

# THE Freethinker

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*Though you assume the face of a saint, a hero or a martyr, the eye of the passing child will not greet you with the same unapproachable smile if there lurk within you an evil thought, an injustice, or a brother's tears.*

—MAETERLINCK.

## A Christian Jew. A Study in Pathology.

THERE is a Society in England for the Conversion of Jews to Christianity. It raises and spends some forty thousand pounds a year. The number of its converts appears to be so small that every one of them, on the average, costs the Society a year's income. And it is cynically said that every time a child of Israel is brought over to the Nazarene faith a bad Jew is turned into a worse Christian.

Certainly it is strange that any self-respecting Jew should change his own religion for Christianity. Apart altogether from the fact that Jewish theology is simple in comparison with Christian theology, and that one God (without a rival or a partner, as Gibbon said) is more credible, or less incredible, than three Gods in one, and a Devil over and above that, and a Virgin Mother of God over and above that,—there is the great historic consideration that Christianity has persecuted the Jews with constant and relentless malice, has shed the blood of their race like rivers, and heaped upon them every outrage and insult, from the ravishment of their women to the fastening upon them of an ignominious gaberdine. If the maxim of Jesus be true, "By their fruit ye shall know them," every Jew should loath the religion of Christ. When he fawns upon it, he is beyond or below humanity, and in either case a traitor to his own race.

Some will say that all that is past. But the past is the great reality. The present is only a moment, and the future does not yet exist. The past is precisely what we have to go by in forming our judgments and deciding our actions. What has been has been. That fact cannot be altered. And it is this which makes the great tragedy of human life. The poor old woman burnt as a witch, the poor little child tortured to make it confess its parents' heresy, the strong man murdered by inches in the name of Christ,—all these suffered their awful fate. In the life of humanity it is as real, except to the callous and unimaginative, as if it happened to-day. The evil was done, and it cannot be undone. It is an imperishable part of history. Time and space have no relation to the matter. Facts are facts, whether old or new. To a philosopher the cry of agony that died away in death in the far past is as real as the cry of agony that strikes the ear at the present moment.

Christian persecution of the Jews, however, is not a thing of the past. They are still brutally treated where Christianity wields unquestioned power. Look at Russia. The "pogroms" there are a disgrace to Christendom—a scandal to civilisation. Every injustice, every oppression, every cruelty, has been inflicted on the Jews even under the rule of the present Czar. Crimes that might make the worst inmates of a prison shudder have been perpetrated gaily, with a religious gusto, and a sense of pleasing

God. Thinking of these things, a Jew might easily turn anarchist or assassin; the nobler his nature the more he might burn with passionate resentment; even in choosing the mistaken path he might show his superiority to the plunderers and tormentors of his race. But what ignominy could be deeper than to slaver the brutal tyrants of his own people, and leave his own religion for theirs? If he cannot do more, he may well spit at them and their God.

## II.

I have had something to do lately with a converted Jew. His name is Warschauer—J. Warschauer. I do not know what "J." stands for. It ought to be Jacob. Of all the "J's." in the Old Testament that one seems the most suitable to this gentleman. As most of my readers know already, the gentleman is a *reverend* gentleman. He is a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He belongs to the Congregational denomination. At present he is stationed at Bradford. Not long ago he was stationed in London. That is how I came to form his acquaintance. He was for some little time on the Executive Committee of the Secular Education League. I must do him the credit—I *have* done him the credit—of saying that he is sound on the principle the League stands for. And I should have been delighted to say no worse of him. But it isn't a year or two that shows us a man, as Emilia told Desdemona; and you have to see a man in more than one aspect before you can judge him with any approach to adequacy.

Many men are agreeable enough until they are crossed. When they cannot get their own way they become very disagreeable. If their vanity is seriously wounded they are capable of almost anything. The Rev. J. Warschauer appears to belong to this category. He would probably have got on all right with me as long as we only touched each other at points of agreement. It was touching each other at points of disagreement that revealed him to me as about the most distasteful person I ever encountered.

Mr. Warschauer is good enough to say, in a publication that I shall deal with presently, that he "accepted an invitation to debate" with me on "Theism or Atheism?" I think it advisable to add that the invitation did not come from me. Neither did it come from my friends or my party. It came from his own friends and party. The North London Christian Evidence League, with which he is officially connected, was the prime mover in the matter. It had arranged a public debate between the Rev. Mr. Gunn and Mr. C. Cohen—the later representing the North London Branch of the National Secular Society; it had arranged another public debate between the Rev. W. T. Lee and Mr. Joseph McCabe, the latter representing the Rationalist Press Association; finally, it approached the N. S. S. Secretary with a view to arranging a public debate with me. Mr. Warschauer was suggested as its representative, and I had no objection to meeting him. A small joint-committee was formed, and the debate came off at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the evenings of March 30 and 31. Hence all these tears.

## III.

I have had a good many public debates in my time, some of which have been printed, and I do not remember having had any sort of quarrel with those



I debated with. One of them presented me with a book "in recognition of gentlemanly conduct in debate." I was never out (as they say now) for anything but the truth—as far as I see and know it; I believe I am naturally too fair-minded to take advantage of anyone in controversy—at least I cannot imagine myself doing anything of the kind; nor can I conceive myself losing my temper on the platform; for even if I were an ill-tempered person, which I do not think I am, I fancy it will be generally allowed—by foes as well as friends—that I am tolerably well able to take care of myself in platform discussion. At any rate, I have had a long and varied practice, and losing one's temper is less likely than ever in such circumstances.

Mr. Warschauer's public debate with me was, I understand, the first of the kind in which he was ever engaged. Allowance could be made, therefore, for his losing his temper in new and trying conditions; and a frank "I'm sorry," would have consigned the fault to oblivion as far as Freethinkers are concerned. But I regret to say what many more than I have said, that Mr. Warschauer's loss of temper was partly real and partly artificial. Finding that it served his turn, he played it for all it was worth. He wanted an excuse for something that will appear in the sequel. This he gained by deliberately irritating the audience, or at least the larger part of it,—not by arguments and illustrations, but by personal remarks, such as no other audience would have stood for a minute.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

### A Testimonial to Miss Vance.

THE National Secular Society's Conference, held at Birmingham on Whit-Sunday, resolved to raise funds for a Testimonial to its Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, in recognition of her "long, eminent, and valuable services" to the Society in particular and to the Freethought cause generally.

That this resolution has my personal concurrence is proved by the fact that I proposed it to the Conference myself. But that is only a formal proof. I desire to say something warmer and more human.

When I accepted the Presidency of the National Secular Society—which I did not seek, but which was imposed upon me by Charles Bradlaugh's nomination and the vote of a special meeting of members—I found Mr. Robert Forder occupying the post of Secretary. After a brief while there came a radical alteration. It was decided that the Secretary should not be elected at the Annual Conference but appointed by the Executive. Then came a rearrangement and Miss Vance became Secretary. Practically, then, she has been Secretary during the whole term of my Presidency. The interregnum already referred to is hardly worth taking into account.

I am therefore in a position, if anybody is, to speak with authority about Miss Vance. And I desire to say that I have the highest opinion of her intelligence, her character, and her devotion to the Freethought cause, which has been the one great love of her life. Her energy and capabilities might have gained her a profitable place in the world. She has preferred to take mere soldier's pay in fighting for her principles. She is staunch to the heart's core. I have had to trust many important things to her, and she has never failed me.

Miss Vance's loss of sight, and her late almost fatal illness, appeal profoundly to our sympathies. But they are not the ground of this Testimonial. The ground of that is her great, invaluable service to the movement. Her trials only make this the psychological moment for giving shape to our appreciation.

Let us concentrate on the Vance Testimonial. The President's Fund can drop out for a while. Let us all do our best to show in a way that cannot be misunderstood, a way that is above words, that she is dear to the party she has served so long and so well.

G. W. FOOTE

### On Thinking.

BY courtesy all men are rational beings. In actuality the description needs careful qualification and definition. In the widest sense of the term it is true that all men think, but it is not true that all men love the exertion of careful thinking, or have ability enough to carry their thinking step by step to an irresistible conclusion. Still less have they the courage to face the conclusion even when the ability is there to see what it must be. In such cases logical thought is shunned because of its perceived consequences. The phrase "I don't like to think it's true" expresses a very common frame of mind. With such the determining factor is not whether a statement is true, but whether it is agreeable. And to realise the agreeable the mind is deliberately closed to evidence that points to an undesirable conclusion. Much of this passes muster for optimism. As a matter of fact, it is due to want of courage. To face a conclusion revolting to one's interest or inclination demands a certain strength of character and detachment of mind of which only a comparatively few are capable. Sheer love of truth for truth's sake is one of the rarest of virtues, but it is nevertheless one of humanity's most valuable—if not most valued—possessions.

The other day the *Times* devoted a leading article to what it called "The Irksomeness of Thought." It prefaced its remarks with a quotation from Bishop Butler, pointing out the indisposition of people to think out a subject, and declared that the statement was as true to-day as when it was first penned. With this we quite agree; but the conclusion that Butler's remark illustrated "a universal tendency of the human mind to shrink from the trouble of really thinking out any of its so-called opinions" is one that ought not to be taken without qualification. For "tendency" is here surely a dangerous and question-begging expression. To say that there is a tendency in the human mind to shrink from thinking contains no more truth and affords no more enlightenment than a statement to the exact contrary. One might, indeed, truthfully say that the almost universal habit of explaining things in terms of "tendency" is in itself one of the most serious obstacles to vigorous and logical thought. All men do think, more or less; and whether they think out their opinions or not is very largely a question of education and general environment. Of course, the ability with which the thinking is done will vary in different instances, but this does not effect the essential fact. Human nature is chock full of "tendencies," good, bad, and indifferent. It is circumstances that determines which shall find actual expression.

