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He who begins life by stifling his convictions is in a fair way for ending it without any convictions to stifle.

—JOHN MORLEY.

Keir Hardie's "Monster."

MORE than twenty years have elapsed since we first had to rebuke Mr. Keir Hardie for his irresponsible chatter about Christ. He (K. H. not J. C.) was then representing West Ham in parliament, and he was interviewed by a Christian weekly—certainly with his own connivance, and probably at his own instigation. Mr. Hardie's father and mother, two of the worthiest old souls, were readers of the *Freethinker* and members (as they remained to the day of their death—for they died on the same day) of the Glasgow Branch of the National Secular Society. Mr. Hardie himself was beginning to get on in the political world, and was perhaps naturally anxious to shed his Freethought flavor. "His father," the interviewer wrote, of course from his client's information, "is a very vigorous and militant Atheist, so that the son was brought up without any religious belief," but he was "weaned from" his scepticism by the Evangelical Union Church, so that the Rev. Dr. Fergus Ferguson, of Glasgow, was able to give a handsome testimonial to the enterprising young man's "moral character and religious work in Scotland." From that time forth Mr. Hardie has been known as a Christian. But it has been a Christianity of his own. Perhaps it is just the requisite quantity and quality to pull him through without religious friction. He is not quite like the fox in the fable; he has got a tail, if it is only a stump. He could at least talk about "the humanitarian Christianity of Christ." Nobody knew exactly what it was, but it served the turn, it did the trick, and it constituted Mr. Hardie a "reverent follower (as the clergy would say) of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Mr. Hardie has been chattering about Christ ever since. He knew it was the only way to make his Socialism tolerable—and himself with it. It might be extravagant nonsense, but that didn't matter; it pacified the average Britisher, who sniffed at a Socialist's legs, and would have bitten them if the Socialism had been mixed with "Infidelity."

Mr. Hardie affected a red tie, a flannel shirt, and a collier's cap when he went to the House of Commons. He seemed to think there was some political virtue in that outfit; or perhaps he thought it looked heterodox and bold without entailing any danger. But he stuck to his Christianity. He was orthodox on that matter, at least to the point of security. They might throw eggs at him, but not stones; and the worst eggs in the world make no inroads on your anatomy. You wash and are clean, instead of being sewn up and taken to the hospital.

It does not do for Mr. Hardie, with an Atheistic record in the family, to stop talking about his religion. We were not surprised at his introducing it into his recent election address at Merthyr. The Welsh revival is not altogether forgotten yet, and Evan Roberts is still in the land of the living, although the little intellect he ever had has taken a long holiday. The bulk of the Welsh people would

never give you their votes if they thought you had no piety. Mr. Hardie felt it was necessary to let them know that he was properly provided with that article. Accordingly, after stating that "a rapidly growing number of Christian ministers" are becoming "avowed Socialists," he came to what we may call his great denial. "Socialism," he said, "has no relation with Atheism, or Free Love, or any other of the monstrosities with which its opponents seek to associate it." There's no mistaking that. Welsh Methodists, Baptists, and all the other denominations of the happy and united Christian family, may safely take Mr. Keir Hardie to their pious bosoms. He'll do no harm there. He's warranted innocuous.

Mr. Hardie has said the last word. Atheism is a monstrosity. We fancy we have heard the statement before. It doesn't strike us as particularly original. But let that pass. The important fact is that Mr. Hardie has spoken. The oracle is uttered. "Atheism is a Monstrosity." Mr. Hardie says so—and that settles it. That is to say, the Scotch-Welsh, Glasgow-Merthyr oracle settles it for those who open their mouths and swallow when he opens his mouth to speak. For our part, however, we beg to say that Mr. Hardie has simply followed the general Christian plan of setting up a hollow, carved turnip, with blue lights inside, to frighten fools.

How in the name of reason can Atheism be a "monstrosity"? What *is* Atheism? It is simply the refusal to believe that the affairs of this world (for a start) are governed by infinite power, wisdom, and justice. Theists assert that it is so governed. Atheists declare that the assertion is against the evidence. That is all. The question is one of evidence on both sides. And for one side to call the other names is foolish and ill-conditioned.

Mr. Hardie cannot be quite so wrapt up in himself as not to know that there are Socialist leaders who are Atheists. There are any number of them on the Continent. Here in England we may mention Blatchford, Hyndman, and Shaw. This does not logically prevent Mr. Hardie from affirming that Socialism has no relation with Atheism. But it should, in common decency, prevent him from calling Atheism a "monstrosity."

People who talk in this fashion of Mr. Keir Hardie's are egotists. Their opinions are *normal*; the opinions of those who differ from them are *monstrous*. That detestable egotism led Christians to burn their opponents at the stake. Mr. Hardie does not propose that now. Oh, dear no. The times are not favorable; he hasn't the opportunity. But if he had we would trust him no more than we would trust any other religionist who talked the same language.

Mr. Hardie's egotistical language only means at bottom that he is a Theist. Well now, we invite him to take the trouble for once to show that the belief in God is reasonable. It is a bigger job than chattering about Christ and calling Atheism names. So big a job, indeed, that the moment he attempts it he will find himself in terrible difficulties. For is it not an obvious fact that Mr. Hardie wants to do what his God has not only never helped, but has never even permitted? On his own political and social philosophy, therefore, his God is a dream—or a fraud.

G. W. FOOTE.

Politics and Piety.

PRESUMABLY, it is not easy to shock the average editor of the average London daily paper; but some members of the Browning Settlement have managed to do it. The *Daily Telegraph* has had its sensibilities outraged by a circular issued to the electors, calling upon them to vote against Conservative candidates at the elections. The terms of the circular, it says, "beggars description." It is "so shocking to the finer feelings of Englishmen" that it almost takes the editor's breath away. The Browning Settlement writers have taken "the name of God in vain"; in the name of the Lord they have called upon people to vote for a Liberal Government, and this "offends against every sentiment of religion, and even of good taste." Therefore the *Telegraph* weeps; for if God is taking sides in this election he must be on the side championed by the editor. He does not say so, but as a properly religious person he believes it. And if the finer and more sensitive *Christian* feelings rule anywhere, it must be in the office of the *Daily Telegraph*.

If the *D. T.* had complained of the circular as stupid, rational criticism would have been disarmed. But being a semi-religious circular, it could hardly have been other than stupid. I am looking at it, of course, from the non-religious point of view, because from the standpoint of religion sense and nonsense have not quite the same significance and value as they have in other directions. But from the religious point of view, why should a pious politician not believe that God is on his side? Would he vote Liberal if he thought God was a Tory? Would he vote Tory if he thought God was a Liberal? Would he vote in favor of Protection if he believed the Deity favored Free Trade? Any really religious person must believe God approves of what he is doing, or he would not do it. And if he believes this, where is the impiety or bad taste in saying so? I admit it is religiously dangerous to say these things, because, after saying the Deity is on the side of one party, it is probable that the other side may get elected. And this will cast reflections either on the correctness of our religious opinions or on the power of the Deity. True, there are those who hold that God is like a good constitutional monarch, and so long as he receives the proper amount of service plays a part of non-interference, and allows people to settle things in their own fashion; but this is apt to cause people to reflect on whether a God is of use to anyone. And this is decidedly dangerous. Of course, all this sounds a little absurd; but that is the fault of analysing a religious frame of mind. One cannot touch pitch and not be defiled.

It must be confessed that circular is a queer jumble of politics and piety, and, with its religious reasons for its political opinions, succeeds in making the whole ridiculous. It commences "In the name of the Highest," and ends with a battle cry of "For God and the people." Of course, the signatories to the document have as much right to speak in the name of the "Highest" as anyone else, and certainly are as well-informed concerning his wishes. But if God is for the people, it would seem that the people have little to fear. If there be such an offence as blasphemy, it must surely lie in one saying that God, the all-wise and all-powerful, wishes one thing, but unless we look carefully after our voting something else will transpire. The House of Lords has been accused of frustrating the will of the people; but here are seven people who accuse the Lords of frustrating the will of God. It has been said that you cannot alter a law of Nature by Act of Parliament, but here are people who believe that you can successfully obstruct the Author of Nature himself. This is anything but a flattering commentary on the Deity—is certainly as direct an attack upon him and as gross an aspersion upon him as was ever made by the most "blatant" of blasphemers.

In the approved British Christian style the

writers inform the public that—

"This country has been used by the Almighty to lead the world in the emancipation of the peoples. It has won their freedom by enforcing the principle that only by vote of the directly elected representatives of the people, without interference from Crown or coronet, shall the national revenue be raised and expended. That principle is manifestly approved by Providence as the safeguard of popular liberty."

I am not, of course, an authority on the ways of the Almighty, but the reasoning seems a trifle mixed, and the principle rather dangerous. If the principle of representation be a good one, it should apply all round, and some means of consulting other nations as to which should play the part of leader ought to have been found. It is just possible that France, or Germany, or Russia, might object to this leadership. In their way they do object, and it is precisely our claim to leadership that is responsible for a deal of our trouble. Having seized upon a *very* large share of the desirable parts of the earth, being convinced that the Almighty intended it, we naturally treat as Atheistic impiety any attempt on the part of other nations to upset the divine plans. For, be it noted, we are not chosen by Providence to cooperate with other nations, we are to *lead* them. And there is thus given to imperialistic jingoism a moral and religious support of the strongest kind.

Thus, when Russia objects to our encroachments in Asia, or Germany objects to our advance in Africa, or when the latter objects to keeping its Navy at a point of admitted inferiority to Great Britain, the reply of Great Britain through these seven pious writers is obvious. We are carrying out the designs of Providence. Our mission in the world is a moral and religious one. We have seized India and other parts of Asia, large portions of Africa, and added, during the last thirty years, an area of nearly five million square miles, with a population of eighty-millions to our territory, not because we had an eye to profit, or have gained anything by it, but merely because we have felt it our duty to establish British Christianity over these lands. Other nations, from the days of Imperial Rome to those of modern Germany, have been animated in their acquisitions by the lust of power, by the love of gain, or by sheer national egotism. We alone are carrying out the designs of the Almighty and have been selected by him "to lead the world." Of this there can be no doubt. Have not all our wars been blessed by the appointed British representatives of God? Has not the Christian conscience seen in our encroachments in Egypt, India, Africa, and elsewhere, Providential openings for the spread of the Gospel? Is not the growth of our Army and Navy the visible and material indications of the power of the "spirit"? Blunders we may have made, but at least we have never faltered in our grasp of this supreme spiritual—and profitable—truth. We thank God for our successes, we blame his enemies for our disasters.

Yet it must be confessed that our enforcement of this principle of representation has not been so universal as it might have been. We have something like 360 millions of subjects outside the British Isles. And of these, so far as legislation is concerned, not more than eleven millions have any representation worth bothering about. Representation is tempered by safeguarding the British Christian's right to "wallop his own nigger." Nor are the wishes of the "Almighty," as regards representation, quite clear to others, however clear they may be to the Browning Settlement writers. An enormous majority of the governments of the world, for by far the greater part of history, have *not* been of a representative character; and the majority of the world's inhabitants are not to-day living under representative institutions. The Almighty seems to have been very remiss in getting his desires realised, although things may now improve under the spiritual leadership of the Browning Settlement. Of course, if the nations properly appreciated the position Great Britain holds in the providential scheme, they would at once submit to our example and assist our

enterprises. Their lack of appreciation simply emphasises the necessity of keeping our divine mission before the world, accentuated by an increased number of Dreadnoughts.

