "Baconians," and it is therefore fitting that Mark Twain, the arch-humorist, should have his say upon this matter. In his latest volume, *Is Shakespeare Dead?* he trots out all the familiar, foolish arguments; but he, characteristic-ally, leads us to an unfamiliar conclusion. After a grave summary of the fantastic statements which do duty for "proofs" in this absurd debate, Mark Twain does not insist on Bacon's authorship of the plays and poems of Shakespeare. He leaves the matter at the stage that Shakespeare did not write the plays and poems, but that someone else did; presumably, another gentleman of the same name.

What foolery is like to this? The original mental confusion that Bacon may have written Shakespeare's works was grotesque; but this latter nonsense is confusion worse confounded. Let us review

the facts. From the time of publication in the sixteenth century until near the middle of the nineteenth century no one disputed the authorship of Shakespeare's works. The first person to do so was a Miss Delia Bacon, an American lady, known to be mentally weak. Her first idea was that Sir Walter Raleigh wrote Shakespeare's books. This she afterwards altered, and substituted the name of my Lord Verulam for Raleigh, presumably attracted by the fact of Bacon being her namesake. Miss Delia Bacon's insane polemic did not attract much attention, but many years later a Mr. Ignatius Donnelly, also of the U.S.A., and quite as mad as Miss Bacon, published a very elaborate work, in which he pretended to find a cryptogram in Shakespeare's works which admitted the authorship of Bacon. Owing to the publicity given to Donnelly's book by the press, it created much attention; but the work was dismissed as absurd by the critics, and the author declared to be as mad as a hatter.

In Mark Twain's new book there is no nonsense about ciphers and cryptograms, but a parade of reasoning apparently bolstered by a display of erudition. The master-key, says Mark Twain, to the Shakespeare-Bacon puzzle is the question, "Was the author of Shakespeare's works a lawyer?" This is sheer bosh. The master-key required is one solitary proof that anyone other than Shakespeare himself wrote the plays and poems. Bacon may be dismissed at once. His mind was a smaller one than Shakespeare's, and could have been cut out of the Master's without the fact being noticed.

Another fact of supreme significance is that Bacon was orthodox in religious matters, whilst Shakespeare was a Freethinker. There is no other claimant put forward in the place of Bacon except by the wildest conjecture. As against all this guessing we have the plain and uncontradicted statement on the title-pages of Shakespeare's works that he was the author. We have Ben Jonson's affectionate testimony of personal knowledge of the Master. Shakespeare lived an orderly life, and naturally did not make a noise in the world. He took his place in literature simply by the sheer force of his supreme genius so quietly that he became imperceptibly the glory of our blood and state. The star of his genius has wheeled so long, and with so equable a majesty, that it has become essential to the aspect of our heaven.

If Mark Twain, or any other excitable person, thinks that paltry polemic or hectic humor will displace the Master in the hearts and affection of men, he is grievously mistaken. If he is only poking fun at Shakespeare without reason we venture to tell him that it is better for people to laugh with an author than at him. We all laughed with the author of *The Innocents Abroad*. We are all laughing at the author of *Is Shakespeare Dead?*

VERDANT GREEN.

### ONE THING AT A TIME.

I hold that the only safe way to success for any agitation whatever, is for that agitation to adopt, in its corporate capacity, the maxim, "*This one thing I do*," and adhere to it. This principle is clear and comprehensible. But when a man, on joining agitation A, finds himself committed officially to agitation B, he cannot know where he is.

And these spreading agitations are like the spreading rivers of the desert, which lose themselves in the sand, and never reach the sea. A narrow channel and an eager stream will cleave the rock and pierce the mountain with the mighty canon till at last it joins the longed-for ocean. A fog looks vastly bigger, but it wears no rock.—*Alfred Milnes*.

The fundamental axiom of scientific thought is that there is not, never has been, and never will be, any disorder in Nature. The admission of the occurrence of any event which was not the logical consequence of the immediately antecedent events, according to those definite, ascertained, or unascertained rules which we call the "laws of Nature," would be an act of self-destruction on the part of science.—*Huxley*.



### Thaumaturgics.

In the ancient Bible records  
 Many curious tales are told  
 Of the magic feats of prophets  
 In the simple days of old.

Thus, in Egypt, Captain Moses  
 Turned his mighty wizard rod  
 To a living, wriggling serpent,  
 And all water into blood.