Average human nature, we may grant, desires to get through life with the maximum degree of comfort. But this does not mean that human nature exhibits any deeply rooted and ineradicable repugnance to effort. The energy expended on games and various forms of sport proves that, given congenial work, effort will not be wanting. It may be said that play which involves an expenditure of nervous energy is an organic need of the higher forms of animal life, and its performance is therefore assured. With this we should agree; but, putting on one side the mental element in most games, it may surely be argued that the organic demand for brain exercise is, to begin with, as insistent in its sphere as is the demand for bodily exertion. The constant questioning of children is a fact patent to all. The fondness of children for games involving some measure of intellectual exercise is as patent as their liking for physical play. Teachers in charge of schools in poor districts tell me that while the children are very bright while young—most probably due to their being under less rigid control than children in better class families—they fall off markedly in later years—a phenomenon that may be safely attributed to lack of nurture and force of example. Moreover, the necessity for physical exercise is recog-



nised by all. The relation between physical exercise and physical health is, and always has been, plain; the relation between mental exercise and mental health is only seen here and there, and often only in a fitful way. If the mentally acute individual emerges, we admire him—sometimes; but we put ourselves to little real trouble to secure his emergence.

The truth seems to be that whether people think out their opinions or not—within, of course, the measure of their natural capacity—is a question first, of education, and second, of social environment. It is true, as the *Times* writer remarks, that people—

“take their opinions upon every conceivable subject ready made; from their favorite newspaper, from the accepted beliefs of the society in which they move, or of the party to which they attach themselves; from old tradition, from custom, from hereditary association; from any source except that of independent thought.”

All this is true enough, and the complete explanation lies not in postulating some occult “tendency” in human nature, but in the fact that the main force of their social environment is designed to produce this result. Whether it be a matter of food, of dress, or of opinion, independence of action or thought calls forth at once social opposition. Even in the harmless instance of the harem skirt, there is the disgraceful spectacle of bands of well-dressed hooligans mobbing women in the public streets, with newspapers recording the incidents as so much good copy, but without their having the common decency to raise a word of protest.

What has been the history of the human race in relation to independent thinking, and what is the present position? Socially, it has always been to the interest of the established powers to encourage the influence of mere authority. Theories of government have proceeded far more upon the right of certain persons or classes to rule than upon any principle that would appeal to educated reason. And as a consequence criticism of existing institutions has always been more or less unpleasantly resented, and the critic made to feel the heinousness of his action. Sometimes the critic has been killed, sometimes imprisoned, but always discouraged, and his position made as painful as possible. And one may safely assert that if those who are independent in mind were to forward to the press a protest against the elaborate pantomimic display and semi-magical ritual of the coming Coronation, the *Times* would certainly not offer such a protest the hospitality of its columns. It complains that people will not think; it fails to recognise itself as one of the factors that make for the discouragement of independent thinking.

The influence of religion has been still more fatal to independent thought. Here the ban against it has been as complete as it could possibly be. During all the centuries that religion has been in existence its one consistent work has been the elimination of the critical, inquiring, independent type of mind, and the development of its opposite. It is, indeed, one of the peculiar and fatal qualities of all punishments for heresy that they can only affect honest men and women. Rogues, cowards, hypocrites remain unaffected by them. And even when society has advanced beyond the stage of putting to death for a difference of opinion, punishments of other kinds are meted out. All are made to feel that an easy life and a profitable career—as the world counts profit—can only be secured by submission to authority. The necessity for this is impressed upon all by direct instruction and by the insidious influence of social pressure. The whole mental atmosphere becomes saturated with the feeling that opinions which are not supported by authority are more or less discreditable, and that those who hold them must express themselves in hushed tones and with every possible concern for opinions that are already in possession. When we bear in mind the nature of the whole process, historical and social, instead of

treating the mental timidity of people as proof of a tendency to shun the irksomeness of thought, we ought rather to speak of a tendency to independent thinking so strong that not all the centuries of social and religious persecution have been able to eradicate it.

The essence of the whole matter appears to me this. The vast majority of people are not hypocrites because they are born with any innate love for hypocrisy, nor, on the other hand, are they so constructed as to face persecution on account of an opinion. Nor, yet again, is there any innate incapacity for reasoning out an opinion. It is here almost entirely a question of training, of education, of environment. Given an education that from the outset emphasises the value of independent opinion, and a social environment that at worst refrains from punishing it, and at best treats it as one of its most valuable assets, and within the limits of the capacity of each, independent thinking might easily become the characteristic of the majority instead of a mere handful. At present, society is in a conspiracy against each newcomer to force him into a common mould. Emphasis is laid upon opinions that are to be reached, instead of upon methods of reaching them. Not *how* we think, but *what* we think, appears to be the chief concern of our educators, the whole aim being to turn out a set of opinions of a stereotyped kind. We need to radically reverse our methods. We can never make a philosopher of a fool or a genius of a mediocrity; but it is at least possible to teach everyone to use their brains efficiently, to take pride in the certainty of the opinions reached, and to feel that no social censure will result from their expression.

C. COMEN.

### The Riddle of Man.

WE are admittedly imperfect beings and live in an imperfect world. This is a fact that cannot be denied. It is also a fact which Theists are bound to try to explain. A perfect Creator and an imperfect creation do not tally. Indeed, the main business of theologians has always been to frame fresh apologies for God. One of the earliest of these apologies has been known as the Fall of Man. The divines declare that there is in human nature a virulent poison, called sin, which entered into it as the result of an act of disobedience on the part of its originator. By eating the apple Adam poisoned both himself and all his descendants to the end of time. According to Paul, Nature's imperfection is a part of the penalty of man's transgression. That is to say, Nature shares the consequences of man's fall, and is destined to have a share in his redemption through Christ. The apostle's theory is unique:—

“The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom. viii. 19, 22).

It is an ingenious hypothesis; but it is difficult to see how it can ever have been accepted as a satisfactory solution of the discrepancy between a perfect God and an imperfect Universe. It is easy enough to say that man alone is to blame for his own sinfulness; but the problem is to explain how God could have created a being capable of becoming sinful, and this has never been and never can be done. God and the Universe disavow each other at every point, the consequence being that the apologists are in a worse plight to-day than they ever were before.

Many present-day divines, having been forced to adopt the theory of evolution, no longer retain the doctrine of the Fall, and this is how they now account for human imperfection:—

“We have no perfection, because it is not perfection, but the striving for it, the reaching after something yet



beyond, that fits us best. To arrive at a point where we had to stop, because there was nothing more to be done, imagine that as a destiny! It is too horrible to think of. The nethermost hell, with a chance of working our way out of it, would be vastly better."

But it is sheer folly for an imperfect man to undertake to determine what life would be to a perfect one. It is quite true that, being imperfect, the striving after perfection fits us best; but, surely, if we were perfect, some other mode of living, some other forms of activity, would contribute to our felicity. The curious thing is that the very divines who assert that a perfect man would be an embodiment of misery, preach a God who is described as absolutely perfect; and yet they do not say of him that he finds life intolerably dull and tame. Perfection means the absence of fault, flaw, or defect—a thoroughly healthy organism placed in an equally healthy environment. It would be unmitigated nonsense to maintain that a human being so endowed would be bored to death because there would be nothing to be done by him. It is true that work is good for us, but it is good for us only because we cannot live without it. It is an essential condition of our very existence. But there is no evidence to show that we were sent here in order that we might do a certain amount of work. The truth is that we work in order to live, not live in order to work. "The world is a world for workers," a liberal divine says. "We are here for that, and to find our happiness in that." True, no doubt, but there is no justification for the saying that the world is left imperfect by a good God "in order that we may add to it our contribution."

The weight of evidence is decidedly against the belief that God made man, or that the whole process of evolution, during countless millions of years, was designed and directed by an infinitely powerful, wise, and beneficent Being for the direct purpose of its culminating in the production of man. Such a belief is cherished in the absence of a single shred of proof. All the facts known to us are dead against it. Man is part and parcel of Nature, and possesses nothing that is not shared by the animals around him. Even mind, of which he is so proud, as if it belonged exclusively to himself, is a purely evolutionary product, the gradual development of which can be traced over myriads of years. Looked at in the light of science, man is seen to be nothing but Nature's latest piece of work. His seeming superiority is only his own fancy. His big and educated brain is of value only to himself; and his very standard of valuation is of his own invention. As Professor Haeckel says, he "has no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus." Mr. W. T. Lee makes merry over that quotation, calling it "a lively specimen," with its "pessimistic view of man." But Mr. Lee does not tell us what it is that makes man of greater value for the Universe than "an ant," or "the smallest bacillus." What service does man render to the Universe at large? What is the object of his existence? On this point we possess absolutely no knowledge. Science preserves a significant silence. It is theology alone that is vocal concerning the unknown, and that makes dogmatic assertions in the entire absence of information. So far as Nature is concerned, apparently, man's existence has no meaning at all, and serves no intelligible purpose whatever. As Professor Haeckel puts it:—

"Humanity is but a transitory phase of the evolution of eternal substance, a particular phenomenal form of matter and energy, the true proportion of which we soon perceive when we set it on the background of infinite space and eternal time" (*The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 87).