Enemies of God are within as well as without this realm. The condemnation of the House of Lords does not, apparently, lie in its constitution or in the character of its members, but in the fact that when "the Christian Conscience of these realms"—no other kind of conscience matters—demanded certain measures the Upper House declined to pass them. In resisting the Liberal party it has resisted the "appointed organ of the will of God in national affairs," and it must go—unless the Almighty happens to be defeated at the ballot-box. The reasoning is simple. The Liberal party is the Godly party; it is the expression of the Will of God, and who so resisteth the Will of God deserves damnation. The only possible reply to this position is to deny the non-representative character of the House of Lords, and to argue that, because of its number of incompetents or muddle-headed reasoners, and its contemplation of national affairs from the standpoint of party or sect, it really does represent the British public in the truest sense of the word. And if I were arguing on the brief I should put in the Browning Settlement circular as my strongest piece of evidence.

For it is circulars of this kind that demonstrate the impossibility of getting a sane and impartial view of social problems under present conditions. That the signatories to the circular are advocating measures with which one may be in agreement, does not alter the irrationality of the attitude adopted. The "Thus saith the Lord" attitude is always an impertinence, and doubly so when introduced into a political question. The appeals to the "Christian Conscience," the fatuous comment that if Jesus "were a British elector" he would vote against the House of Lords, are equally depressing to those who wish to see political life regulated by sane and profitable principles. The assumption that it is "God's will" that the Liberal party should be returned is fitly answered by a precisely similar assumption on the part of the Conservatives; and thus, instead of such party making an appeal to a sense of social responsibility and justice, we find ourselves landed in a theological warfare both stupid and dangerous. It is actually almost an argument against the extension of democratic power, if it is to be made merely the mouthpiece of an unenlightened sectarianism. For sectarianism in religion finds its counterparts in national egotism and narrow social prejudices, and offers the greatest obstruction to a really healthy sense of social and national responsibility. Men of the type criticised may blunder on correct views of social problems, but they are just as likely to champion wrong ones. And, in the long run, it is the spirit and temper in which men face their social obligations, even more than the precise theories adopted, that tells in the process of development.

C. COHEN.

The Scientific versus the Religious View of Man.

THERE is no longer any doubt as to man's place in Nature. Science finally settled that point long ago. When Professor Huxley resolved, forty-seven years ago, to publish a book on the subject, he was strongly advised by "a very shrewd friend not to ruin all his prospects by so rash a venture." Despite that friendly warning, however, the work appeared under the title of *Evidences as to Man's Place in Nature*. At first its teaching was angrily resented almost universally, and vehemently condemned as "an anti-scriptural and most debasing theory," and as "standing in blasphemous contradiction to Biblical narrative and doctrine." The "very shrewd friend" referred to was Sir William Lawrence, an eminent English surgeon, who had himself issued a book in

1819, entitled *The Physiology, Zoology, and Natural History of Man*, and got cruelly pilloried for his pains. He knew by a bitter experience what it meant to be under the ban of the Church. But during the interval between 1819 and 1863, the influence of the Church on public opinion had weakened considerably, with the result that the opposition to Huxley's views, though furious for a season, was of comparatively short duration. Even the theologians were obliged to turn round and bless the very book they had set out to curse. Instead of controlling public opinion, as they had been formerly accustomed to do, they were now compelled, by force of circumstances, to be controlled by public opinion. The consequence is that to-day the majority of religious teachers are avowed evolutionists. They regard man as the fruit of evolution, and many of them go the length of admitting that the whole of him has been evolved from lower and simpler forms.

But while thus forced by public opinion to accept the great conclusions of science, the divines are still as theological as ever. They experience no difficulty whatever in reconstructing their dogmas in terms of modern knowledge. Belittling the Old Book, out of which theology was originally hewn, and putting symbolical interpretations upon its anti-scientific passages, they grandiloquently speak of the sciences as "God's Bible." The facts of Nature, they say, "are the undiluted thoughts of the Infinite Mind, written out by the very finger of God." The Bible is fallible because it seeks to interpret the facts without sufficient knowledge, and the sciences also make numerous mistakes from the same cause. But the theologians have very little respect for facts. They formally take off their hats to them in passing, and then forget all about them. They prefer to soar to the nebulous region of speculation, pretending the while to be uncovering the facts. They say:—

"The commanding purpose which binds the endlessly diverse into the Universe is the making of man. The experts tell us that the sweep of the cosmic process from nebulae to man is one long line of ordered development with man as goal. He is the end, the explanation, the value of the whole process. Without him the Universe simply would have no meaning."

That reference to the "experts" is superb. One would like to know who they are and where they live and what books they have published. Are they scientists, or are they theologians, who think God's thoughts after him? We are not acquainted with the works of a single great scientist in which it is taught that man is the explanation of the Universe, and that "without him the Universe simply would have no meaning." It would be highly interesting to be told in definite terms what the meaning of the Universe is with man on its summit. If man is the end of Nature, what is the end of man? The scientists cannot tell us—who are the "experts" that can and do? What does the Universe mean as seen through man? Until man arrived, we are assured, the Universe was meaningless. For countless millions of years it had absolutely no significance; but as soon as man appeared it was seen to be shot through, saturated, with thought.

It is the theologians, not the scientists, who talk in that wild fashion. The scientist has never affirmed that the Universe is intelligible to man, nor has he ever pretended to be able to "read the mind of this infinite energy." Herbert Spencer, the greatest evolutionary philosopher, asserts that the Power behind Nature, from which all things proceed, is inscrutable, incomprehensible, unknowable. It is true that this assertion is wholly illogical, and a contradiction in terms; but it is not so absurd as the preacher's claim that he "can read the mind of this infinite energy." Who can tell that "this infinite energy" has a mind to be read? Equally nonsensical is the following statement: "The Universe is an expression of God—he the cause, the Universe the effect." The introduction of God simply complicates the problem of the Universe. Science has abandoned the old metaphysical hypothesis of a First Cause, and contemplates the Universe as an eternal reality, with

neither beginning nor end; and believing it to be infinite, it is aware of no Power, either beneath or above it, guiding all its activities. "Everything should tell us something of God," says the preacher; "man as really as a mountain." Well, what does a mountain tell us of God? Take the biggest mountain ever seen, and what Divine secrets can it reveal to you? Or take the greatest man that ever breathed, and what can you learn from him about the Deity? "Necessarily," continues the divine, "we learn more of God from a Ruskin than from a rock, more from a St. Francis than from a crocodile." Let us sit for a moment at a crocodile's feet, and listen to what he has to say of God. If there be a God, he made the crocodile, one of the ugliest, wretchedest, and most undesirable creatures on the face of the earth. Is it possible to think of a crocodile as an expression of a good and loving God? And are serpents and snakes and wolves and tigers expressions of God? What attributes of Deity do they reveal? Or let us come to a Ruskin, and what do we learn concerning the President of the Universe from him? Ruskin was brought up in a profoundly religious home, and his religious training was most rigid and persistent. The consequence was that in his early manhood he was a narrow-minded and bigoted Evangelical. In the latter half of his life he was a merciless critic and vigorous denouncer of Evangelicalism, and an eloquent advocate of a religion strongly tinged with Rationalism. His Master was Carlyle, whom he half worshiped; and Carlyle, according to Froude, was an Agnostic, though he tried to hoodwink his readers by his ostentatious use of capital letters.

Such is the religious view of man according to the most progressive theological teaching of to-day; but a moment's serious reflection shows how utterly preposterous it is. No one is entitled to describe man as "the consummation of creation." The Universe is infinite, and we are cognisant of only a tiny speck in an insignificant corner of it. It is inexcusably silly to aver that "now the cosmic process is concentrated upon developing the mind, the spirit of man," because, while man is undoubtedly the highest being now on earth, we do not know but that in other parts of the Cosmos there may be beings much higher and nobler than he. To call him the masterpiece of the evolutionary process is to betray the most obstinate and unforgivable insularity and perverseness. Our acquaintance with life is limited to this planet. There are millions upon millions of other planets in the great hosts of solar systems which occupy their respective spheres in the shoreless ether-ocean; and it is quite possible, if not probable, that on many of them there may be living beings more wonderful in structure, and more varied and stupendous in function, than any to be found here. And we cannot tell what possibilities of evolution may still be in store for our little globe. But even granting that "there never will be a higher being on earth than man," it by no means follows that evolution has finished its work on him. In any case, however, man cannot be looked upon as the master-key to the riddle of the Universe. His existence explains nothing, but is itself as unaccountable as that of the venomous reptiles. To assert that he constitutes the value of the whole cosmic process is to "multiply words without knowledge." Value is a commercial and ethical term, and, cosmically speaking, it is unintelligible. Nature recognises no differences whatever, in this respect, among her numerous family, and she treats all her children exactly alike. Jesus is reported to have addressed his disciples thus: "Fear not; ye are of more value than many sparrows." But he was mistaken. Nature—and the theologians inform us that Nature merely does her Lord's behests—Nature sets no higher value on a man than on a sparrow, but allows both to fall on the ground with equal indifference, though Jesus alleged that "your Father" falleth with the one, and has the very hairs of the other's head all numbered. Divine Providence is only an empty dream, or a cruel lie, unless it prevents the birds from dying of starvation

in thousands every season, and protects the men from perishing by flood and flame and earthquake.

It is becoming more and more indisputable, year by year, in proportion as scientific knowledge spreads, that our safety, or salvation, consists in strict obedience to Nature's iron laws, and in fighting and overcoming, or outwitting, many of her forces. We are not to trust except in so far as we understand her. We are to be constantly on our guard against her. She neither loves nor cares for us, and when we perish she drops not a single tear on our coffin. And it is noteworthy that the most devout believers in Divine Providence invariably act as if it did not exist. The only providence worth pinning one's faith in is knowledge. Every other providence ever heard of is a delusion and a snare. We are but learners in the school of life, and our success is always commensurate with our respective abilities and devotion to the lessons. Nature has fitted us to be brave fighters, not against one another, but against multitudes of her own elements. We are to struggle, not competitively, but in hearty co-operation, for mastery over, and harmony with, our Mother—Earth. It is only by thus resolutely exerting ourselves that we shall succeed in weaving strength, courage, and the true social instincts into our character, and it is thus alone that we shall rise above the selfish and slavish fear of death.

The religious view of man is clearly wrong, and should be renounced by all who cherish it as speedily as possible. The only safe view of man is the severely scientific, as it is also the only practically profitable, one. Our chief comfort comes from the assurance that the religious view of man is steadily retracting, while the scientific one is as surely gaining ground every day.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Narratives in Genesis.

ESAU AND JACOB.

CHAPTER XXV. has been compiled from narratives by the Yahvist and by the Priestly writer—the former being responsible for verses 1-6, and 21-34; the latter for verses 7-20, and the last twelve words of 26. The Priestly writer records the age and death of Abraham, the age and death of Ishmael, and the names of twelve "princes" descended from the last-named patriarch.