Then the Red Sea barred their passage ;  
 What to do in such a plight ?  
 To'ards the sea his rod he stretches  
 And the waves are put to flight.

Next, when marching through the desert,  
 Javeh's people pine with thirst,  
 Moses strikes a rocky mountain  
 From which floods of water burst.

Moses' brother, cunning Aaron,  
 He too sports an eerie rod,  
 Which in one night grows and blossoms,  
 Marking who are priests of God.

Then a wizard of Mount Carmel,  
 Finding there no pleasing love,  
 Drives his magic, fiery chariot,  
 To the realms of heaven above.

These were all renowned performers ;  
 But how feeble and how tame  
 By the side of the great wizard  
 Who gave Nazareth its fame.

All his feats this great magician  
 Would perform in Palestine ;  
 First he turned six pots of water  
 Into good fermented wine.

Then five loaves and two small fishes  
 For the crowd he multiplied,  
 Leaving basketfuls of fragments  
 After all were satisfied.

Such like feats, in after ages,  
 Into gospel stories grew,  
 But the writers never saw them ;  
 Dolts, then, they who count them true.

Since that time all Christian wizards  
 Keep on witching like their God,  
 Changing wafers into Saviors,  
 Turning wine-juice into blood.

Their proud bishops, when performing,  
 Strut with golden staff in hand,  
 Just as Moses and his brother  
 Waved of yore their magic wand.

All these frauds are still believed in  
 By the dull, deluded crowd ;  
 Unkind nature has her children  
 With unthinking minds endowed.

Nor in Bible legends only  
 Are these strange romances found,  
 Profane annals, "lives of saints," too,  
 With deluding tricks abound.

Let me tell you, as a sample,  
 Of a vulgar private's sword,  
 Which to lathwood was converted  
 By a wizard's clever word.

'Twas in ancient days in Flanders,  
 In the quaint old town of Ghent,  
 Where the busy Kaiser Karel  
 Oft his leisure moments spent.

There he heard—could he believe it?—  
 Shocking charges, freely made,  
 Of his soldiers, in the taverns,  
 Leaving drinking scores unpaid.

This vile charge at once to clear up,  
 All disguised, alert, and free,  
 Off he starts and meets a private,  
 Who invites him to a spree.

Arm-in-arm, "The Bear" they enter  
 Jauntily. With mighty airs,  
 They exhaust the froth-capped tankards ;  
 Ghent, it seems, might all be theirs.

Gay and boist'rous was the private  
 In his cups ; but, oh surprise !  
 Had it dawned upon his senses  
 Who was near him in disguise ?

When at last the bout was ended,  
 And it question was of pay,  
 Then the private sought excuses,  
 Trying hard to sneak away.

But the hostess, well determined  
 On her payment to insist,  
 Stands erect against the portal,  
 Threatening him with angry fist.

By this bold defiance kindled,  
 Out the sword flies at a bound,  
 Flashes, smites the table, but, ah !  
 Snaps in twain with clinking sound.

By this savage outburst frightened,  
 Quick the dame her exit made,  
 While this rascal, sore astounded,  
 Glumly viewed his fractured blade.

Looking up, with fallen spirits,  
 "Comrade," saith he, "woe is me,  
 Should the Kaiser hold inspection  
 In what anguish should I be !

What to do, friend, what to plan out,  
 I am wholly at a loss,  
 O, misfortune ! no such misluck  
 Have I ever come across.

Oh, by Jove ! methinks I have it !  
 Look here what I'll do, comrade :  
 With my tools, to this good handle,  
 Will I fit a wooden blade.

Such a blade to handle joining,  
 Light work made for his keen wit.  
 Will the blade now suit the scabbard ?  
 Bravo ! it's a perfect fit."

Karel, in his palace, ponders  
 How to bring this rogue to bay.  
 How confound his knavish cunning,  
 How his wooden sword display.

This he'll do : he'll call a muster,  
 Feign a crime, pass doom of death,  
 And this knave shall execute it  
 With the lath that's in his sheath.

Next day, "Rum-to-tum" re-echoes  
 All through Ghent. A grand review  
 Is commanded by the Kaiser,  
 Every one the signal know.

Soon the men are up and ready  
 In their best attire arrayed,  
 And none brighter, no one sprucer,  
 Than the mate with wooden blade.

One by one the cunning Emperor  
 Views them in their grand array ;  
 But one man he closely looks for—  
 His boon friend of yesterday.