It is becoming more and more evident every day how utterly groundless, nay, how essentially false, is the metaphysical and theological view of man. Science has made it unmistakably clear that we belong, not to a race that has ignominiously fallen, or that has been cruelly hurled headlong, by an

Almighty fiat, from some inconceivable heights down to the humiliating level it now occupies, but to a race that has been slowly evolved from very small and unpromising beginnings. In our upward march we have developed intelligence, and intelligence is the greatest and most powerful known factor in the Universe. By the use of his intelligence man is at last discovering himself and slowly coming into his kingdom. He is beginning to emerge from the land of empty dreams, the land of terrifying shadows and fantastic spectres, in which the priest has had him under his heel so long. He is on the threshold of a new world and a new life, in which he will be able to think for himself and in sympathetic tune with his fellows, and in which he will be at liberty to use this strange and priceless product of evolution, intelligence, for his own further uplifting and for the distinct benefit of all his comrades. It is his gradual discovery of his own value, importance, and responsibility in the social order that is dethroning and discrediting the sky-pilots of every school, and steadily emptying churches and chapels everywhere. To the Universe at large intelligence means nothing and is valueless; but to the human family its meaning and value are immeasurable. It has already sounded the death-knell of superstition and priestcraft, and it is showing us our place in, and possible partial mastery over, Nature.

It is only natural that the Churches should resent and oppose this teaching with all the force and vehemence at their command. They do it simply in self defence, in the certain knowledge that if science prevails they are doomed. And doomed they are as certainly as that the sun shines. They are already shorn of their ancient powers. They cannot even persecute on any appreciable scale. The powers of the world to come are no longer of any service to them because the people have lost faith in them. The pre-existence and immortality of the soul are now exploded dogmas; nay, even the existence of the soul itself, as a thing distinct and apart from the body, is only maintained to-day by a rapidly diminishing number of people. It is becoming more and more indisputable for the thoughtful that there is no essential difference between man and the animals next below him. He and they are blood relations. Like them, he is born, runs a certain course, and then ceases to be as a conscious being. Nature gives him and them precisely the same treatment. His only advantage over them is that he has more intelligence than they, and can so use it as to get more out of Nature than it is possible for them to do. Beyond this, we know nothing. Beyond this, all is profitless speculation.

J. T. LLOYD.

### A Chinese Puppet Show.

THE puppet is a little Chinese boy whose worthless name is Wang Shih Chiu. The showman who pulls the string and plays the part of ventriloquist is the Rev. Harold B. Rattenbury, B.A., of Wuchang. The persons to whom the show-patter is specially addressed may be gathered from the inscription on the sign above the puppet-box: "The Chinese school-boy to the English Methodists, young and old." The sign is picturesquely decorated with views of a Chinese street and the Sea Dragon King, both framed in bamboo, to give it a Chinese appearance. The patter, as may be conjectured from the inscription and the character of the performance, is a curious mixture of Chinese sincerity and British hypocrisy. It is not strictly a children's entertainment, but is intended for the young and the old. The children's pennies, of course, are not despised by the showman, but the more substantial contributions of the older members among the audience are earnestly solicited. Wang Shih Chiu in Chinese (so runs the patter) means Four-nine King, a name bestowed on our little Celestial because he was born on the ninth day of the fourth month. It is a very convenient name, because when anyone hears it they know at



once when your birthday is, and are thus left without excuse if they fail to make you a present of a ball or a popgun. It has been a red-letter day in Wang Shih Chiu's life, and he is overjoyed. He has been to school for the first time, and he has not kicked the teacher. He hears that in our honorable country there are a lot of naughty boys and girls who do not like to go to school, but who delight to play the "wag" and go bird-nesting. He cannot understand such naughtiness, because in China learning is held in very high esteem, and he thinks it a great privilege to go to school. To-day he has been repeating his first lesson: "Ren chih t'su, hsin pen shan, hsiang siang ching, hsi siang yuan." As yet he does not know what these words mean, but he will by-and-by when his wisdom develops and he is able to understand the teacher's explanation. One thing he is "so glad about" is that his "is a Christian school." Of course, Wang Shih Chiu is young; it is his first day at school, and perhaps his joy is just the exuberance of his youthful spirits, and has little to do with whether his school is a native or a Christian one. In his childish innocence he does not perceive the deception that lurks in the phrase "Christian school." If he had known anything of European history, he would have been aware that these Christian priests have never really been in favor of the education of the common people. Some day he may learn with astonishment that in the European country where they have the greatest power and influence two-thirds of the populace can neither read nor write; and that the education movement in other countries of the West is of comparatively recent origin; that even before it began we have the testimony of a Catholic missionary who travelled throughout the Chinese Empire that in no country in the world was elementary education more widely diffused than in China. And, so far from these Christian priests being the friends of education, they have ever been the great obstacles to its progress and efficiency. Beware, therefore, of so-called Christian "schools," Wang Shih Chiu. They are not educational institutions, but only the forcing ground for superstitious beliefs.

Wang Shih Chiu goes to a Christian school because his parents are Christians. They are very, very poor, and his father has had to work in the fields from being quite a young boy. "He never went to school, and can't either read or write." That is the reason he is a Christian. If his father had gone to school and been a scholar, he "would have grown up to despise Jesus and the Church." But ignorant as his father is, Wang Shih Chiu has a proper Chinese regard for his parent. He never refers to him as the gov'nor, or the old man, or insults his native tongue by calling him the pater; that would be wanting in filial piety, which, in China, is the chief end of man. At the solicitation of the missionary, this Christian Chinese household has removed the ancestral tablet. In its place is the picture of a woe-begone figure hanging limp upon a cross, with the blood oozing from the holes in his hands and feet—a fulsome and repulsive sight. At either side of this picture is a gaudy German-printed motto, on one of which is our old familiar friend "What is home without a mother," and on the other is the very suggestive text "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." The ancestral tablet has gone, but the influence of the ancestors remains and constitutes an almost impassable barrier to the progress of the missionary's effort. They may be Christian in name, these poor people, but they are Chinese at heart.

Says the puppet: "We are proud of China. Of course, it is natural, because you know as well as I do that China is the greatest and most civilised nation on the earth." And then, with a feeling of pride and of pity for the poor Methodists of England, he exclaims: "It's a pity you hadn't as wise ancestors as we." It is a pity, Wang Shih Chiu, but we couldn't help it; we had no choice in the matter. And those naked, painted barbarians whom the Romans found on this island of ours, have be-

queathed to us, their descendants, those strong barbaric instincts which the foreign religion which we profess has been utterly unable to eradicate. But those naked barbarian ancestors have no parallel in your history. Your ancestral line, which stretches away back into the dim mists of antiquity, appears to have been always civilised. No other nation can boast of such a historical record. Before Abraham was, you were; and even then you had left the nomadic state for a settled civilised life. The early dynasties of your nation were contemporaneous with the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt. You have seen the empires of Assyria, of Babylon, of Persia, of Greece, and of Rome all arise and flourish for a period, and then decay and vanish. But your nation, during all this long period, has pursued the even tenor of its way, cultivating the arts of peace, contentment, and happiness. And if, as these Christian priests assert, all these ancient nations have decayed by reason of their moral rottenness, what stimulating and purifying influence can account for your national longevity? It was those "wise ancestors" of yours, who knew that the best asset of a State is a happy and contented people, and that a wise and virtuous ruler is of more value than many gods. That wise ancestor of yours, Confucius, lived a very long time ago, hundreds of years before the Syrian Jew whom the missionaries tell you was a God, ever saw the light of day. A wonderful man was this Confucius! Statesman, philosopher, poet, historian, moralist, counsellor, guide, and friend—your nation owes him an incalculable debt. And they say he was an Agnostic; at all events, he took little stock in gods or priests. He claimed no divine wisdom, but his profound secular knowledge has been the mainstay of your marvellous empire, and the cement of your unique unity and cohesion. And your nation have rightly honored his memory.

What is it you chant at those national festivals of yours?—

"Confucius! Confucius! how great is Confucius!  
Before Confucius there never was a Confucius!  
Since Confucius there never has been a Confucius!  
Confucius! Confucius! how great is Confucius!"

This Confucius is a hard nut for the Christian missionaries to crack.

Some of your emperors, too, Wang Shih Chiu, have been among the most illustrious monarchs who ever sat upon a throne. And the songs of your sweet singers of bygone ages have sweetened the lives and delighted the hearts of succeeding generations. One of our own countrymen, Robert Fortune, who penetrated into the interior of your empire, disguised in your national dress, for the purpose of discovering the secrets of your tea industry, tells of the happiness of your workers at their labors. As he approached the groups in the fields, he heard the merry laugh go round, while many of them were singing away as blithely as the birds in the temple trees. And so, I suppose, your people must have laughed and sung for countless ages, enjoying their allotted span of life. But the religion of the missionaries, Wang Shih Chiu, produces no such joy or freedom. If you could only behold a typical Puritan countenance, you would wonder by what strange process the milk of human kindness had been squeezed out of such a face. Its sullen dourness, its stern rigidity, its cast-iron, inflexible mould, would be a warning to you. You have no dairy farms in your country, and do not use milk, but if you did, one sight of that face, look you! would turn the whole milk of the empire sour. It is only in recent years that our Christian wisdom has begun to perceive the truth of what Confucius taught two thousand five hundred years ago, viz., the influence of good music on the morals of the people.

Those wise ancestors of yours not only believed in inculcating the practice of virtue, but they also endeavored to remove the temptations to evil out of the people's way, knowing that "oft the sight to do ill deeds, makes ill deeds done." The Christians have a prayer, "Lord, lead us not into temptation," which they keep on repeating continually and never



perceive its uselessness. But, as I have said, your wise ancestors themselves removed the temptations. According to your traditions, the first man who discovered how to make intoxicating drink was banished from the empire. Whether this tradition be true or not, the fact remains that you have always been a sober people, and have set a grand and worthy example to the Christian nations, whose greatest curse, next to their hypocrisy, is the evil of drunkenness. But the Christian priests, instead of removing temptation out of the path of the weak, have, many of them, vast wealth invested in the drink traffic, and derive large incomes from the demoralisation of our people. Even the Church to which your missionary belongs, and which professes such deep concern for the "heathen," officially forbade any of its ministers to say anything in condemnation of this great evil. Even the great vice of opium-smoking, to which so many of your nation are addicted, was taught them by Christian people. Your wise and beneficent ancestors had taken every precaution to guard your people against acquiring the habit. The laws of your empire forbade the cultivation of the poppy and the manufacture of opium, and so effective were the measures taken to enforce these laws that this vice was practically unknown among you until the Christian pirates, who are in league with the missionaries, set your laws at defiance. They smuggled the accursed thing into your empire, and plotted to ruin your people for the sake of profit. And when you grow up, Wang Shih Chiu, and read about this opium traffic, and the brave efforts of your rulers, who scorned the idea of making profit out of the encouragement of vice; when you learn that the soldiers of Christian England brutally butchered your innocent women and little children, mowing them down like wild beasts with cannon and grape-shot, then, perhaps, the very name of Jesus will stink in your nostrils, as it does in those of your countrymen who are intelligent and educated.