The Yahvist goes into the most private family affairs of the recently-wedded Isaac and Rebekah. He tells us that the last-named lady was barren, and that "Isaac intreated the Lord for her," with the result that "Rebekah his wife conceived," and bare two sons. The Yahvist appears to have had a craze for representing wives as barren: first, he says that such was the case with Abraham's wife, Sarah; next, that this was the case with "all the women of the house of Abimelech" (Gen. xx. 18), the latter statement being a demonstrable falsehood; now he tells us that such was also the case with Rebekah; later on, he says that the same was the case with Jacob's wife, Rachel (Gen. xxix. 31). In the present chapter this writer further tells us that shortly before the birth of her two sons, Rebekah "went to inquire of the Lord," who "said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb.....the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

The writer does not give us any idea as to how this inquiry was made. Did Rebekah pray aloud to the god, and did she hear a human voice reply from behind the tent? or did she fall asleep and imagine she heard the answer in a dream? These are points that ought not to have been omitted. Again, it goes without saying that the so-called prediction that "the elder should serve the younger" was written, like all the other fulfilled Bible predictions, after the event; that is to say, it was composed after the Israelites had subjugated the Edomites, but apparently some time prior to the successful revolt of the last-named people recorded in 2 Kings viii. 21-22.

To continue this veracious history, when Rebekah's time was come, she gave birth to two sons, Esau and Jacob, the first-named—who is also called Edom—being the elder. Time went on, "and the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob." Of these twin brothers Jacob was the quieter and more polite, but he was at the same time crafty and underhand in his dealings; while Esau, though somewhat rough and outspoken, was, as far as we can judge, straightforward, honest, and sincere.

There is no accounting for a mother's love: often the black sheep of the family receives more than his share of maternal affection. But one would scarcely think that a god who "looketh on the heart" and "accepteth not man's person" (1 Sam. xvi. 7; Gal. ii. 6) would be biased in this way. Yet, if we believe the prophet Malachi—and he was as fully inspired as any other Hebrew writer or prophet—"the Lord" had a kindly and tolerant feeling towards the crafty Jacob, and a decided aversion to the frank and open, though somewhat simple Esau. Speaking in the name of "the Lord" Malachi says:—

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness" (Mal. i. 2-3).

Actions, as we know, speak louder than words: hence, the foregoing may be taken as a fair sample of the great nobility of character of the Hebrew deity, who is said to be "gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Joel ii. 13). As will be seen from the quotation, this hatred of Esau extended to his posterity; and we are told by the apostle of the Gentiles—who was quite as much inspired as Malachi—that it began even before that unfortunate individual was born. Paul says:—

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger" (Rom. ix. 11-12).

That any sane god should take such a dislike to a man before he was born almost passes understanding; but we must remember that the Lord's ways are not as our ways, and—what is of more importance—that our ways are not as the Lord's ways—for which last-mentioned fact we ought to be truly thankful.

The Old Testament prophet who spoke in the name of the Lord was, however, a reputed descendant of Jacob, and he and all his nation regarded with hostile feelings all the reputed descendants of Esau, whom they looked upon as their enemies. This fact may in some measure account for the Lord's aversion: the Hebrew god, of course, naturally hated all the enemies of his chosen people, even before it had pleased him to bring them into existence. The wonder is that, under such circumstances, he ever allowed them to come into being; but this, again, is but another indication that the Lord's ways are not as our ways.

One of the writers of the Psalms says: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (cxviii. 8); but anyone with a grain of sense would think twice before trusting to the tender mercies of a god who conceived likes and dislikes to his creatures before they ever saw the light of day. Far better would it be for man to "put confidence in man"; there would then be some likelihood of receiving justice.

The Yahvist next narrates an incident which is said to have happened when the brothers Esau and Jacob had arrived at man's estate, but of what age is not stated—which incident illustrates the natural craftiness of the younger brother. The story commences:—

"And Jacob sod pottage; and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom."

Assuming the narrative to be true, one would think that Jacob, upon seeing his brother ready to faint from fatigue and want of food, would scarcely need to be asked to share what he had prepared with him, but would do so spontaneously. Such, however, was not one of the characteristics of the younger brother, who saw in the circumstance a grand opportunity to gain his ends, and was careful not to allow his brotherly feelings (if he had any) to interfere with his making a good bargain. Esau was the elder, and therefore the heir; Jacob upon this occasion stipulated that his brother should sell him his "birth-right" in exchange for the pottage. "And Esau said, Behold I am at the point to die: and what profit shall the birthright be to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me first of all; and he swore unto him." Jacob then gave him the "pottage of lentils," and the bargain was concluded. The astonishing part of the story—which obviously is a silly fiction—is that Esau, being at home, did not go straight to his mother's pantry and help himself to whatever he could find in the larder.

Here it may be noticed that the Yahvist, whenever he could find opportunities of doing so, has invented circumstances in his narratives to account for the names that might figure in them. Thus, *Esau* (= "hairy") is said to have been born covered with hair, which he retained in after life; *Jacob* (= "he takes by the heel") is stated, at the time of his birth, to have caught hold of his brother's heel (Gen. xxv. 25-26); *Edom* (= "red") is given as a second name for "Esau," because that hunter once said, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that red pottage." We are told that William II. of England was called *Rufus* because he had red hair. It seems most probable that the Edomites, as a race, were of a ruddy or florid complexion, or possessed some physical peculiarity, such as red hair, from which the name *Edom* was derived. The latter name most certainly did not originate as described in the fictitious Bible story. Further examples of the Yahvist's powers of invention may be found in the reasons he assigns for the giving of the following names: Eve, Noah, Babel, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Moses (Gen. iii. 20; v. 29; xi. 9; xxix. 32-35; xxx. 6-24; Exod. ii. 10).

ABRACADABRA.

Christianity and the Public Authorities.

It is a common trick of ecclesiastics to represent that religion is entirely dissociated and divorced from what they call "temporal authority," though, at the same time, they do not hesitate to declare that both Church and State, though separate, are Divine institutions, each having functions of its own. As a matter of fact, the separation is more in semblance than in reality. The majority of the big bugs in the State are also influential members of Christian Churches. The occasional Agnostic whom one meets holding high office in the State is a very accommodating and obliging gentleman. He is, as a rule, an Agnostic and Freethinker merely in name. His ambitions, alas, tone down his convictions, and he is seen tolerating things which are false and iniquitous. That is why Charles Bradlaugh is such an outstanding figure. He was unique in this great and distinguishing respect that he was definitely and clearly a Freethinker first and last and all the time. He would bend to no attempted compromise between Truth and Falsehood, and that is why he suffered. He had the greatest scorn for men who were willing to sacrifice conviction to opportunity. That was his crowning glory in the eyes of all fair-minded men: his rigid adherence to his convictions: and that adherence—to unpopular convictions—brought the usual meed of human hatred from those whose purpose it is to maintain a seeming separateness and a real unity between Church and State. The upholders of the existing system hope to keep the mass of the people in ignorance of the actual state of things, and so keep them in order—that is, in intellectual subjection.

Time may be said to bring its revenges. Poor and uneducated, but bold and enthusiastic, agitators and protestors against existing systems are canonised and deified after death and become the adored of millions. This is, however, now a matter of the past. It is the apotheosis of sentimentalism,

and sentimentalism is now scouted even by religionists. Those of us who were brought up in homes of the strictest orthodoxy, and who have gone through the interesting mental and psychological process whereby we have reached, by difficult paths and through storm and stress, the standpoint of the Freethinker, well know what potency a bastard emotionalism possesses and can exert. It has been well said that religion came into existence under primitive conditions, when men were ignorant and fearful and subject to limitations from which scientific research has now freed us. Reason is the only power by which free institutions can be secured and maintained. The compilers of the Bible were astute enough to see there was something in this, and that is, no doubt, the reason why they make that volume teach as the "Word of God" that Church and State are separate institutions, though each is Divine. Accordingly, a person who is identified with the Church, if he happens to have a quarrel with the State finds it a much smoother matter to air his grievances than the man who is a public reformer and who refuses to acknowledge any Divine authority or associate himself with any ecclesiastical body. The real unity of State and Church does the trick for the former. But are we, for the sake of a mere apparent temporary advantage, to resort to Jesuitical methods and chicanery? Truth can only be served, Truth can only be attained, permanent benefits can only be obtained for humanity in so far as we are loyal to what our Reason tells us Truth is, so far as we know it, and as it is possible for us to know it.

Some of us can look back upon a youth lived in strict conformity with ecclesiastical regulations, and when we read the Bible with simple uninquiring faith. The chief impressions our minds received were, of course, the omnipotence of God, Christ's Father, and the divinity of Christ. These things, dogmatically and persistently advanced, made us regard the Bible with awe and holy wonder. To drop it on the floor or throw it carelessly on to the table was a kind of sacrilege. Biblical terms became "polarised" for us. We never heard the New Jerusalem spoken of in the same tones as New York. We were obsessed by the religiosity of feeling which cuts off one day of the week from the others, one book from all others, one religion from all others. The whole thing, as we advanced to manhood and had larger opportunities for reading, became a good deal of a bugbear. Even the simplest scientific principles we found contradicted and violated by our Christian teaching. Naturally something had to happen, and our individual emancipation had to come. Surely this is the only method by which superstition can be dethroned.

The attitude of Christ to the public authorities, as described in the New Testament, which, of course, is not authenticated by any writing by Christ himself, is somewhat peculiar, but no doubt explicable from the point of view of the compilers of the "holy" book. At the dramatic trial of Christ, Pilate asked Christ what truth was. Christ adopted a policy of silence. But the main point to be observed in the New Testament record is the solicitous care—always evident—to keep the divinity of Christ in the foreground. Christ himself was never very clear about the State as an institution. His most celebrated utterances on this topic are evasions of the main point. Here was Rome, with all her mechanical and well-devised organisation of government, trying, through her governor Pilate, a poor and unlettered agitator who had made big claims and aimed at big things. The Christian attitude to Pilate in all the ages would be amusing if it were not so hopelessly silly. The story of the dream dreamed by Pilate's wife is one of those childish expedients so much employed in the case of Joseph before, at, and after the birth of Jesus. Pilate's wife was of opinion that Jesus was a just person, as he very well might be without being a god. Indeed, few gods that we read and hear about have much idea of what justice is. Certainly Jesus' Heavenly Father dispenses queer justice when we are supposed to believe that Pilate has been sent to hell for delivering over a disturber of the peace to the proper authority. There is no suggestion that Pilate failed in any duty laid upon him by the laws; and while he seemed to be conscientious in discharging his duty, he also showed a good deal of considerateness to the prisoner. It is to be doubted very much whether unbelievers who have had to appear before Christian magistrates have always been as considerately and respectfully treated by them as Christ was by Pilate. And it has to be remembered that many Freethinkers who have been arraigned in the law courts of their own land know more truth than Christ could know in his day and generation.

No; and it will be found in actual practice, and upon occasions when Freethought and superstition get into grips, that ultimately the Churches lean upon the State in this supposedly free land of ours, whatever may be said about separateness and freedom and nonconformity and the rest of it. The blasphemy laws—which Christ himself was charged by his own people with violating; and they still

say the charge was true—the blasphemy laws and our governmental and legal forms and oaths and affidavits in daily use all bear the mark of the beast of ecclesiasticism, which, whenever it has got the upper hand, is the most ignorant, the most unreasoning, and most cruel form of tyranny from which any people can suffer. But we live in an easy-going age when direct and straight speaking easily shocks our *dilettante* leaders of thought. There can be no compromise between good and evil, between truth and falsehood. Do we recognise this, and do we believe that ecclesiasticism in every shape and form, and all religious instruction, are dangerous, demoralising, and devitalising things? If we do honestly and sincerely believe these things, then our duty is plain, and we should give no quarter to the enemy. However long delayed, the victory of truth must be secured.