With his keen eye he espies him,  
 Praises his attire and mien.  
 Carefully observes his number,  
 Marks it down, 'tis *seventeen*.

One man more he wants—a sloven—  
 To complete his deep-laid plan,  
 Spies an ill-dressed, tousled rustic—  
 He is just the fitting man.

Him the Kaiser, with feigned anger,  
 Sets before the corps and says :  
 "Sloven ! how is't your appearance  
 Such neglect and sloth displays ?

Soldiers such as you are worthless,  
 Perjured recreants to their oath,  
 Come forth, sluggard, and this moment  
 Die a victim of your sloth.

Straightway shall your head be struck off  
 As a warning to the corps,  
 Let all know and well remember  
 What for slovens is in store.

For this task, in all the army,  
 None more suited have I seen,  
 Than you prim and dapper private—  
 Come and do it, *seventeen* !"

Horrorstuck were all the soldiers  
 Such a dread command to hear ;  
 Never did their trusty Kaiser  
 So unjust and harsh appear.



Doom of death for fault so slender  
Fills them all with silent awe;  
They bewail, but cannot help it,  
For the marshal's word is law.

Slowly forth the executioner  
Comes, with sad and lowly gait:  
Will his scheming save him once more  
From this new and awesome strait?

Standing by his doomed companion,  
Deeply wrapt in anxious thought,  
Lo! an inspiration strikes him  
By which rescue may be wrought.

"Lord of heaven," he cries, "thou know-  
That I never spared a foe; [est  
But to shed a brother's life-blood,  
Save me from so dread a woe!

In thy power, grant my prayer,  
Guard me from this deed of blood;  
Turn the steel of this my sabre  
To a lath of harmless wood!"

From its sheath he draws the weapon,  
Lo, behold! his prayer is heard!  
See! the sword's to wood converted,  
To a brother life's conferred.

At this sight all stand bewildered,  
Yet the mystery none can tell;  
Is he saint, is he magician?  
Has his black art wrought a spell?

When the marvelling had abated,  
All adown the awe-struck ranks  
Ran the rumor "'tis a miracle,  
To our God be grateful thanks."

From henceforth, his secret keeping,  
*Seventeen* was demi-god,  
While his magic sword of lathwood,  
Was renowned as Aaron's rod.

It was now a precious relic,  
Celebrated through the land,  
Put up as a sacred trophy  
In the church of Saint Amand.

Many still grope on in darkness,  
Many fight against the light,  
Judges gag the fearless captains  
Who stand up for truth and right.

Yet the dawn must be approaching,  
For the gloom begins to lift,  
Brighter light is surely coming,  
In the clouds we see the rift.

F. BONTE.

In relation to the Israelitish religion, the Christian religion is one of criticism and freedom. The Israelite trusted himself to do nothing except what was commanded by God; he was without will even in external things; the authority of religion extended itself even to his food. The Christian religion, on the other hand, in all these external things, made man dependent on himself, that is, placed in man what the Israelite placed out of himself in God. Israel is the most complete presentation of Positivism in religion. In relation to the Israelite the Christian is an *esprit fort*, a free-thinker. Thus do things change. What yesterday was still religion is no longer such to-day; and what to-day is Atheism, to-morrow will be religion.—*Feuerbach*.

Surely the history of the Spanish Inquisition, or the war waged by Jesuits in later times against the whole stream of human progress, or again, Robespierre's organisation of massacre in the name of the Rousseauist philanthropy, are proofs plain enough of what comes when men ride roughshod over the charities and duties of home life in the name of duty to God, or to the Church, or to the human race; mixing up, as they are well-nigh sure to do, their aspirations for the public welfare with the fumes of combative self-will or irritated ambition; blinding their sense of public good with the prejudiced delusions of self-love; so that at last that good may follow, and the highest attributes of manhood, mercy, loyalty, and justice, are swept clean away.—*J. H. Bridges*.

The whip degrades. A severe father teaches his children to disassemble. Their love is pretence, and their obedience a species of self-defence.—*Ingersoll*.

## Correspondence.

### WOMAN SUFFRAGE AND METHODISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me to comment on the topic presented to us by Mr. C. Cohen? It is true that the New Testament, as well as the Old, contains teachings and injunctions derogatory to woman, which have been applied deliberately and brutally from the earliest times. But other peoples and religions outside Christianity and the Bible have regarded the sex as inferior, and from the very dawn of human societies. The explanation of this is a perfectly natural one—woman's liability to periods of helplessness and dependence.