In the face of these facts, do you think it a wise act to have removed that ancestral tablet? You say your father is poor and ignorant, and I can well believe it. You know what your countrymen say of men like your father: "You eat Jesus' rice; you speak Jesus' words"; and probably the missionary's rice tempted him in his poverty. But the real object of the missionary is neither to feed you nor educate you, but to drug your mind with his own superstition, and use you as a means to extract subscriptions from the wealthy of our own land, who, unfortunately, know very little of your past history, your intellectual attainments, or your wonderful civilisation. It may surprise you to hear that the educated portion of the West are only now arriving at the conclusions reached by your wise ancestors long, long ago—that supernatural religion is unworthy of intellectual credence, and that the fears and terrors generated by superstition are a menace to human happiness and well-being.

But I am forgetting, Wang Shih Chiu, that you are only a puppet, and that the little performance is just another of those missionary dodges to raise subscriptions for their caste.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Mr. Price Collier's twelve months' travel has resulted in a book entitled *The West in the East, from an American Point of View*. Here is a passage that our readers will appreciate:—

"First of all we must rid ourselves of the assumption that we are called upon to impose our religious and moral codes upon the East, if need be by an armed crusade; and to follow this by dictating to the East the commercial and military lines along which they shall be permitted to develop. The days of the missionary-cum-gunboat policy have gone by. They have gone by, not because the Western lust for the land and trade of the East has lessened, but because the East has grown strong enough to put a stop to it. We were not converted to charity towards the East by obedience to the tenets of our religion, but by Kuroki's guns at the Yalu River. Let us be frank and admit it."

This plain speaking is sadly needed in the West.

## Acid Drops.

"England is a Christian country." Evidently! Look at two pieces of news in Monday's papers. A lot of royal and aristocratic persons—including the cowardly little ex-King of Portugal—indulged in solemn tomfoolery at Windsor. The Prince of Wales, who is but a boy, was invested with the Knighthood of the Garter. There was a great show and presumably great expense, and hundreds of high-placed nannies went strutting about in the garments of two hundred and fifty years ago. Rows of Life Guards, men who are supposed to exist for the defence of England, had to look on at the show; and perhaps the thoughts of some of them upon it might have been an eye-opener to some of their ridiculous "betters." So much for *that* piece of news. The other was very different. A Bloomsbury shoemaker, an honest man, fallen, at least temporarily, on hard times, was still in prison for being unable to pay his rates. Nine days after his arrest his poor anxious wife sickened and died. But they still kept him in prison. His eldest daughter, with six little children to support out of nothing, as it were, was striving gallantly all the time to solve that difficult problem. And the little business was,—well, anybody can imagine what was happening to that. The authorities were besought to release that poor man, but they were comfortable themselves, and why should they trouble? They were not sentimental infidels; they were Christians in a Christian country. If they had let him out of prison he would still owe the money; for while imprisonment wipes out other offences it leaves the awful offence of poverty as punishable as ever. So the poor shoemaker eats his heart out in prison, knowing that his children are in a state of destitution, and that he will never see his wife again. And he has a book to read in prison—the only one allowed him—in which he reads old-fashioned words about the blessings of being poor and the curse of being rich. Oh, yes; England is a Christian country. These things prove it.

"The King," according to the *Daily Mail*, "has sent a message to Gipsy Smith, the evangelist of the National Free Church Council, thanking him for the letter, expressing loyal sentiments, which he had sent to the King." General Booth will have to look out. He has a serious rival for the King's favor. Gipsy Smith can not only talk, but sing, and probably do a break-down on a pinch. But, seriously, is it not hard lines on a King—reigning by the Grace of God, as you may hear at the Coronation and see on the coinage—to be bombarded with loyal letters from every lunatic or enterprising pietist? We tremble to think that the being by whose grace the King reigns may some day suffer the same misfortune, and that a future *Daily Mail* may report that the King of Kings is much comforted and encouraged by the loyal letter of Horse-Thief Jenkins, the famous evangelist of the National Conversion League.

If there is any bigger fool in England than "Vanoc" of the *Referee* we should like to hear of him—for we have a preference for the best (or worst) of its kind. "Vanoc" is a loud fool, a dogmatic fool, a wordy fool, a pompous fool. He is many varieties of fool in one. But the pious part of his folly, in our judgment, takes the cake. He is ready to shed maudlin tears, at a moment's notice, over any decaying superstition. And now that the Coronation is approaching he gets his handkerchief ready for a blether over the dying belief in the sacredness of royalty. Look at the following extract from his "Handbook" in last week's *Referee*:—

"Imagine the amount of pleasure that even Charles the Second gave to sick people and their relations when he touched for the King's Evil. In a single year Charles performed the ceremony eight thousand five hundred times. In the course of his reign he touched nearly a hundred thousand persons. Educated laymen may deride the importance of this superstition, but in the eyes of the English poor touching for the King's Evil was for centuries a visible attestation of the sanctity of the Royal line. It placed the King outside the category of human institutions and endowed him with a virtue and a glory which the other political forces of the nation could neither create, nor rival, nor destroy."

Poor King George! Fancy his crown falling off and his throne tottering because he doesn't touch people for the King's Evil—which was probably scrofula or incipient leprosy! Behold the way in which the monarchy may be restored to its pristine glory! Let the "King's touch" be revived! His Majesty should lay his royal hands, his sacred hands, his anointed hands, on a certain class of sick people suffering from a nauseous disease—and heal them. Or, if modern science has lessened the number of sufferers from that disease, there is an unmentionable one closely allied to it, and the number of sufferers from *this* disease is as great as ever. For this is a Christian country.



Mr. Horatio Bottomley, M.P., got a splendid and (we presume) gratuitous advertisement in last week's *Referee*. We warn him, in a friendly way, against the patronage of that paper. It might prove the beginning of the end for him. And that would be a gratuitous shipwreck.

The earthquake which shook up Mexico city on the day that General Madero, the revolutionary leader, was to have made his triumphal entry, stirred up all the latent superstition of the multitude. "Wild terror," the Central News telegram said, "seized upon the people as the shocks continued, and hundreds rushed into the churches crying out that the vengeance of God had overtaken Mexico because the country had driven out General Diaz." A great many Christians will laugh at this. But they have no right to do anything of the kind. The Mexico mob displayed a godly terror that is quite in keeping with the Bible and with pure unadulterated Christianity. Even an "advanced" Christian like the Rev. Dr. Warschauer, in his recent debate with Mr. Foote, said that God sent weeds into people's flower-gardens to punish them for their negligence. And one divine punishment, of course, is no more wonderful than another. Besides, the doctrine of a "general" providence, in opposition to a "particular" providence, is (as Wesley argued) sheer nonsense. All generals are made up of particulars and cannot exist without them. The teaching of Jesus is that not a sparrow falls to the ground without God's permission—not a single hair of our heads is unnumbered. Consequently the inhabitants of Mexico City were quite logical, as Christians, in regarding the earthquake as a warning or a punishment.

According to a Central News telegram there was a curious illustration of the efficacy of prayer at Guadalajara. The earthquake was so sudden and severe that "many persons were killed as they were marching in procession through the streets carrying a statue of the Virgin." Such is the protection of the Mother of God!

Murillo was a great and glorious painter, and we are sorry to hear of any of his pictures being destroyed. That is why we regret to hear that the great church at Guadalajara, in Mexico, was wrecked in the recent earthquake. It contained a number of Murillos. If we heard that they were saved we should not mourn over the other damage.

Mrs. Besant has been giving the Fabian Society—of which she was an active member in her old Socialist days—her views on England and India. In the course of her address she said that, "The normal Indian was loyal to a person. We did not realise the power of kingship in India and the love of the personal ruler." Really, it is astonishing to find the Mrs. Besant we once knew talking in that way. It is a maxim of the political constitution in Great Britain that the King reigns but does not govern. King George is not a "personal" ruler in his own country. Any of Mrs. Besant's old Republican articles or pamphlets will show that. How on earth, then, is he to be a personal ruler in India? If he can be so there, and wants to be so there, he will have to leave Great Britain altogether and settle down in India. And how long a man of his special calibre would be able to hold on to a post like that we leave everybody to decide for himself.