SIMPLE SANDY.

One of the "Young Turks."

Mr. H. C. Woods, F.R.G.S., contributed a very interesting article to a recent number of the *Westminster Gazette* on "The Work of Reform in the Asiatic Vilayets of Turkey." Our readers will be pleased with an extract from his account of the work of Djemal Bey in the Adana Vilayet. This official was sent to take charge of the province by the Young Turks, who are now the masters of the Turkish empire. He is an army officer, and he took a conspicuous part in the events that led to the deposition of the late Sultan. Djemal Bey is carrying out a civilised policy with energy and tact. The following extract from Mr. Woods' article shows his freedom from religious prejudice:—

"One of the most liberal and up-to-date ideas possessed by Djemal Bey is his desire to found a permanent Ottoman orphanage at Adana for fatherless boys and girls. The instruction in this school, which it is hoped will eventually contain 500 children, is to be purely secular. Notwithstanding the fact that the Christian and Moslem children are to be allowed to go to their places of worship on Sundays and Fridays respectively, no priest, Christian or Moslem, is to be allowed to enter the establishment. The language of the institution is, of course, to be Turkish. Although it is estimated by Djemal Bey that £18,000 would build and £130,000 would endow this establishment (an excellent site has already been given by a Mohammedan magnate at Adana) it seems as if this sum might take some time to collect. Moreover, I understand on excellent authority that each child educated in an establishment of this kind costs at least about £112½ per year for food, clothing, and instruction. Unless, therefore, a very high rate of interest can be obtained, £130,000 would hardly endow an establishment to accommodate 500 children. Whatever may be our personal views upon religious education in schools, and however great may be the difficulties in collecting £138,000 for the orphanage (£15,000 has been allotted out of the funds voted for the relief of the Adana sufferers, and subscriptions have already begun to arrive) it is impossible not to sympathise with any object which will further the union of the Turks with the various Christian elements of the country. I have only described the proposals for this institution so fully because, if the orphanage is ever completed, and the present program of absolute religious equality for the believers in all creeds is established, it will be an example of the theory that the Young Turks are genuinely anxious to institute the equality of all Ottomans."

The keynote of the Young Turks' policy is religious freedom and equality for all inhabitants of the Empire; and the vigor, patience, and success of their efforts are astonishing the world.

AN AGNOSTIC'S PRAYER.

I pray not, for I hold that prayer is vain,
 Since, whatsoever Powers control man's fate,
 I cannot think that any cry of pain
 From him would change their course predestinate:
 But if those Powers I ever supplicate,
 Thus will I seek a boon from them to gain,—
 "I ask ye not for lands, or wealth, or state;
 Nor fame nor love would I from ye obtain;
 But give me strength to gaze with steady eyes
 Into the causes and the roots of things,
 And see them unbeguiled by outward shows,
 Stripped naked of all trappings that disguise,
 Till truth—though she my soul with torture wrings—
 Herself unrobed, unshadowed, doth disclose.

—Bertram Dobell, "A Century of Sonnets."

Acid Drops.

What is the matter with *Truth*? It used to be a good paper, but that was in Labouchere's time. For all we know, Labouchere owns it now; but he is an old man, and he lives in Italy, and *Truth* is obviously under other management. In last week's (Jan. 12) issue there was a fantastic article on Thomas Paine, representing him as an Atheist, who had robbed people of the belief in heaven. This shows the writer's ignorance, or something worse. Paine was a Deist. He wrote against Atheism. He also believed in a future life. Paine is further represented in the courtyard of the Luxembourg prison, during the Terror, as a "self-complacent little man of fifty-seven." A little man! Paine was only two inches short of six feet, of athletic build, and handsome presence. The writer winds up by representing Paine as "a creature unworthy of a tragic end." It would be well if all articles in periodicals had to be signed. The practice would be some check on the insolence of little critics of great men.

Marie Corelli babbles about a future life in *Cassell's Magazine* for January. She thinks, to begin with, that such a question as "Is Immortality Necessary?" ought not to be asked in a Christian country,—where she appears to think that Jews, Turks, and Infidels, to say nothing of Agnostics and Atheists, are practically unknown. But since this naughty, or at least unnecessary, question is asked, the divine Marie condescends to answer it. She assures the editor in particular, and the reading world in general, that she does regard the belief in a future life of practical value. "Without it," she says, "I should not have cared to live." And we daresay she is sincere. But we believe she is mistaken. She would have lived on all the same, with or without the expectation of another life, as long as this one was all right. And they do say that Marie lives on the sunny side of the hedge. She has a fine income, she lives at Stratford-on-Avon, and she seems to imagine herself a sort of spiritual bride of William Shakespeare. Why should such a happy lady want to die if she isn't going to live again after she is buried? One world at a time, Marie, one world at a time.

The divine Marie answers another question in the negative. Is there any incentive to altruism in the absence of a belief in a future life? "In the absence of such a belief," she says, "there is no vital incentive to work for the interest or good or uplifting of others." Here again the poor lady is probably sincere. What she means by uplifting others is the soup, coal, and blanket tickets business. People who give up the belief in a future life are, indeed, apt to grow impatient with that sort of cheap philanthropy. But they have nobler philanthropies of their own; and one of them is called Wisdom, and another is called Justice. Marie thinks they ought to be miserable,—but they are not; and her thinking that they ought to be simply springs from a lack of knowledge or imagination.

Rev. William Philip, rector of Shelley, near Ongar, should give up reading the Bible and tackle some sensible and humane literature. He has been bound over in £50 to be of good behavior for twelve months, on a charge of assaulting Evelyn Galloway and Bessie Brisdien, the daughter and her nurse of Mr. Malcolm Galloway, of Shelley Hall, by threatening and frightening the child with a big stick. The reverend gentleman (that's parliamentary) had been previously bound over for assaulting another parishioner, and was warned by the magistrates that if he misbehaved himself again he would be dealt with in a very different manner. We hope the higher-class literature we recommend will improve his mind and enable him to turn over a fresh leaf.

"Who teaches you your manners?" asked the Rev. William Philip of little Miss Galloway. A parson once said something like that to a boy, and got his answer. "You are better fed than taught," the man of God remarked. "Yes, I be," the boy replied; "I feeds myself, and you teaches me."

Rev. H. Norburn, rector of St. Agnes's, Longsight, points out that in Wales, during 1907, there were 5,399 marriages in church, 4,908 in chapel, and 6,641 in registry offices. Thus, says Mr. Norburn, in the case of these latter, "God was ignored and public feeling wounded." Well, the ignoring of God is the Deity's concern; it is neither ours nor Mr. Norburn's. And, with regard to the latter portion of the complaint, we need only inquire, Whose feelings were wounded by these 6,641 marriages in registry offices? Clearly the people who were married were quite satisfied. No one forced them to be married there. Church and chapel were

both available, and minister and parson ready to accept their fees. Mr. Norburn can only mean that his feelings, and the feelings of other religious people, were wounded. Now, with all due respect to everybody, one would like to know what the deuce has it to do with them? The legislature sets up a perfectly proper machinery for the registration of marriages for all who care to dispense with the religious ceremony, and others who do not use this machinery complain that it hurts their feelings and ought not to exist. The feelings of other people are not, of course, worth bothering about. Piety is often little more than consecrated impertinence.

Mr. Norburn says that many people would not believe that they were married at all without the blessing of the Church on their marriage. Well, no one wishes to prevent these ill-educated people having the blessing of the Church, or anything else they wish for. All that is asked from them is to cultivate sense and manners enough to extend a like freedom to other people. Evidently Mr. Norburn would like everybody to believe what he says many people believe now, although he does not appear to have courage enough to say so. He says "it is of importance that young people should have a right understanding about the marriage service." With this we agree; a right understanding shows it to be in essence a social ceremony, Church or State simply serving as recording agencies—the latter with the power to enforce the terms of a contract solemnly undertaken. And we may also add that, without the power of the State, the "blessing of the Church" would be of small value in quite a number of cases. Perhaps, though, all that Mr. Norburn means by the phrase is that young people should be brought up to regard marriage in church as of vital importance. Which is precisely what they should not be taught.

The January number of the *Holy Trinity Magazine*, Bath, notes that "our miniature rifle range set up for our C.L.B. [Church Lads' Brigade] company in the Church Room will be opened early in the new year." Now who will deny that Christianity is a religion of peace when a miniature rifle range is set up in the Church Room of Holy Trinity?

The total value of church property in the United States, for all denominations, is officially given at £251,515,173. Times have changed since their founder borrowed an ass to ride into Jerusalem. And one may safely assume that one of the pair that then entered the "Holy City" is well represented in the modern Churches.

A correspondent, signing himself "H. F.," does not agree with Mark Twain that the only joke in the Bible is the reference to "the street which is called straight" in Damascus, which Mark found like a corkscrew. Our correspondent suggests two others. "I would suggest," he says, "two others: first, that King Hezekiah 'suffered much of many physicians'—second, St. Paul's observation that 'he that desireth the office of a bishop desireth a good thing.'" It was not Hezekiah, however, who suffered much of many physicians, but a lady in the New Testament.

Some pious ladies write to the press from Church House, Westminster, about "Undesirable Books." They praise the action of "some leading publishers and circulating libraries" that are attempting a censorship, and on behalf of the Mothers' Union, which boasts 300,000 members throughout the British Empire, they call for "a like vigilance" with regard to "certain low-class magazines and papers, illustrated periodicals, and the like, which are bought by thousands." These Anglican ladies want to "purify our national literature." We are sorry to see them meddling with what is too high for them. What women generally mean by "purifying" literature is seeing that nothing is printed but what can be read in nurseries. And their notion (especially when they haunt places like Church House) of what should be allowed in the way of religious criticism would, if carried out, put an end to all Freethought propaganda, and probably "shut up" the Rev. R. J. Campbell himself. The Society for the Suppression of Vice, in old days, used to carry on prosecutions against Freethinkers for "blasphemy" and Neo-Malthusians for "obscenity," and we have no doubt that this would meet the approval of the pious ladies who write from Church House on behalf of the Mothers' Union.

If we might offer a word of advice to these ladies, we should suggest that they should either drop this "purifying" business or begin with the Bible, which is by far the dirtiest book in general circulation. It contains lots of passages which any decent mother would sooner bite her tongue off than read to her children.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells says that what is needed in England is a real renaissance of "true Christian faith." The complaint of bad trade seems universal, and everywhere there is a cry for better business. Perhaps things will improve after the elections.

What a united and happy family Christians are. For example, Canon Scott Holland, speaking on the character of Jesus Christ and what we know of him, says that it was no abstract ideal humanity that Jesus "assumed."

"He took it in the exact form in which it stood at a certain date, in a certain place, amid a certain environment.....He shut himself up within our limitations; He confined himself to our precise conditions. He allowed himself no selection, no liberties, no exceptions, no privileges. He took upon Him our ignorance. He was enclosed within our narrow experience."

Which wordy deliverance means that Canon Scott Holland knows all about Jesus; why he was born, what he was like, and that he was just the same as the ordinary person of his time and place.