That the Methodist Conference now admits that women may "attend as delegates on an equality with men" shows a desire to retain the female influence in that body which might otherwise be lost. That this is a characteristic of Christianity Mr. Cohen has clearly pointed out. But it has absolutely no political significance, and the domestic arrangements of such religious bodies are of no consequence to the community or value to the growth of freer thought among their women.

Woman suffrage being a political question, the *Freethinker* is properly closed against its discussion. I might point out, however, that Atheistic France refuses women political equality, while the Rocky Mountain States of Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming, where Mormonism predominates, has conceded equal adult suffrage—an example that the rest of America will not follow.

I suggest that, in return for the domestic servitude and dependence of women in Mormon homes, the vote has been given, but is controlled by the head of the house in his interest.

H. B. SAMUELS.

### A Court Decision Regarding Voltaire.

THE Appellate Term of the Supreme Court, of New York, in a decision written by Justice Seabury, upholds the sale of a set of Voltaire's works in this language: "It is no part of the duty of Courts to exercise a censorship over literary productions. I think it is clear that no sale of a book can be declared illegal because of the character of the book unless its sale or publication violates the criminal law."

The decision reversed a judgment obtained by Peter J. Quinn in the Ninth Municipal Court in a suit against him brought by the St. Hubert Guild, booksellers, to recover \$200 alleged to be due for forty-two volumes of Voltaire's works. Quinn admitted making the contract for the books, but set up in his defence that it was understood that the books were only to be accepted upon the approval of himself and his family. He asserted that the books contained "reading matter of a licentious, lascivious and lewd character and not fit to be read in the defendant's family." Justice Hoyer upheld him.

The Appellate Term finds that there is no evidence of the arrangement Quinn declares he made about submitting the books to his family and says that the evidence goes no further than to show that the agent said the books were fine reading, fit for everybody. The Court said on this point: "At best this statement was a mere matter of opinion and cannot be construed to be representations of fact."

Justice Seabury says that the lower court held that the books were immoral and arrived at this conclusion from examining only two of the books, *The Philosophical Dictionary* and *The Maid of Orleans*. The higher court says that two books cannot be used to judge forty-two.

Justice Seabury also remarks that *The Philosophical Dictionary* has been condemned before, but that the last time was in 1766, when a boy, who was suspected of malicious mischief and had the book in his pocket, was burned to death with the book in the streets of Paris.

The Court finds that *The Philosophical Dictionary* isn't so bad after all, because "it is not only a reservoir of sarcasm and wit, but it has exerted a profound influence in favor of humane and rational administration of the law." Justice Seabury doesn't find much of good to say about *The Maid of Orleans*, but doesn't think the contract in question can be called illegal on account of it.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

### ICONOCLASTS C. C. V. HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE C. C.

The return match between the above clubs was played on the Iconoclasts ground at Hanwell on Sunday last. The Iconoclasts batted first, declaring with a score of 201 runs for 9 wickets. H. M. cricket club team then scored 71 runs. Result:—Iconoclasts won by 130 runs. Top scores for Iconoclasts C. C.:—Mr. G. Harvey, 64; Mr. Collard, 54. His Majesty's C. C.:—Mr. Jenny, 31; Mr. Crawley, 14.—E. HARVEY.



**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.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. Shallor, a Lecture; 6.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "The Women of the Bible."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Christian Pretension."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, Howell Smith, B.A., "Why I am an Atheist."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, F. A. Davies, "The Uselessness of Christianity."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park): H. B. Samuels, 11.30, "And God so loved the world"; 6.30, "Women and God."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What think ye of Christ?" Corner Seven Sisters'-road (2nd station): 7, N. J. Evans, "What Has Christianity Done for Women?"

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture; 6.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.****INDOOR.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Free-Will Delusion."

**OUTDOOR.**

BISHOP AUCKLAND: Meeting at Musgrave's Tea Rooms, John-street, Spennymoor, at 3, to open the new N. S. S. Branch.

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Durdham Downs): 7.30, B. G. Brown, "Is Christianity True?—The Jesus Myth." (An Analysis.)

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture; Portobello Sands, 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Edge Hill Lamp): Wednesday, August 25, at 8, H. Percy Ward, "The Truth About the Bible."

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market-square): Monday, August 23, at 8, H. Percy Ward, "Can Men Sin?"

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