Another thing that Mrs. Besant told the Fabians was this. Belonging to the Theosophic branch of religion, she scouted the "dream of the missionary making India Christian." But to "ignore religion in India was a blunder." There is a small party of non-religious educated men there, Mrs. Besant said, "but they are a grain of sand among the countless millions of the Indian people." Indeed! Mrs. Besant talked otherwise when she had other purposes to serve. We beg to remind her, as a matter of arithmetic (unless Theosophy repudiates such a vulgar thing) that the millions of India are not "countless." Neither are the non-religious educated Indians so few as she represents them. She is playing the game of exaggeration-and-diminution which all religionists appear to play instinctively. Mrs. Besant's object in this instance is clear enough. She used to speak and write eloquently in favor of Secular Education. It was included on her ticket when she was a member of the London School Board. Now she refers to it as if it were a notion that has cropped up while she has been away in India. "I know that over here," she said, "there is much feeling in favor of Secular Education—because you have never had it and know not its results." And what are the "results?" Mrs. Besant stooped to borrow Christian falsehoods. "New Zealand has it," she continued, "and her youth is a problem she has to solve—racing, gambling, lack of all control and subordination." Just as if there were no racing, gambling, etc., in

England where religious education is firmly fixed in the public schools; just as if errand boys in London did not consult "Captain Coe's Finals" and use language in the streets that would make Satan jump. No wonder that Sir Robert Stout, Chief Justice of New Zealand, treated these pious statements, which Mrs. Besant so lightly borrows, with contempt when he was in England two years ago. For thirty-three years Secular Education has obtained in New Zealand, and the proof of its success, Sir Robert Stout told a *Daily News* interviewer, is seen "(1) in the diminishing of serious crime, and (2) in the fact that those trained free from sectarian bias produce only half as many criminals in proportion to their number as those trained in the denominational schools." "Our teachers," he added, "inculcate order, obedience, respect for others,"—the very virtues Mrs. Besant most desires.

Here is another New Zealand fact for Mrs. Besant. "I see more practical heathendom in London in one day," Sir Robert Stout said, "than I should in a New Zealand back block in a year."

It is sad to see Mrs. Besant unsaying all that she said when her brain was in its prime. When she was an Atheist advocate (and an able and eloquent one, too) she laughed at the idea that the Brotherhood of Man depended upon the alleged Fatherhood of God. It is different with her now. After stating in a recent pamphlet that "Man, being himself divine, can know the Divinity whose life he shares," she goes on to say that, "As an inevitable corollary to this supreme truth comes the fact of the brotherhood of man." Men, and especially nations, have never done each other much good in the name of God. They have cut each other's throats *ad libitum* with his name upon their lips. Shelley spoke the truth of history when he sang that, "The name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness." Happily the brotherhood of man depends upon a more real basis than the dreams of theology. It depends upon our common nature, our common wants, our common hopes, our common aspirations, and (last, but not least) our common need of each other. Mrs. Besant knew this once. Her not knowing it now does not not alter its truth.

There was an International Convention during Whitsuntide at Sunderland of one of the craziest of Christian sects, believing in revelation by "tongues." Members assemble, get hot and excited, shout any stuff that comes into what they call their heads, and that is the word of God. This particular assembly was presided over by the Rev. A. A. Boddy, an Anglican clergyman. Nothing out of the way came from his lips, but presently a lady who was praying aloud used several unintelligible words, which (according to a newspaper report) "raised the gathering to great fervor, women weeping loudly, and men making rapturous expressions. Continuing, amid the manifestations, with greater eloquence, the lady burst into an incoherent, unintelligible sing-song, and the whole company became roused to a state of intense excitement. Individuals sang gibberish, whilst women wept and shrieked and writhed to and fro. This ecstatic behavior continued for a quarter of an hour." It is an old story: hysteria the raw material of religion. Revelation and sex have always had a lot to do with each other. This fact lends grimness to the sarcasm of Swift's "Mechanical Operations of the Spirit."

Those of our readers who have never perused that Essay of Swift's should do so without delay. We must warn them, however, that it is not "meat for little people or for babes." Neither could it very well be read aloud to a mixed company. But it is one of the strongest things in English literature. The connection between piety and sexuality is hit off with the most splendid sarcasm. This essay is included in the *Tale of a Tub* volume in "Everyman's Library"—where we were rather surprised (though much gratified) at seeing it.

That same Sunderland meeting had another superstitious treat. Mr. A. Booth-Clibborn, son-in-law of General Booth, interpreted the speech of Pastor Friemel, from Prussia, which contained this choice passage:—

"Speaking of faith in God, he said that when his congregation were negotiating for a site for their chapel at Glogan, the site had a huge fortification mound on it. The owners would not remove the mound, which made building there impossible, but the Lord told him to purchase the site. They did so, trusting in God, and one morning they found the mound had disappeared. This and other experiences of a similar kind roused the gathering to a state of ecstasy, manifested by weeping and singing."

This is a fair specimen of primitive Christianity. There is plenty of it in the New Testament, and more in the "history" of the early Christian Church. Professed Chris-



tians who look down upon such things do not know it, but they have outgrown the "Christianity of Christ."

Sunderland seems to have been favored lately in the matter of religious experience. A Mormon treat was provided on Wednesday afternoon, June 7. Thousands of holiday-makers on Roker Beach witness a Mormon baptism in the sea—which was thus described in the *Daily News* the next morning:—

"After addressing a great crowd, the Mormon missionary, who wore neither coat nor vest, suddenly walked into the sea, leading by the hand two pretty young ladies, fashionably attired in white summer costumes. When the water was on a level with their shoulders they stopped, and the missionary made a number of gestures, put his arms around the waists of the damsels, and immersed both of them. The dripping trio then marched back to the beach singing joyous hal-lalujahs."

We dare say that damsel-dipper likes his job. The damsels, however, must have looked a pretty picture as they marched back with their wet summer clothes clinging about them. And what a performance in the name of God! The Deity's friends—if there be a Deity—are always making him ridiculous.

Ananias Jacob Warschauer is obtaining Christian assistance in his slimy policy of trickery and lying. We take the following from the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* of June 3:—

"The Rev. Dr. Warschauer's share in the debate with Mr. G. W. Foote, the Atheist, is published in the form of a sixpenny booklet—at least, it contains the eight questions Mr. Foote could not answer."

Our contemporary ought to have seen through Warschauer's little game. It is really obvious to any person with a grain of sagacity. Nothing but Christian partisanship can explain why our contemporary takes Warschauer's word for what Foote said, instead of ascertaining what Foote actually did say—which is shown in the verbatim report. Besides, who ever trusts a converted Jew without security or believes him without corroboration? The questions that Mr. Foote could not answer only exist in Warschauer's mendacious imagination.

Here is another good Christian patting Warschauer on the back. Listen to the *Church Times*:—

"To dispute with men like G. W. Foote, of the National Secular Society is seldom a profitable exercise; if it be done at all, it should be done in the style and temper of Mr. Warschauer, who is not new to such tasks. We have in the past praised his *Anti-Nunquam*, and we can without reserve commend his *Atheist's Dilemma*."

Warschauer's "style and temper" naturally please the good Christians. That they should praise his *Atheist's Dilemma* without reserve is to be expected. Our readers will quite understand this when they have perused our article begun in this week's *Freethinker*. Christianity has not only shed more blood than any other religion in the world; it has also told more lies than any other religion in the world. And it will never leave off; it cannot leave off; for it lives on lies.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has broken out again on religion. It was at Cambridge, where he lectured to "The Heretics." According to the *New Theology* organ, which he has bamboozled into believing him a Godite, and even a sort of a Christian, G. B. S. had a crowded, enthusiastic, and distinguished meeting. It is a pity the address was not reported in the ordinary newspapers. But they fight shy of him when he talks about religion, and the brief report in the *New Theology* organ gives no real conception of what he said, so that we are hampered in noticing it at all. One thing seems to stand out clearly—though it may be *only* seems. "The business of a heretic," Mr. Shaw is reported to have said, "is to produce a God whom humanity can understand." Well, that is a job. Besides, a God understood is no God at all. Knowledge is knowledge, and faith is faith. Science is science, and mystery is mystery. We beg to remind Mr. Shaw once more that the "God" he is seeking (or trying to get manufactured) is the Humanity he possesses. It is only Mr. Shaw's want of emotional warmth that prevents his seeing this. One of his Cambridge auditors objected that "Mr. Shaw should endeavor to avoid the unpleasant word God, with its unsatisfactory associations," and "Mr. Shaw admitted the difficulty, but complained that he could do no better." But there is more in it than this question and answer explain. For all his Socialism and Democracy, one sees that Mr. Shaw is aristocratic and cynical—though that is far from being the whole of him; and he is more likely to bow to God than to Humanity—for the first is Mr. Shaw's ideal of himself, and the second is Mr. Shaw's ideal of his fellow men

One utterance of Mr. Shaw's at Cambridge does him more credit than his repeated chatter about "God." "Whoever," he said, "held that Christ was the highest possible was a hopeless pessimist and not worth working with." One may say ditto to that—and ditto to the further statement that the "figure of Christ is largely mythical, and to a large extent a failure"—without endorsing Mr. Shaw's fancy tribute to the work that Christ did in promoting the "realisation of God."

The Christian imperialists don't seem to find Lord Kitchener pious enough, and would doubtless like him to be as religious as Lord Roberts. The one post in the Army that he ought to take is denied him. By way of compensation, we suppose, he has been given the command of the troops in London at the Coronation! He has also been elected a Director of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway!

Admiral Togo and General Nogi are over here for the Coronation. Both are said to be Agnostics, and both are of the greatest simplicity of character. General Nogi, the victor of Port Arthur, is a great scholar and a distinguished poet as well as a famous soldier. He lost both his sons during the war with Russia. On learning of the death of his elder son he said: "I am glad he died so splendidly. It was the greatest honor he could have." Which is almost as fine as the great Greek's reply to those who brought him, with sad faces, on the battlefield, the news that his son was killed. With a grave set face, he replied: "I knew that my son was mortal." General Nogi lives very simply; indeed, his habits are quite ascetic. Admiral Togo hates display. When he returned to Tokio, the hero of the hour, after settling accounts with the Russian fleet, he gave the crowd the slip and went home to his wife and children.

Mr. Richard Richard, the chairman of the annual convention of the Christian Endeavor Union, at Middlesbrough, looked forward to the time when the King would be present at their conventions. Poor King George! He will be applying for his old age pension as soon as that happens.