On the other hand, Mr. R. J. Campbell tells the Christian public that it really knows nothing at all about Jesus. He says that we know less about him than we do about Buddha, Zoroaster, or Mohammed—

"Outside of the New Testament contemporary evidence as to his life and work is non-existent. Nowhere have we any such detailed account of His doings as would warrant us in putting Him in the same category with other great religious masters of men.....He takes no part in the history of his time, is quite unknown outside the petty subject State in which he was born; and, so far as the brief Christian records themselves go, He never was regarded by His followers as a human being."

There! you pay your money and you take your choice. You can either have Jesus who "assumed" all the qualities of contemporary human nature, or you can have the one who was pure myth from the beginning. Or, if you have sufficient faith, you will adopt both. Mr. Campbell himself, after practically dismissing Jesus as an historical character, yet says he believes he "can see a sublime (historical) figure at the beginning of Christian history." Well, but if there is no contemporary evidence for this figure, if his followers always treated him as a supernatural being, that is, a myth, on what evidence does Mr. Campbell believe in the historic reality? He might as easily believe in a historic figure that served as a basis for the stories of the Man in the Moon. Mr. Campbell's ill balanced sentimentalism is the sole ground for his belief. He admits the lack of evidence to prove the existence of the Gospel Jesus, but he believes it. Well, there is no arguing against a man who believes in "a magnificent personality of amazing force and moral loftiness," on no evidence whatever. One can only marvel and pass on.

The difficulty confronting Christians in this matter is a very real one. To claim that the Jesus of the four gospels is a veritable historic character is, to educated and thoughtful people, impossible. The absence of contemporary evidence is a strong argument against such a position; but, even though this were forthcoming, it would still remain impossible to believe in the miraculously born, miracle-working, resurrected, and supernatural Christ. People, of whom we have actual evidence as to their existence, were given a divine birth, and were said to have worked miracles, besides living in a more or less supernaturalistic atmosphere. The question is really not one of dates and testimony at all. It is a problem in historic psychology. Testimony to the miraculous in other religions does not convince Christians. Testimony to Roman Catholic miracles and visions leaves Protestants unaffected. And the same general rule must hold good of New Testament stories. There need be no question of deliberate imposture; it is simply a question of development. People testify to the miraculous not because the miraculous actually happens, but because they believe in it happening.

On the other hand, if the Jesus of the Gospels is dismissed as a non-historical figure, what is there left for Christianity to rest on? If the Gospel story be not the narration of an historic event, it is—nothing. It becomes a piece of pure mythology, and Christianity is left an intellectual vagrant, without visible means of support. To talk in a vague, half-intelligible, new theological manner about Jesus being the incarnation of an ideal humanity cannot save the situation, save for those who mistake pietistic sentimentalism for scientific thinking. Humanity will, for obvious reasons, put its ideals into human shape, but on this basis there is no compelling reason why we should call it Jesus Christ any more than Buddha, or Mohammed, or Man—with a capital M. If Jesus Christ is a mere name for humanity's changing ideal of moral and intellectual excellence, the very name of

Christian becomes misleading. Christianity is dismissed, and people who call themselves such are half-developed humanitarians retaining just enough of the supernaturalistic element to rob their humanitarianism of its effectiveness.

Oh what a fall was there! A prophetess calling herself Zenita, deriving magical powers from the sorcerers of Egypt, India, and the Middle Ages, who sold love philtres, amulets, and talismans to fashionable people for good round prices, has been fined £12 for fraud. The incident occurred at Ferney, where Voltaire lived for so many years. It is enough to make the old sceptic grin in his grave.

Mr. Chiozza Money, the Liberal candidate for North Paddington, is a clever man, but he should avoid the mistake of being too clever. He was asked at one of his meetings if he was in favor of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, and he replied that these laws were in abeyance, and he had not troubled about the subject. This statement was challenged on the spot. The questioner stated that "Mr. G. W. Foote, one of the most intelligent men in England, had been sentenced to two years' [it should be one year] imprisonment for 'blasphemy,' and only recently Harry Boulter had a month for the same offence." Mr. Money replied that "it was deserved,"—which is sheer nonsense, for the question was not Harry Boulter's deserts (in Mr. Money's mind), but whether he should have been prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws. The gratifying part of the matter was the evident approval by so many of the Postmen present (it was a postmen's meeting) of the questioner's description of Mr. Foote. For the rest, it appears that even very "advanced" people like Mr. Chiozza Money need educating on the subject of the laws affecting free discussion.

The West Ham Branch tried to reopen the question of the *Freethinker* in the West Ham Free Libraries, with the success that might be expected. After waiting six weeks, a reply was received from the Town Clerk stating that the Council had "decided to make no departure from the present practice of not placing the *Freethinker* on the tables at the libraries, but supplying it only to readers on application." Such is the sense of fairplay manifested by the Christian bigots on the Council. But why do we say "Christian bigots"? It is a pleonasm. (Most of the West Ham councillors will have to look in the dictionary for that word.) To say "Christian" is to say "bigot" too.

According to the *Daily Mail* report—though that is far from infallible—Mr. W. C. Steadman, the well-known Labor representative, has been giving a Central Finsbury meeting a little theology. He has confided to them his "honest belief" that Joseph Chamberlain's letters and manifestoes are written for him, but that they are nevertheless "the voice of a man that Providence, that God Almighty has afflicted for his wickedness in that unjust and wicked war in South Africa." Poor old Joe! And also poor old God! Why didn't he prevent Joe from bringing about the South African war, instead of letting him pull it through and giving him beans afterwards? It would have saved three hundred millions of money and tens of thousands of lives. We cannot congratulate Mr. Steadman on his Deity. We advise him to swop Gods as soon as possible.

"Acid Drops" are fewer than usual this week, but the raw material runs short while the newspapers, etc., are so full of the elections. Better luck next week!

HOLY MOSES.

By Egypt's banks, contiguous to the Nile,
King Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in style;
She shed her duds, and had a pleasant swim,
Then ran along the shore to dry her skin
(For towels in them days were not invented,
And with an annual bath were folks contented.)
Disporting 'mong the rushes, thick and thin,
She found the basket which the child lay in.
She drew the ark and child out from the water—
Inspection showed the kid was not a daughter—
Then to her maids she said in accents mild,
"Which of yez ladies is it owns the child?
'Tis none of yours, ye all are quick to say,
I doubt your word; I've known yez many a day;
But since he has a nose like Hebrew noses,
Bedad, he shall be christened Holy Moses."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 23, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.; at 7.30, "God's Place in the New Parliament."

January 30, Stratford Town Hall.

February 6, Manchester; 13, St. James's Hall; 20, St. James's Hall; 27, Birmingham Town Hall.

March 6, St. James's Hall, London; 13, Liverpool; 20, Leicester; 27, St. James's Hall, London.

April 3, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 30, St. James's Hall; February 6, St. James's Hall; 13, Glasgow.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 23, Stratford Town Hall; 30, Birmingham.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £108 15s. Received since:—W. Bailey, £6; T. Hopkins, £2; Mr. and Mrs. Roleffs, £1; Mrs. A. Harden, £1; Electron, 5s.; M. Corbyn, 10s. 6d.; Mechanic, 1s.; R. H. Side, £2; Eric Douglas Side, £2; Mr. and Mrs. Ringrose, £1 1s.; T. A. Matthews, 10s.; Richard Morris, 7s. 6d.; A. H. Smith, 10s.; A. R. Brown, 5s.; M. J. Charter, 5s.; (Sir) Hiram S. Maxim, £2 2s.; Gwiriowedd a Saif, £3 3s.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance (Secretary) acknowledges: A. J. Fincken, 4s.; Miss Bailey, 4s.; F. N. W., 4s.

W. T. NEWMAN.—It does serve for an "Acid Drop."

H. A. GILES.—Shall be considered.

J. MARTIN.—Please note that Tuesday is too late for paragraphs. We strain a point this time.

A. HARDEN, a lady correspondent, writes: "What causes me great astonishment is that I have lived in the world fifty years and until a few months ago never heard of your paper. Now we read it and pass it on."

J. BURRELL.—Glad to hear that Mr. Mackenzie Bell, the Liberal candidate for St. George's Hanover-square, answering you with respect to the Blasphemy Laws that "he certainly should support the repeal of them and thought prosecutions under them were injurious to religion." This is not the most perfect attitude, but it is better than supporting the Blasphemy Laws.

IRVINE WILLIAMSON.—We quite understand that many shrink from joining a Secular society from fear of losing their employment. Christian charity is such a beautiful thing when it warms up. We cannot undertake personally to arrange for lectures at Dewsbury. You should apply either to the National Secular Society or to the Secular Society, Ltd., at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. You might let us know what were Mr. Runciman's replies to your questions.

E. A. HAMMOND.—The Richard Carlile edition of Paine, in four vols., 1819, might be worth 10s., but you would have to find a customer. A bookseller would not give that amount.

S. HOLMES subscribes to the President's Fund as "some slight token of my high appreciation of your invaluable services to Freethought."

W. DODD.—Your good wishes are appreciated. Sorry you were not able to come up from Scotland to the Dinner, as you hoped to.

HARRY ORGAN.—If our Shakespeare lecture at Glasgow, which you went over from Edinburgh to hear, caused you to read the Master with renewed interest, it produced just the kind of effect we desired. Glad that, after reading the *Freethinker* for 18 years, you still regard it as "a necessary part of your life" and feel you "owe us a heavy debt of gratitude." This journal has certainly a number of very devoted admirers.

J. LAZARNICK.—May your "best wishes" for our "good health and prosperity" be realised.

RICHARD JOHNSON.—The Secular Society, Ltd., has spent a good deal on Freethought work in the provinces. It has assumed financial responsibility for all the Birmingham Town Hall lectures; it has rendered much assistance at Liverpool, and no mean assistance elsewhere. Some time ago a grant of £10 was made to the Manchester Branch, and more was promised at an early date if the Board of Directors were supplied with information that would enable them to come to a practical decision. It must be remembered that there are nearly eight millions of people in Greater London, and that, as our principal lecturers live in or near the metropolis, it is cheaper to make use of their services there. But lecturers have been offered to various parts of the provinces without much response; and, as a matter of fact, the provinces had all the benefit of the costly, but not very productive, organising-lecturer effort which was carried on not so very long ago.

J. H. MATSON.—What we said was perfectly correct—"There is no Free Love party in England." You admit it. We had no concern, in making that statement, with the opinions of a few isolated persons like yourself. Neither can we open our columns to a discussion of the subject. It is off our beat.

T. FREEMAN.—We don't deal with politics in the *Freethinker*, but we don't mind saying—for it is philosophy and not partisanship—that in our opinion the essence of the whole matter was very well expressed by Don Quixote in a conversation with Sancho

Panza. There never were but two parties in the world (he said), the Haves and the Have-Nots.

JAMES THOMAS (Quelta).—Glad you are "immensely pleased" with the *Freethinker*.

W. WAINWRIGHT.—Thanks for getting us two new readers, one of whom is coming up to London with you to hear us lecture at St. James's Hall.

A. D. CORRICK.—Your position is arguable, but we still think Ruskin essentially right.

W. E. PUGH.—Your letter was appreciated.

J. W. REPRON.—We did not enter the service of Freethought either for praise or for profit, and it does not disappoint us to miss the things you indicate. We keep our mind, as ever, steadily fixed on our object; and its progress, however slow, is our exceeding great reward. With regard to copy, we are a good deal overset at present, and must wait till some of it is worked off.

T. WILLIAMS.—We are obliged.

MR. AND MRS. RINGROSE.—All attended to. Glad you both read this journal weekly "with great relish" and regard it as "always bristling with intellectual light." Shall be very pleased to shake hands if you ever call on us.

R. H. ROSETTI.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

G. HOBBS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

RICHARD MORRIS, subscribing to the President's Fund, writes: "With the exception of three weeks, I have read the *Freethinker* ever since the close of the late Welsh revival, when I severed my connection with the Christian Church, much to the sorrow of my relatives and friends; and I freely remark that the intellectual and moral standard of the paper is beyond praise. It fills a gap in one's life."

T. MOULT.—Sorry our "Words to Freethinkers" seemed "pessimistic." It was not intended to be so; but we had to state hard facts. We smiled at your "please don't get discouraged." It is a sentiment foreign to our nature. Glad to have your compliments and hearty good wishes for 1910.

QUILL.—Sorry we cannot answer your questions precisely. We fancy Ashton Dilke must have been editing the *Dispatch* in 1872.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

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

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

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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.

PRIZES 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.

January will not be brilliantly successful at St. James's Hall. A crowd of philosophers would not sit still while a dog fight was going on, and English people have minds for little else while they are plunged in the excitement of a general election. In the circumstances, however, we have done better, perhaps, at St. James's Hall than might have been expected. Last Sunday evening the rain came down spitefully about three-quarters of an hour before the lecture; it was heavy enough to drench you in a minute or two. This disadvantage was on the top of all the others. Yet a good audience greeted Mr. Foote as he stepped on the platform with his chairman (Mr. A. B. Moss). The lecture was evidently much enjoyed, and was very warmly applauded at the close. Mr. Moss managed to draw several questioners, who were all (as it seemed) satisfactorily answered.

Mr. Foote intends to return to Shakespeare at St. James's Hall in February. For the present he must keep near the popular mind if he is to get an audience at all. Accordingly he will lecture this evening (Jan. 23) on "God's Place in the New Parliament." A promising title, which ought to attract a good meeting.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd delivers the second of the Stratford Town Hall lectures this evening (Jan. 23). The West Ham "saints" should see that he has a fine audience and a fine reception.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner this year was a record success. No less than 223 guests were seated at the

gaily decorated tables in the splendid Venetian Room of the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 11. It was the N. S. S. President's birthday, and it was particularly pleasant to him to see so many ladies, with their bright dresses and animated faces, lending a touch of brilliance to the scene, besides assuring him that he, as well as the movement, stood honorably in their regard. Almost everybody who is anybody in the Freethought movement in London was present. One exception was Mr. F. A. Davies, who was kept away by indisposition. It would be idle to attempt a list of even the better-known diners; but mention must be made of the veteran Mr. Side, who looked as active and cheerful as ever, in spite of his eighty-six years. Two foreign visitors may be mentioned, the London correspondent of the *Heraldo*, of Madrid, and Professor F. Tarrida del Marmol, an intimate friend of Ferrer's, and himself a refugee from Spain. Amongst the visitors from the provinces we noticed Mr. W. Bailey (Manchester), Mr. G. Roleffs (Liverpool), Mr. J. H. Gartrell (Penzance), Mr. H. Foyster (Clacton), Mr. and Mrs. Caunter (Westcliff-on-Sea), Mr. A. Clarke (King's Norton), and Mr. Horace Parsons (Evesham).

M. Furnémont, secretary of the International Freethought Federation, was unfortunately not able to attend the dinner, after all; but a cordial telegram was received from him (despatched from Lisbon) in the course of the evening. M. Furnémont had been obliged to start off for Portugal and Spain on Federation business. We see by Continental papers that he is going to interview the new Spanish Premier before his return, in order to arrange, if possible, for the restoration of Ferrer's property to the persons and purposes set forth in his will; and we earnestly hope M. Furnémont will be successful in this gallant enterprise.

The dinner was a good one (of course), and when it was over the tables were cleared away, leaving the room so that the guests could sit or move about at pleasure. The entertainment part of the program (with Madame Van Raalte at the piano) consisted of songs by Miss Edith Payne, and Mr. Percy Watson; a cello solo by Master Ernest Harrison; humorous selections by Mr. Will Edwards, junior, representing his more famous father, who was down with influenza; and last, but anything but least, a "turn" by Mr. Finlay Dunn, an exhilarating artist with a fine vein of exuberant comicality, quite unmarred by the vulgarity to which so many humorous performers are apt to condescend.

A full report of the oratory of the evening—including the Chairman's address and the speeches in proposing and responding to the toasts of "The National Secular Society" and "Freethought at Home and Abroad" by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Moss, and Heaford—will be found on another page of this week's *Freethinker*. Naturally the speeches all turned a good deal on the President's birthday. One pretty little speech by Miss Vance was made in presenting the President, on behalf of the N. S. S. Executive, four volumes of Furness's great Variorum Edition of Shakespeare—*Hamlet* (2 vols.), *King Lear*, and *Othello*. Inside the first volume of *Hamlet* was the following inscription, beautifully done as a labor of love by Donald James:—

"To GEORGE WILLIAM FOOTE, on the 60th Anniversary of his Birthday, and in the 20th year of his Presidency of the National Secular Society, these favorite plays of SHAKESPEARE are offered as a small token of esteem and affection by his colleagues on the Executive Council of the National Secular Society.—11th January, 1910."

Mr. G. Roleffs next appeared upon the scene with a birthday present from the Liverpool Branch, consisting of a handsome umbrella for the President and a handsomer flower-and-fruit stand for Mrs. Foote. These presentations threw the program speeches late, and the speakers all had to be brief. As it was the company did not break up till nearly twelve.

One of the speeches (Miss Vance's), and the references to her in the President's speech, necessitate an explanation, which may as well be given now as any other time. Indeed, this seems quite the psychological moment for it; and one has to find that moment in these cases. Miss Vance has for the past three months been suffering from eye trouble. One eye has been affected for years, and now the other eye is attacked. It is to be hoped that the specialists Miss Vance has been consulting will be able to do her some good. If they cannot, she will have to bear the burden of blindness. A sad calamity! yet one that is proving to her the sincere affection and esteem in which she is held by so many friends. It would be easy to give way to grief on such an occasion; but that is not what she would choose to do, or what we should choose to help her to do. Life is tolerable to higher natures while it is useful, and that serves as a basis for other satisfactions. Miss Vance is not made of the stuff that submits tamely to every stroke of fate. She will assert herself

in spite even of this terrible blow. Her knowledge, experience, and capacity still make her an effective Secretary; and she has loyal and energetic friends in Miss Kough and Miss Stanley. The former is doing the office work that requires eyesight. And though we do not attempt to make light of Miss Vance's calamity,—for it was a great shock to us,—we hope the merely practical side of the sequel justifies the Shakespearean sentence, "All may be well."

The Liverpool Branch's platform is occupied to-day (Jan. 23) by Mr. Joseph McCabe. We understand that it will be occupied by many London lecturers during the next three or four months.

A farewell hotpot supper will be given by the Liverpool Branch in honor of Mr. H. Percy Ward (who is leaving for America) at the Alexandra Hall on Thursday, January 27, at 8 p.m. Tickets 1s. 3d. each from Mr. J. Ross, 13 Carlingford-street.

The editor of the *Freethinker* is nobody. The people who reckon themselves somebody are nearly all agreed about that. And the editor of the *Freethinker* smiles. So he can't be quite such a nobody after all. Many of his readers would join him in that smile; the following one, for instance, who wrote to us at Christmas, and said, in the course of his letter: "I greatly admire and appreciate your manliness and straightforward direct style of writing. It is so much more needed now, when all of us (myself included) really appreciate liberty less, and are willing to make fewer sacrifices for it than formerly. The tyranny of people is to take the place of the tyranny of kings and nobles, and all the bulk of men want is beer, 'bacca, and football. Health and strength and hope I wish you; courage and zeal you've always plenty of."

A Welsh reader, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes that he read our "Words to Freethinkers" twice over and "came to the conclusion that they were written by an absolutely honest man." So he sent on his cheque accordingly as "a token of the gratitude" he feels towards us personally. "Your little paper," he adds, "is a great paper, and it has created a revolution in my mind." The rest of this correspondent's letter is extremely interesting, and we shall be glad to receive the further letter he promises.

A very clever American, sending his cheque to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes; "Dear Foote,—You have fought the good fight, and next to Colonel Ingersoll you have done more in recent years to knock the bottom out of the bottomless pit than anyone else. With my best wishes, Yours sincerely, HIRAM S. MAXIM."

Mr. W. H. Aggs, Liberal candidate for the Everton Division of Liverpool, replying to Mr. G. Roleffs, under date of January 8, wrote with respect to the Blasphemy Laws: "I quite agree that the laws to which you refer me are entirely antiquated and out of date and should be repealed. I am absolutely and strongly in favor of all questions, religious, political, or social, being fully and freely discussed and dealt with either by speaking, writing, or printing. The only limitation I make is that no one has a right to indulge in gross indecency, and when any person so deals with a question that it is obvious his main object is to provoke a breach of the peace he must be restrained. Controversy in the proper sense need I think never be so carried on. I agree that the State should not meddle with religious opinions or controversy unless it leads to a breach of the peace, as was unhappily the case in Everton last summer." This answer is perfectly satisfactory, provided Mr. Aggs is willing to guard against the Blasphemy Laws being brought back again (after being repealed) under cover of "indecenty."

"Infidel France," as the Christians all used to call it, and as it now indeed is, as far as the Government is concerned, does a good many things better than Christian England. Look at the following instance. A simple Paris constable, named Doray, died of terrible wounds inflicted upon him by the notorious "Apache," Liabeuf. His funeral was attended by a vast concourse of people, as might have been the case in London; but it would not have been attended by such officials as were present at Paris—the President of the Municipal Council, the Chief of Police, and representatives of the President of the Republic and the Presidents of the Chamber and the Senate. "Thus chivalrously and humanely and touchingly," the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* said, "does the French Republic render its last supreme homage to an obscure hero who has perished in the performance of his duty."

Speeches at the Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society,

HOLBORN RESTAURANT (ROYAL VENETIAN CHAMBER),
JANUARY 11, 1910.

Chairman: Mr. G. W. Foote.

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, I have to ask your attention now for the Chairman's address (hear, hear), which I do not intend shall last till the Day of Judgment. (Laughter.)

First, I have to congratulate all of us and the movement upon our record number to-night: we number 223. (Applause.) I congratulate myself as President, looking round the room, on the very considerable number of ladies present. (Hear, hear.) Our movement never was troubled with what is today a very troublesome question—the question of women; because we never made any distinction in work or position in our movement between the sexes. (Hear, hear.) In settling things in that way we have avoided all troubles and all disputes. (Hear, hear.) This may be a hint to outsiders. (Laughter.)

I am very sorry, of course, that an announcement which I put in the *Freethinker* tentatively has not realised itself. We are very sorry to miss M. Furnémont, the Secretary of the International Freethought Federation; but he is a man with great calls on his time, and often sudden calls, and he has hurried off to Lisbon, where he has to attend a rather hurriedly convened conference; from there he goes to Madrid, and I sincerely hope he won't end up at Barcelona. (Laughter.) We may be fortunate enough to get his attendance next year, but if I make an announcement then it will be even more tentative than this last one was.