Frank James Scott, a retired merchant, who shot himself dead at Bailey's Hotel, Brompton-road, suffered from cancer of the throat. In a letter he left for his wife he said: "I cannot bear the pain any more, and if I do shoot myself I am sure the good God will take into consideration all the pain I have passed through." Not an Atheist, anyhow.

They are building a Cathedral in New York which is to cost £3,000,000. There are people in New York in want of bread. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

It is high time that the Home Secretary stopped playing into the hands of General Booth. Anybody would think that the Salvation Army owned or controlled the prisons of this country. We have noticed several instances already, and here is another. General Booth lately addressed two hundred and fifty convicts in Peterhead Prison, and every one of them has since been presented with a booklet of salvation songs, ornamented with a message running as follows:—"My Friend,—Whatever your present character and prospects may be, you can be so wonderfully saved that you shall sing with gladness the songs contained in this little book, enjoy the favor of God, and bless all who know you. If you want to do this the Salvation Army will delight to help you, and so will the General—William Booth." The reference to the convicts' "character" is gratuitously pharisaic and offensive. The prisoners have committed offences and are paying the penalty—and that is enough in the way of humiliation as well as in the way of suffering. Moreover, we beg to ask Mr. Churchill, quite seriously, whether he really thinks that the moral problems of criminology are to be settled, either wholly or partially, by pious letters of this description and little collections of salvation songs? An affirmative answer would show that he is fit to make England the laughing-stock of the civilised world.

The *Aberdeen Evening Express* bewails the fact that General Booth devoted his afternoon address in that city to a vindication of his "honor and honesty," and tells him that his critics are not worth answering. General Booth is no fool. He knows better than that. He is perfectly aware that he must answer his critics. But he is also aware that the cheapest and safest plan is to answer what they don't say, and never refer to what they do say. And that is what he does.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

(Lectures suspended for the present.)

**To Correspondents.**

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.**—Previously acknowledged £248 18s. 3d. Received since:—J. Barry, £1; W. P. Adamson, £1 1s.; J. H. O. (S. Africa), 10s.; J. H., 5s.; W. J. Conroy, 7s. 6d.

**THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.**—G. W. Foote, £2 2s.; Richard Johnson, £5; R. T. Nichols, £1 1s.; A Few Members of the Kingsland Branch, £1 10s.; Thos. Judge, 2s. 6d.; R. B. Harrison, 2s.; W. Leat, 5s.

**H. SMALLWOOD.**—You will see they were useful. Thanks.

**W. D. CARPENTER.**—Ferrer's name is not going to die in a hurry. We shall deal with Mr. William Archer's book as soon as we have done with matters that cannot be delayed.

**R. T. BUDD.**—Freethinkers are certainly entitled in debate to demand that Christian advocates shall stand by the Authorised Version or the Revised Version of the Bible. Both these Versions are the work of Christian scholars and put forward by "authority." If they cannot be trusted in public discussion, of what use are they? It is absurd to argue about "accurate translations" before an ordinary public audience, who must judge, just as they must be saved or damned, in English.

**A. G. MARKS.**—The points you mention are sound, but they are not novel. No doubt they are original as far as you yourself are concerned, but they have been familiar points in sceptical criticism of the New Testament for the best part of a hundred years.

**J. BARRY.**—Your continued support is appreciated.

**J. L. WOLFF.**—The letter appears to be lithographed, and is probably sent to many other households as well as your own. For the rest, it is quite beneath contempt, being undated and unsigned, and accompanied by printed matter unworthy of a lunatic asylum. Forget it. It isn't worth remembering.

**W. P. BALL.**—Many thanks for valued cuttings.

**J. TOMKINS.**—Much obliged for the cuttings, especially the *Church Times* one, which we should be sorry to have missed.

**W. P. ADAMSON.**—You wish us "long life" to carry on our "grand work." Such wishes tend to get realised, for they cheer the recipient.

**W. H. SPIVEY.**—Your suggestions of "collecting sheets" for the Vance Testimonial Fund shall be considered.

**JOSEPH BATES.**—See paragraph. Thanks for cuttings.

**A. B. MOSS.**—A good many of our friends seem to be hit by the Birkbeck suspension, but we believe the loss will be less than has been generally expected.

**JOHN VASEY.**—We had noticed the Sunderland oddities already. Thanks all the same.

**G. M. (Canada).**—Pleased to hear that, although you first bought the *Freethinker* for curiosity more than any other reason, you "would not be without it now on any account." Thanks for your efforts to get us some new subscribers.

**E. A. CHARLTON.**—Your letter was read to the Conference. Your personal letter is appreciated, and we thank you for your good wishes. Our own good wishes go with you to America.

**W. G. TOWN.**—It was Carlyle who called the Church of Rome "the Great Lying Church." Let holy father McLeod settle the matter with him. You merely repeat the phrase. The N. S. S. secretary is sending your card of membership.

**T. H. ELSTON.**—We note you were "pleased to see the President in such good trim" on Whit-Sunday, and that you "account listening to his speech in the Stratford Memorial Theatre" on Monday "to be just as great a privilege as he appears to esteem the invitation."

**E. B.**—Much obliged for cuttings. The Gore volume shall be looked through and returned.

**J. H.**—Glad to have your expression of "great respect and admiration." It won't puff us up. It will simply encourage us to go on doing our best.

**F. J. S. GILBERT (U.S.A.).**—We do not acknowledge *Freethinker* subscribers' renewals in this column—or any other. Your remittance duly reached us and was passed over to the shop manager, who should have sent you a formal receipt. We are sorry you have had the trouble to write again. Very glad to hear you say: "I cannot tell you how much pleasure, information, and solid satisfaction I get from your paper." Your suggestions are under consideration.

**A. J. ARMSTRONG.**—The Birmingham Branch secretary is Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road.

**W. BLETOHER.**—Much has been written on the topic. We cannot deal with it at present.

**JAMES NEEDHAM.**—Glad to have a bright, encouraging letter from one who has been taking the *Freethinker* for the last eight months, thinks it splendid, and is doing all he can to promote its circulation.

**TRUTHSEEKER (Liverpool)** writes: "It may interest you to know that, after twenty years as a believer in Christianity, and an

active worker in the cause of what I now call mythology, I have just recently received a rude awakening through reading the *Freethinker*." We are sending this correspondent the list of books he asks for.

**J. F. HENLEY.**—Mr. Mann's letter must end the correspondence.

**J. C. ANDERSON (Australia).**—Our *Shadow of the Sword* is now published by the Humanitarian League. You will hear of the works you mention before long.

**W. J. CONROY.**—The "much esteem" is as welcome as the subscription.

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

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

**WHEN** the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

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

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

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

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**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.**

The *Birmingham Daily Mail* gave a moderate but perfectly fair report of a portion of Mr. Foote's speech from the chair at the evening public meeting in connection with the National Secular Society's Annual Conference. Considering the array of speaking talent on the platform that night, the other Birmingham papers neglected an opportunity. Their readers would have enjoyed a report of some of the good things said. But newspapers are nearly always timid. They suffer from delicate circulation.

The fight still rages in Wood Green, especially in the columns of the *Sentinel*, as to whether the *Freethinker* should be admitted to the local Free Library. Some able letters have appeared on the Freethought side, notably those by Mr. E. Burke. The Christians generally express the view that the *Freethinker* should be excluded because they don't like it. The editor of the *Sentinel* pertinently suggests that the lady hit the bull's-eye, who challenged an orthodox lecturer, at an open-air meeting, to read out anything from the *Freethinker* that could "reasonably be called objectionable."

A ruffian Christian Evidence controversialist, states in the *Sentinel* that some of our advertisements have been "most objectionable." Plainly, he lies. The recent withdrawal of the "True Morality" advertisement, which this ruffian refers to, is entirely a matter of business. When the advertiser can afford to renew it the advertisement will reappear.

We are not putting ourselves in the same street with Mr. Thomas Hardy in stating that his *Jude the Obscure* has been blacklisted in the York Free Library. The name of the greengrocer, or curate, on the committee who is responsible for this fatuous act is not yet published. We do not offer Mr. Hardy our sympathy. We congratulate him on piercing the thick skin of the British Philistine. A man's, or author's, character is shown by the abuse of his enemies as well as the praise of his friends.

An amusing incident happened at Bolton on a recent Friday evening. Two speakers wanted to address the crowd at Victoria Square; one had been engaged to speak on Tariff Reform, the other wished to lecture on "Is there a God?" The latter suggested a Referendum as to whether the Tariff Reform man or himself should speak. The Tariff Reform man agreed to this, feeling sure he would win, but to his astonishment he only received about half a dozen votes, and the other man (Mr. Joseph Bates) took possession of the meeting.



## The Apocalypse.—XIII.

(Continued from p. 373.)

IN chapter xvii. the writer of the "Revelation" says that an angel "spake with him," saying, "I will shew thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication" (Rev. xvii. 1, 2). The writer was then "carried away in the spirit into a wilderness," where he beheld a woman "arrayed in purple and scarlet.....having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations.....and upon her forehead a name written, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. xvii. 3—5). The angel further told him that "the ten horns" which "gave their power and authority unto the beast" (who are said to represent proconsuls) should "hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and burn her utterly with fire" (Rev. xvii. 12, 13, 16).

This narrative, at first sight, appears to be original. The great Harlot, labelled "Babylon the Great," symbolises the Roman empire, and more particularly its capital city. But the appellation "harlot" applied to a great city, that city situated "upon many waters," the worship of all gods save Yahveh characterised as "fornication," a golden cup full of abominations, the selection of the name Babylon from all others, and other matters, all show an intimate acquaintance with the "holy books." Witness the following:—

Nah. iii. 4, 5.—"Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms.....behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts.....and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame."

Ezek. xvi. 40, 41.—"And they shall stone thee with stones.....and they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee.....and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot."

Jer. li. 7, 13.—"Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunk of her wine.....Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed.....O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come."

In the first of the foregoing passages the reference is to Nineveh, in the second to Jerusalem, and in the third to Babylon; but they were all three great cities doomed to destruction, so what was decreed of one might be applied to any other. The last-named was the greatest of all, and therefore the best fitted to symbolise the greatest city in the days of the Apocalypticist. The latter, in bringing the chapter to a close, represents the angel as saying: "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." There was, at that time, but one city to which these words could refer—the eternal city of Rome. As might be expected, in one of the "holy books" we find a woman (who is said to have been beheld in a vision) represented as symbolising a city—in this case Jerusalem.

2 Esd. x. 27, 40, 44.—"And I looked, and behold, the woman appeared unto me no more, but there was a city builded.....This therefore is the meaning of the vision.....The woman whom thou sawest is Zion, which thou now seest is a city builded."

The next chapter, Rev. xviii., is an apocalyptic prediction—one regarded by orthodox believers as truly prophetic—of the downfall of "Babylon"; that is to say, of Rome. This chapter, like the last, appears at first sight to be an original composition; but, needless to say, it is not. In this case, to save time and space, I have placed the apocalyptic narrative and the statements in the "holy books" in parallel columns; so that readers may perceive at a glance the source of the Apocalypticist's great prophecy.

### THE REVELATION.

"And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habi-

### THE HOLY BOOKS.

"And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen"—  
"And Babylon the glory of

### THE REVELATION.

tation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird" (xviii. 2).

"For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen" (xviii. 3).

"And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (xviii. 4).

"Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works" (xviii. 6).

"How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire" (xviii. 7, 8).

"And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come" (xviii. 9, 10).

"And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and men shall find them no more at all" (xviii. 14).

"And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate" (xviii. 17—19).

"And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all" (xviii. 21).

"And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth" (xviii. 22, 23).

### THE HOLY BOOKS.

kingdoms.....wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and the houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and demons shall dance there" (Isa. xxi. 9; xiii. 19, 21).

"The nations have drunk of her wine.....Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed" (Jer. li. 7).

"Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldees"—  
"Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished and hiss at all her plagues" (Jer. l. 8, 13).

"Recompense her according to her works; according to all that she hath done, do unto her" (Jer. l. 29).

"O daughter of the Chaldeans: thou shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms.....Now therefore hear this thou that.....sayest in thine heart.....I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: but these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day.....the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame" (Isa. xlii. 5, 8, 9, 14).

"Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones.....they shall sit upon the ground.....and be astonished at thee. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which was strong in the sea" (Ezek. xxvi. 16, 17).

"In those days the fruits of the earth shall be late, and not flourish in their season; and in their season the fruits of the trees shall be withholden" (Ezek. lxxix. 5).

"And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea.....shall stand upon the land, and shall cause their voice to be heard over thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads.....And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee saying, What city is like the great city, like her that is brought to silence.....Thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise" (Ezek. xxvii. 29—33).

"When thou hast made an end of reading the book, thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again" (Jer. li. 63, 64).

"The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth"—  
"And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard"—  
"Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle"—  
"the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth" (Isa. xxiv. 8; Ezek. xxvi. 13; Jer. xxv. 10, 11; Isa. xxiii. 8).



As regards the foregoing quotations from the "holy books," the last five words of the first quotation (Isa. xiii. 21) are added from the Septuagint. The Apocalyptic, I felt sure, had something equivalent to "a habitation of demons" in his copy, and this I found in that Greek version of the Old Testament. With regard to the other extracts, seven have reference to Babylon, three to the city of Tyre, and the remainder (including Enoch) to the ungodly of the earth. The predictions in Ezek. xxvi. and xxvii. relate to Tyre, which, like Babylon, was one of the great cities of the earth. The writer of the Apocalypse has applied them all to Rome under the symbolical name "Babylon." The systematic fraud practised by this writer in asserting—as he does in every chapter—that he saw and heard all he describes in a vision inspired by God (Rev. i. 1; iv. 1, 2; xxii. 6; etc.) is, of course, obvious.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

### National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held at King's Hall, Corporation-street, Birmingham, on Whit-Sunday.

The following Vice-Presidents attended the Conference:—Messrs. C. Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, Dr. R. T. Nichols, F. Wood, J. Hammond, S. Samuels, T. J. Thurlow, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, R. Johnson, R. G. Fathers, W. T. Pitt, H. Cowell, J. G. Dobson, F. A. Davies, R. Chapman, Jas. Partridge.

Branches were represented by the following delegates:—R. G. Fathers, Clifford Williams (Birmingham); C. Cohen (Bethnal Green); F. A. Davies (Camberwell); W. Bradford, T. Judge (Islington); H. Cowell, W. Davey (Kingsland); J. Hammond, W. McKelvie (Liverpool); Ben Palley (Maesteg); R. Johnson, J. Barlow, J. G. Dobson (Manchester); J. Charter, T. H. Elstob (Newcastle); S. Samuels (North London); R. Chapman, J. Fothergill (South Shields); Dr. R. T. Nichols (West Ham); Wm. Stewart, jun. (Wood Green); Wm. H. Spivey, Mrs. Spivey (Huddersfield).

Amongst the visitors were noticed Mr. and Mrs. Dodd (Cannock), Messrs. George and John Faulkner (Stafford), Mr. E. Gilman (Coventry), Mr. S. Cohen (Manchester), Mr. Bean (London), and Mr. W. Mann (Wolverhampton).

After the President (Mr. G. W. Foote) had offered a few words of welcome to the delegates and members, the Agenda was at once proceeded with.

It was agreed that the Minutes of the last Conference, as printed in the *Freethinker*, be taken as read.

The Executive's Annual Report, which has already appeared in these columns, was read by the President. The Report was received with general expressions of satisfaction.

Mr. A. B. Moss referred to the year having been surprisingly fruitful in public debate, whilst several delegates expressed their personal satisfaction at the fact that some tangible recognition was to be made of Miss E. M. Vance's long service to the party.

The Report was unanimously adopted.

After a few questions had been asked, the Financial Report was also unanimously adopted.

The President now vacated the chair, and his place was taken by Mr. C. Cohen. It was moved, seconded, and supported by the delegates of the Birmingham, North London, and Kingsland Branches—"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."

Mr. Cohen, before putting the motion to the meeting, said that Mr. Foote's abilities and past record clearly pointed to him as being the best man for the position. The Presidency of the N. S. S. was not an office anyone could fulfil. It needed a very peculiar combination of energy, ability, courage, and, above all, optimism. Mr. Foote had these characteristics, and his optimism, he must confess, had, up to then, been justified by results. He had pleasure in supporting the resolution, and he hoped the next twelve months of his Presidency would be followed by a great many more twelve months.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. G. W. Foote, on re-taking the chair, was received with acclamation. He said that at that time of day there was little occasion for them to say much to him, as President, or for him to say much to them, as the Society. Enough then to say that, as of old, he valued this position, not out of a feeling of common pride, because, as far as public recognition went, it stood in his way; but he valued it because it enabled

him to work effectively for the only cause he really loved, the only movement he had ever thoroughly associated himself with, and the movement in which he hoped, when his time came, to die fighting. He had done his best, whatever that may have been, to fulfil the task he had undertaken when his predecessor, Charles Bradlaugh, handed over to him the Presidential hammer, and he could only trust that when it passed from his hands to the hands of another he should have no more disgraced it than his predecessor had. (Applause.)

Election of Vice-Presidents:—The following nominations of the Executive were re-elected unanimously:—J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, R. G. Fathers, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, Horace W. Parsons, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. H. Ridgway, J. T. Ross, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, S. Samuels, F. Schaller, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Charles Steptoe, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood, G. White.

The names of Miss Kathleen B. Kough and Mr. E. A. Charlton (on the motion of the Executive), Miss Mary Ross (on the motion of the Liverpool Branch), and Mr. F. E. Willis (on the motion of the Birmingham Branch) were agreed to be added to the list of Vice-Presidents.

The President moved that the standing orders be suspended (which was agreed to) in order that the name of Miss Alma Stanley be added to the list of Vice-Presidents. This was seconded, and carried.

Election of Auditors:—Mr. Savill and Mr. H. G. Farmer were elected Auditors.

Mr. Stewart (Wood Green) asked why a resolution forwarded by his Branch to the Executive did not appear on the Agenda. The President explained that part of the duty of the Agenda Committee was to sift out from the resolutions sent to them those that they considered were unsuitable for the General Conference.

Mr. Stewart then moved: "That in future only five Vice-Presidents shall sit as such upon the Society's Executive, and that Branch delegates sitting upon the Executive shall be in the proportion of one delegate for every 20 members or part of 20 members." He considered that the present arrangement of allowing one delegate only from each Branch, no matter how many members it stood for, and also allowing Vice-Presidents, responsible to no one, and who could not be turned out if their voting was against a Branch's interests, was unrepresentative and undemocratic.

Mr. Bradford (Islington), in seconding, referred to the trade unions and their methods of representation, and stated that he considered the motion, if carried, would put matters on a more business-like footing.

Mr. F. A. Davies (Camberwell), as a member of the Executive, had come to the conclusion that if they eliminated the Vice-Presidents from the Executive they would take away from it that element which for many years had most greatly interested itself in Freethought propaganda. Delegates from Branches, on the other hand, often attended a few meetings and then disappeared altogether. He thought such a step, if taken, would leave the Executive poorer and not purer.

Messrs. Moss, Willis, Chapman, and Heaford having spoken, the President stated that he thought the motion showed very inadequate knowledge of the history of the N. S. S. The delegate was elected by his Branch, and the Vice-President was elected and re-elected by the whole forces of the Society. To say that a member elected by the whole Society represented nobody, and that a Branch delegate represented everybody, was an absurdity, and he considered the motion from every point of view to be a great mistake.