I have just had put in my hand a letter from an old Freethinker in a foreign country, not known to the new generation of Freethinkers, but for whom I always retain a very warm place in my own heart, although I never had the good fortune to meet him in life. In the early eighties there was a blasphemy prosecution in Sweden, and amongst the very few stalwarts who stood firm was Captain Otto Thomson. (Applause.) I think I may venture, not only on my own behalf, but on yours, to answer Captain Otto Thomson's letter and say that we reciprocate all the good feeling he expresses. (Applause.)

A word as to the visitors. We have visitors to-night to my knowledge from Manchester, Liverpool, Ipswich, Evesham, Birmingham, Penzance, and other places, which for the moment I do not recollect. Well, that is gratifying too. It shows that there is a spirit of solidarity spreading amongst our forces. That is a great gain. Freethinkers have been so full of individuality that they have necessarily somewhat lacked cohesion in the heroic days of Freethought. There was necessarily a very large development of individuality, because only strongly individual people would ever stand out and fight for such an unpopular movement, and face the frowns and the wrath of their fellow-men. (Hear, hear.) In time, of course, as we multiply we shall become more normal in our emotional characteristics. The presence of the ladies testifies that this desirable consummation is being reached. We never are normal until the ladies join us in what I may call normal numbers. Through them we reach the children. Men alone are abnormal; women alone are abnormal; men and women and children together are normal, and constitute the unit of civilisation. (Applause.) We do not want to injure civilisation but to improve it. We do not want to destroy the indestructible basis of civilisation—the one sure and holy trinity of Father, Mother, and Child (hear, hear); but we want to rationalise that institution like all others, to throw glory into life, to banish misery, and to make the little children of future days infinitely happier than the superstition-cursed children of bygone times. (Applause.)

Well, now, I suppose on an occasion like this a man is expected to say a few words even upon such a distasteful topic as himself. I have lived long enough to have had enough of myself. I do not think there are any novelties in store for me in that direction. But as this happens to be my birthday (applause)—and I have lived more years in the world than I am going to tell you (Miss Vance: "We know,") but quite long enough, and with quite a long enough record of work for Freethought, to give me a little right to speak (hear, hear)—I shall not be trespassing upon you if I turn this occasion into one of greater intimacy than usual.

I have served nearly twenty years in the presidency of the National Secular Society. (Applause.) It was on the 20th day of February, 1890, that my great predecessor in this office, Charles Bradlaugh (applause), nominated me for the presidency at the meeting when he resigned his office. In very briefly acknowledging the honor that was paid to me, I said that those who had elected me were not to expect too

much: it was not easy to stride behind a giant, but I promised that I would at least do my best (hear, hear); and, whatever else may be said, I think you will agree that I have done that. (Applause.) And I hope I have imparted to my work at least something of the forthright and unblenching spirit of my great predecessor. (Applause.) One sentence of Bradlaugh's, standing at the Bar of the House of Commons, has always lived in my memory. I have thought of it at moments when I might be pardoned even for some dejection. No doubt, when I utter the words, many of you will remember them. Bradlaugh concluded that great speech of his at the Bar of the House of Commons by saying, "If I am not fit to represent my constituents they shall dismiss me, but you never shall. (Applause.) The grave alone shall make me yield." I have thought of that hundreds of times. And I think the Party will at least bear witness that, to the degree of my strength, I have acted upon the spirit of it. At any rate, I have never turned my back, to my knowledge, upon an active enemy of our cause. (Applause.)

Sometimes I feel, when people get into trouble and come to the President of the N. S. S., that they might be a little more considerate in their speech before they get into trouble and come to the President (hear, hear), and occasionally afterwards (hear, hear); but, after all, considerations of that kind need not trouble one to any great length. In every public position you have to take certain penalties. They are the disadvantages of the position. But whoever in the chair of the N. S. S. makes ill-wishers makes more well-wishers, and I am proud—even if it be a proud thing to say it—I am proud of the trust and the affection which have been expressed for me quite recently by scores and hundreds of the best men and women in our Party, from one end of the country to the other. (Applause.)

We are all of us alive now, but nobody knows, as they say in the churches, if we may not die to-night. (Laughter.) Well, I am not going to talk about preparing to meet my God. (Laughter.) I am ready. (Applause.) No one knows how long he has to live, but still I hope that I have time and work left to me to devote to the cause of Freethought. (Applause.) I hope to live to see my paper get through all its difficulties, and exist upon the sunnier side of the hedge. (Applause.) I hope, before I die, to be able to earn at least sixpence from it. (Laughter.) Whether I do or not I shall work on precisely as I have done hitherto. I am glad to know that I have been assisted and collaborated with by what I will venture to call the best brains in the Freethought party. (Hear, hear.) I heard of a man suggesting, some time ago, "Mr. Foote is jealous"; I suppose he meant of *him* (laughter) but I think you will bear me out when I say that I have at least never been jealous of the best men in the movement, when they were ready to stand with me either on the platform or in my paper. I hope, too, that when my time comes either to die or to resign I shall leave our party well in funds. Now the Freethought party never was in funds until within the last few years. The establishment of the Secular Society, Ltd., solved our financial problem. (Hear, hear.) It was inconceivable before that a Secular Society would ever have a thousand pounds at the bank. A man would have been considered a lunatic (laughter) even to predict that such a thing would ever come to pass. Well, you know, we have derived benefit from many wills; we are remembered in many other wills which, to use a business expression, will in the course of things mature. (Laughter.) We shall, before very long, come into actual possession of the Bowman bequest, which runs into several thousands of pounds. (Applause.) Now, I consider if I never did anything else, and never do anything else, that the establishment of the Secular Society, Ltd., which has solved our financial problem, will entitle me to at least a little grateful recollection in the minds of Freethinkers when I am turned to unrecognisable dust. (Applause.) Meanwhile, I hope that wherever the battle between reason and faith, Freethought and superstition rages, I may be holding your flag, not timidly and disgracefully in the rear, nor even mixed up indiscriminately in a cowardly fashion with the unrecognisable mob, but carrying that flag, your flag, Bradlaugh's flag, in the van of the fight. (Loud applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: I have received a telegram from M. Furnémont (it is from Lisbon), "Congratulations from the International Federation and the Portuguese section. Furnémont." (Applause.) In the absence of M. Furnémont you have, at least, got his message, and that will show you I was not romancing in the information I gave you. I have now to call upon a lady who wishes to say something, she tells me; and calling upon here I wish to say, I think on behalf of all of you, that we are profoundly sorry for Miss Vance's misfortune. We hope that nothing will be allowed to make any difference between her and us. (Applause.) We shall regard our old association as one to be always treasured. She will be our secretary as long as she wishes to be so, and we shall think all the more of her for proudly

and bravely standing up against misfortune and doing her duty to the cause. (Applause.)

MISS EDITH M. VANCE: Ladies and gentlemen, in the early history of these dinners I used to be one of the speakers. For some reason or other—I think it was my own fault—one year I was omitted, and after that the attendance increased. (Laughter.) That is the reason I have not spoken lately. I am proud to say this is our record dinner, and I promise not to do it again, so do not stay away another year on that account. (Laughter.) Well now, I want to tell you the reason I am speech-making to-night. It occurred to the London Executive that as this is our President's sixtieth birthday (laughter) they would like to express its wish on their behalf for Many Happy Returns of the Day, and also to make Mr. Foote some little present. Everybody, of course, wanted to make the present; but as the Executive is rather large, and there are a good many speakers amongst them, we did not see very well how we would get through with the business. Well, we had—or, rather, I had—a Committee Meeting; it is my business to call the Committee together, you know, so I called the most workable Committee I could think of. I have learned from the President that a small committee is always the most workable, and so I called a Committee of one, and that one was unanimously elected—and that is why I am here. (Laughter.) It is not the only tip I have had from the President in my years of service, but that is another story. Now I want to tell you how glad the Executive are to know that he is 60 and not out, to express to him, in the giving of this little present, their admiration for him as a man, and their unbounded devotion to him and loyalty to him as President, and to ask him to accept four volumes of his favorite author—four volumes of the greatest edition, I believe, of Shakespeare—two volumes of *Hamlet*, one of *King Lear*, and one of *Othello*: all of which I know are amongst his first favorites. We give them to him with our very best wishes, and hope that he is going in for at least another 60. (Applause.) And now I come to the inscription that has been prepared as a work of love, and I am told it is a work of art by another good old Freethinker, Donald James, who has put his heart into his work. I am sorry I cannot read it to you, but just at present I am like the man with the boil on the back of his neck—I know it is there, but I cannot see it. (Laughter.) It is inscribed to George William Foote on the sixtieth anniversary of his birth and the twentieth year of his Presidency, and contains the best wishes of his London Executive. (Loud applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it of course gives me very great pleasure to receive this token of trust and respect from the N.S.S.'s Executive. Miss Vance has rightly said that Shakespeare is my favorite author. Well, that is a very mild way of putting it, because there are not very many in the competition. (Laughter.) But I was thinking at one point of her admirable little speech of something that occurred when Harry Hotspur was going off to the fight. His wife wanted to know where he was going and what he was going to do, and you will remember, perhaps, she gets hold of his hand and says she will break his little finger if he doesn't tell her, and she says she will tell nobody, and he says he is sure she won't, because he won't tell her. (Laughter.) Now, I know that a lady couldn't keep a secret (laughter)—I guessed that what I didn't tell you she would. You know, the ladies never like to talk about their own age; but they are fluent enough where we are concerned. But that is mere jocularly by the way. I return my thanks to the Executive; and as Miss Vance herself has been Secretary most of the time of my Presidency, I am glad to thank her personally too (hear, hear) for her devotion to the cause, and her ceaseless true loyalty to the President—not in any lickspittle way which I should detest, but in the way of perpetual readiness to do whatever may be thought advisable or necessary. (Hear, hear.) It would be impossible for one to have in that sense, for any President to have, a more devoted Secretary than Miss Vance. (Applause.) I would not have said so much perhaps if it were not for the peculiarities of this occasion. I wish her to know once for all that much as I welcome these handsome volumes of Shakespeare's plays, edited by perhaps the first Shakespearean scholar in the world, I regard books, poetry, intellect itself if you will, as but dust in the balance compared with friendship, goodness of nature, and the milk of human kindness. (Loud applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: To make a further inroad on the program the Liverpool Branch has sent up Mr. Roleffs, as its representative on this occasion, and on behalf of that Branch he has a few words to address to you.

MR. ROLEFFS: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. Surely a time more appropriate could not have been chosen for this Freethinkers' Dinner than January 11, because it is the birthday of our President. Another thing, which Miss Vance has reminded us of, it is the sixtieth year of his life. Therefore, on behalf of the Liverpool members of the

N. S. S., I offer him our heartiest congratulations, coupled with the earnest wish that he may be spared to render many years of usefulness to the great cause with his eloquent tongue and trenchant pen. For twenty years, as Mr. Foote as told you, he has always been in the thickest of the fight. Does any of you know that he has ever shown his back to the foe? Even his bitterest enemies could not accuse him of cowardice. His twelve months' imprisonment for blasphemy proved that, and his establishment of the Secular Society, Limited, is of no less importance, the true value of which will only be properly realised by a generation of Freethinkers yet to come, who will reap the rich harvest which Mr. Foote has sown. Well, after all, is it not infinitely better to give this appreciation and present to Mr. Foote now, when he is living (hear, hear), while he can see and hear us and be encouraged by us, instead of doing it over his coffin, when he can no longer know and understand how much we value his character and work? Now, as a very small token of our appreciation, a few Liverpool Secularists have joined together to make Mr. and Mrs. Foote a small present as an outward and visible sign of our inward Freethought grace. It is an umbrella for Mr. Foote, something which Mr. Foote can put by for a rainy day, and a cake dish and flower stand for Mrs. Foote. (Applause.) I hope you will honor us by accepting them as a little evidence of our loyalty to you, and to the cause you so valiantly represent. (Loud applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I suppose, as my wife is not a public speaker, I must acknowledge these presents too. I suppose the idea was that we should remember the Liverpool Branch indoors and out of doors. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I am an awful fellow for losing umbrellas, and therefore I always have a cheap one; but this is one I shall take care of. In fact, I do not know that I ought to take it out in the wet. I thank you sincerely on behalf of my wife, as well as myself. It is not so much the value of the present, as the good heart that prompts it. (Applause.)

MR. COHEN: Ladies and Gentlemen, I have a very long speech ready, but I will save it; or perhaps, if the editor won't object, I will print it. All I want to say on that is, that although we always feel the need of ourselves, yet perhaps never before as at present, when this may be the last year we shall have a chance of eating white bread (laughter), and with threats of invasion and war and what-not, yet perhaps never before in the country was there so urgent a need of a Society which stands for principles that are wider than the petty patriotism of party politicians, and wider even than a lot of the inflated egotism which passes muster as national pride. I could make a long speech on that, for two or three hours, but I will be merciful, so you will please imagine that you have listened to one of the most impressive speeches that have ever been delivered. I want to say a word on another matter that has already been touched upon. It has been mentioned that we have got the anniversary of the President, celebrating, or deploring, his sixtieth birthday. It has also been mentioned that it is also the twentieth anniversary, roughly, of his presidency of the N. S. S. But there is another anniversary near at hand, namely, about the thirtieth anniversary of his editorship of that scurrilous and illiterate production, the *Freethinker*. (Laughter.) Well, now, I do not want him to be unduly egotistical about having achieved the feat of living for sixty years, because, given time and good fortune, most of us could do that. (Laughter.) It depends upon a number of minor circumstances, not the least of which is the good humor of the public; but not so many of us could have been President of the N. S. S. for twenty years, and still fewer of us could have edited or kept the *Freethinker* alive for thirty years. (Hear, hear.) These two last things require certain qualities of courage, pertinacity, conviction of principle, and a sort of cheery Micawber-like faith in Providence (laughter), and only those who have been intimately associated with the work know how essential these qualities are to the life of a Society like the N. S. S. (Hear, hear.) If my nearly twenty years' experience on the Freethought platform has taught me nothing else it has at least taught me to value that.

Well, now, however much one may criticise the President (and everybody is at liberty to do that—it is one of the things he is elected for—if the President could not be criticised we should have to criticise one another, and then we should not be able to exist), Freethought has been his life-long love. I do not know whether he has had any others, but if he has, it has been Freethought so long that any other attachment must have been in the nature of a mere flirtation (laughter) and easily got over. He has given to Freethought the utmost that anybody can give, and that is himself. (Applause.) And that fact, I think, stands above everything and beyond everything; and when a man gives himself to a movement, when he devotes his life exclusively to that movement, I think it demands the respect, not only of the people in the movement, but of the

people outside, who value the real essentials of the welfare of the nation. (Applause.) So I abbreviate my very long speech by asking you to join in the toast of the N. S. S.—not only success to the N. S. S., but also long life and good health to its President. (Applause)

Mr. J. T. LLOYD: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I have only just one word to say in response to that toast, and it is this: I am here from the depths of a loyal and friendly heart to join enthusiastically in the congratulations offered to the President on his achieving with such good health and spirits his sixtieth year, and in wishing him very many happy returns of the day, and very many years of service both as President of the N. S. S. and as editor of the *Freethinker*. (Applause.)

Mr. A. B. MOSS: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Cohen has told you what a very brilliant speech he could have made out of the small material he had to deal with: what a wonderful speech I could have made out of the material I have got to talk about if there were only time. Fortunately, however, for me, Mr. President, there is no time; therefore, all I shall be able to say in the few moments at my disposal will be this: I believe that Freethought on the Continent is in a very healthy condition (hear, hear); and I am quite sure, from this gathering here to night, that Freethought at home is very far from dead. (Hear, hear.) Although it may be perfectly true that, as an organisation, we are in a somewhat scattered condition, it only needs a great event to bring us together. We are brought together annually, at festive occasions of this kind, and when a very serious event happens, like the foul murder of Senor Ferrer. On that occasion a very great gathering took place in St. James's Hall, and we could see the spirit of Freethinkers in this country then. (Hear, hear.) Well, ladies and gentlemen, all we need, therefore, is to be constantly in touch with our brothers and our sisters in Freethought, gather them together for the good work, and march on to higher and nobler achievements as the ages roll. (Applause.)

Mr. HEAFORD: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I am not going to talk to you about my great speech, because I am going to achieve it. I am not going to recount all the events in the history of Freethought during the 365 days that have elapsed since we last met. That would take 365 hours at least. Mr. Moss has already told you all that we have done, and the other speakers have told you more. (Laughter.) What I have to say new is precisely this: that we are standing to-day, I think, in a more favorable position, not only as a national Freethought party, but as an international Freethought party, than ever we did before. Our union to-night on this sixtieth birthday of Mr. Foote, on an occasion when we see around us so many of our colleagues of early years, when in our memory we can record the achievements and the victories which we have won during that time, marks the progress which our views have made during the short years during which we have been able to contribute our labors with tongue and pen to the growth of the Freethought movement; but more than that, more than our presence here, and more than our work in England, there is the important fact that the Freethought party in every country forms part and parcel of this universal pulsation of the human intellect towards emancipation in every land. We are to-day enjoying a real royal birthday, the birthday of Mr. Foote (hear, hear), but yesterday there was a birthday of another Freethinker, of Senor Ferrer. Had he not been foully murdered by the reactionaries on October 13 last he would have achieved his fiftieth year yesterday. But Ferrer will live during all the ages; and precisely because the martyrdom with which his work was crowned by the great criminals of Barcelona only a short time ago. (Applause.) There is an intense movement on the Continent principally aroused by that great event on October 13 last; and I propose to bring my remarks to a close by submitting that the following should be sent as a message from this meeting to the Spanish Prime Minister, and to the Spanish Government:—

"That this meeting congratulates Senor Moret, the Spanish Prime Minister, on the restoration of the constitutional guarantees in Spain, and urges upon him to grant an amnesty to the prisoners connected with the incidents of July last in Barcelona, and to restore to Ferrer's heirs the property bequeathed by him for the continuation of his educational work."

I will hand this resolution to the President, a copy of which has already been handed to a Spanish correspondent at this meeting. I ask you to drink this toast, "Freethought at Home and Abroad." (Loud applause.)

REVELATION.

"Ah, sir, we do enjoy your sermons," remarked an old lady to a new curate. "They are so instructive. We never knew what sin was until you came to the parish."

Let it Come.*

THEN let the new religion come,
With men of knowledge later:
The only hope of peace on earth,
When men are manlier, greater.
Man's fear of man shall then depart,
When fear of God is dead,
And men be fit for brotherhood
When the last priest has fled.
The bitterness of fatal strife
Shall be a thing unknown,
The feuds of men begin to cease
When the Church is overthrown.
With minds relieved from haunting dreams,
Calm-hearted men shall be,
And ancient problems soon be solved
In pleasant rivalry.
The children in the home and school,
Fearless, all truth shall learn,
Blackminded priests shall not rule there
And unsafe knowledge spurn.
The past will shrink away in shame
And error leave its throne,
When men have ceased to fight about
The triple god unknown.
The mighty burden of the Church
Shall then no longer weigh
Deluded populations down,
The needless priest to pay.
The Church's wealth set free, shall then
Become the people's treasure,
Re-opening all the springs of life,
Enlarging joy and leisure.
And men set free from foolish thought,
And wasteful speculation,
Shall concentrate on nobler work
With high deliberation.
And then the faith of all good men
Simple shall be and clear:
Now I can trust my fellow man
Because no God I fear.
The happy days are coming, see
The Church's hour half-past;
While thousands of the priests of God
Have turned iconoclast.
The Bishop, Cardinal, and Pope
The fatal times deplore,
To save the dying Church they make
One frantic effort more.
Too late, too late, her doom is near,
Bewailings now are vain:
Rejoice men of triumphant zeal,
The world grows young again.
Come happy days, let sickly fear
Be dead, the priest be dumb,
The old religion fade away,
The endless new time come.

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Obituary.

THE Freethought cause has just lost a staunch supporter by the sudden death on the 13th instant of Mr. E. G. Taylor, of Manchester, in his sixty-ninth year. We believe that some twenty to twenty-five years ago he was an active member of the Manchester Branch N. S. S., but of late years his endeavors to promote its principles have taken the direction of letters to the local press upon a great variety of subjects, upon which he expounded advanced positions with great vigor and clearness, and thereby from time to time excited useful discussions. His friend and executor, Mr. J. D. Gilmour, of Glasgow, officiated at a brief memorial service at Mr. Taylor's residence, and gave an impressive reading of Austin Holyoake's Burial Service address. Mr. George Payne, as an old friend and colleague of the deceased, also attended the funeral at the Manchester Southern Cemetery.

* See previous verses, "Let it Go," *Freethinker*, Dec. 26, 1909.

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.**INDOOR.**

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, London, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "God's Place in the New Parliament."

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "The Only Real Substitute for Christianity."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 3.15, Special General Meeting; 7.30, E. C. Saphin, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon) Sidney Cook and W. Bradford.

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Oddfellows Hall, Forest-road): W. Heaford, 3, "Francisco Ferrer and the Modern Schools in Spain"; 7, "Francisco Ferrer: Personal Views and Impressions of One Who Knew Him."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward, 12 (noon), "My Thirteen Years' Experience as an Atheist Lecturer"; 6.30, "Do the Dead Live? Why! Answer No."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Joseph McCabe: 3, "Christianity and Marriage"; 7, "Sir Oliver Lodge and the Future Life."—Monday, January 24, in the Picton Lecture Hall, at 8, Joseph McCabe, "Evolution of Mind," with sixty beautiful lantern illustrations.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road. All Saints): 6.30, Emil R. Voigt (Olympic Champion), "Vegetarianism and Power of Endurance."

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, G. F. Berry, "Buddhism."

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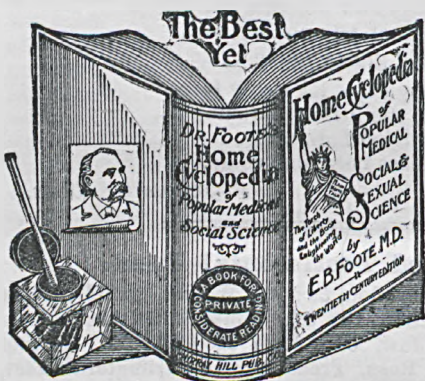
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