The motion was negatived by a large majority.

There being no representative present from the Renfrew Branch, Motion 9 on the Agenda standing in their name was not moved, and it was agreed to pass on to the next business.

Mr. Cowell moved for the Kingsland Branch:—"That this Conference resolves to honor the memory of Charles Bradlaugh by establishing a Bradlaugh Lectureship for the delivery and publication of an Annual Lecture on a Freethought subject." He stated that his Branch was desirous of instituting some scheme by which the rising generation could be kept in touch with the great work Charles Bradlaugh had accomplished and the principles he had advocated. The precise method of doing this they were not particularly concerned with, but a lectureship would tend to inspire those who followed them, and would, as well, give them the personal satisfaction of trying to do something to honor his memory.



Mr. F. A. Davies considered the best way of honoring Bradlaugh's memory was by carrying on the same fight that Bradlaugh lived and died for.

Messrs. Heaford, Chapman (S. Shields), Moss, and the President supported the motion, and it was carried.

The representative of the Birmingham Branch moved:—"That the Society should publish a program of courses of study in Freethought, and that every member be provided with a copy; and that copies should, as far as possible, be judiciously circulated at meetings and otherwise."

This was seconded, and, after a brief discussion, carried unanimously.

Mr. J. Hammond moved, for the Liverpool Branch: "That with a view to organising unattached Freethinkers, and increasing the area of activity of the N. S. S., the Executive should, if finances permit, appoint competent lecturers to give Freethought lectures in centres where no Branch of the N. S. S. already exists, with the object of attracting local Freethinkers to the lectures and forming new Branches." He said that all realised the great amount of Freethought which existed which was not systematised and was not attached to any party organisation, and he thought the N. S. S., with the help of the Secular Society, Ltd., should descend into the provinces and preach the gospel. He suggested that the Society should first provide the funds to send lecturers into the provinces, and then hold series of lectures, inviting all known local Freethinkers to assist at the meetings, and then form a Branch. Even if members so gained did not prove permanent additions to the fighting strength of Freethought, yet some good would have been done. Secular societies were, he thought, in some respects like Turkish baths. They were good to pass through, even if one did not choose to live in them.

Seconded and carried unanimously.

Mr. A. B. Moss moved, on behalf of the Executive: "That this Conference hails with delight the prospect of a complete Arbitration Treaty between Great Britain and the United States, and hopes that this will lead to similar treaties between all civilised nations." He was pleased that the present Government was taking steps in this direction, and he knew that Freethinkers, who were the pioneers of the Peace movement, would be particularly gratified if this Treaty were consummated. The Freethought party was historically a Peace party, and he considered when their teachings became understood by all universal peace was bound to follow.

Mr. Willis, in seconding, called attention to the obstacles the Christian Church had always placed in the way of peace. Now, when the cause of peace was in a more flourishing condition, they were endeavoring to persuade folks that peace was a peculiarly Christian object. Freethought's record, however, was a consistent one.

The motion was carried unanimously, and, on the suggestion of Messrs. Moss and Chapman, it was agreed to send copies of the resolution to the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey.

The President moved the suspension of the standing orders, and, on this being agreed to, moved:—"That this Conference, desiring to recognise in a tangible way the long, eminent, and valuable services of Miss E. M. Vance as secretary of the National Secular Society, resolves to invite the Society's members and friends to subscribe to a Testimonial Fund, and requests the Editor of the *Freethinker* to take charge of the Fund in his paper."

Mr. Foote said that he thought very little need be added to the resolution by way of comment. Those who were present that day, and who knew Miss Vance so well, would perhaps feel that words were not perhaps the most desirable thing on this occasion.

Mr. Cowell (Kingsland) seconded. He said it would be a source of pleasure to himself and the rest of the delegates if the President would also undertake to send on their behalf some message of sympathy from the Conference.

Mr. Cohen said that the keen disappointment the delegates were experiencing that day in the absence of Miss Vance would, he knew, be felt just as acutely by Miss Vance herself. If Miss Vance could have been with them that day it would have been the twentieth Annual Conference she had attended, without break, in her capacity as General Secretary. He thought a message from the Conference on the lines suggested by Mr. Cowell would be appreciated.

Mr. Charter (Newcastle) supported, and the resolution was carried unanimously, the President also undertaking to convey a message from the Conference, as they desired, to Miss Vance.

Mr. C. Cohen moved: "That this Conference notes the desperate Sabbatarian efforts being made by the clergy of all Christian denominations to hinder or suppress opportunities for rational enjoyment on the people's weekly day of rest, and trusts that ample attention will be given to the reports of Chief Constables that picture theatres, in particular, have contributed so much to the good order of the

towns where they exist." He said that the motion, an old one in essence, was made necessary owing to the special efforts being made by the clergy of all denominations to band themselves together on behalf of Sabbatarianism. They no doubt felt that in this matter they were affected all alike. The matter had been brought seriously to the fore by the development of Sunday picture shows, which threatened to be as great a blow to the clergy as the bicycle had been. Special emphasis ought to be laid on the reports of the Chief Constables, as this meets the clergy on practically their chief ground—that is, the question of the morals of the young and old. The most demoralising factors in modern English life was the Sabbatarianism of the Christian Church. The increase of drunkenness in the seventeenth century was coincident with the stopping of the Sunday games and entertainments that took place under the Catholics. They ought to challenge the clergy on that special ground—that Sabbatarianism is a demoralising thing. He advocated bolder speaking and freer criticism on this subject, and, above all, the force of example, as there was a large body of discontent existing that only wanted an excuse to express itself. When this occurred a real obstacle would be removed to the healthy education of the rising generation.

Mr. F. A. Davies called attention to the hypocritical methods of modern Sabbatarianism. The religious aspect of the matter was now left entirely out of account, and their sole concern appeared to be the poor oppressed working man who was compelled to work seven days a week to fill the pockets of the bloated capitalists.

The President related how a certain Sabbatarian move against the Sunday picture shows had been, at any rate, checked by a word or two from him at the right time. He considered that, with a little more outspokenness, Freethinkers were perfectly capable of sweeping the bigots back.

Mr. W. Heaford moved:—"That this Conference rejoices over the continued vindication of Francisco Ferrer which is going on throughout the civilised world, and congratulates the progressive parties in the Spanish Cortes on the splendid effort they have made in this direction." From the point of view of Spanish Freethought, the debate in the Cortes was perhaps one of the greatest possible triumphs. The English press only gave a few paragraphs of misleading telegrams and notes on the great debates which lasted for fifteen days in the Cortes, and which in the Spanish newspapers occupied columns upon columns. Ferrer was not yet buried. Spanish Freethinkers and Radicals were determined that the expectation of the civilised world should be realised, that the memory of Ferrer should be vindicated, that the trial should be reopened, that the schools should be reinstated, and that the Executive, who were entrusted in his last hours to carry out his labors, should be enabled to do so. He hoped when they met at the next Conference they would be able to report a great victory.

Mr. A. B. Moss seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Heaford moved the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to call attention to the imprisonment of the Polish Freethought leader, Andrew Niemojewski, on account of the publication of his *Commentaries on the Catechism*; and, further, to the fines of 410 francs each, inflicted upon the members of the Czech Freethought Society at Prague. On the recommendation of Mr. Heaford, it was agreed that letters of sympathy and support be sent from that Conference to Niemojewski and to the Prague Freethinkers, and the President undertook to forward these resolutions to the proper quarters.

The President moved, for the Executive: "That this Conference congratulates the Portuguese Republican Government on its determination to apply the principle of religious equality to the relations between Church and State, and trusts that it will continue to hold perfectly even the balance between the religious and non-religious citizens." In putting this he did not wish it to be thought, from the way the latter portion of the motion was framed, that there was much likelihood of the Portuguese Government failing to apply impartially religious liberty to all, but an article in the *Positivist Review* by Mr. Swinny seemed to hint at a tendency in the new Government to overstep the line between religious liberty and retaliation for past offences. They did not, as believers in freedom, want their principles to be imposed in any way on any people, or want other people to be punished for not showing our principles sufficient respect. If anyone had to play the part of a persecutor, it had far better be a Christian. It was a sin for a Christian to persecute, but it was a double sin in a Freethinker, who had been advocating toleration for all. If, when his day arrived, he persecuted in turn, it discounted all the promises he had made in the day of his weakness.

The motion was seconded, and carried unanimously. Miss Kough moved a vote of thanks to the Birmingham Branch for the admirable way in which they had carried out



all the arrangements for the Conference, and the cheerful and ready way they had ministered to the comfort of the delegates. Mr. Cowell seconded, and the motion was carried by acclamation.

The President declared the Conference proceedings at an end.

T. H. E.

### The Stratford Excursion.

CERTAINLY the sun shone upon the Freethinkers assembled at Stratford-on-Avon on Whit-Monday. So vigorously did it shine that only enthusiasm for the hallowed spots where the greatest of all Englishmen lived and died, kept them off the river and took them into the town. Most of us would have preferred a quieter day. So many sightseers seemed somewhat garish in the interesting old-world town.

The river trip was delightful. We wished it could have lasted longer. The view of the church in which Shakespeare lies is most picturesque from the water, and the gardens surrounding the Memorial Theatre slope softly down to the water's edge. There is a full luxuriance of trees and grass in the Warwickshire scenery, which seems to refresh and fill you with a sense of well-being.

On Monday our interest was chiefly centered in the Memorial Theatre, where our President found a kindred spirit in the Curator, who most courteously gave us an opportunity of listening to a magnificent speech delivered by Mr. Foote, in response to the entreaties of the party, from the stage of the Memorial Theatre.

One could not help feeling that the world would have been the richer by a great exponent of Shakespeare's genius, had Mr. Foote been able to devote himself to the histrionic art. But Freethought would have been the poorer. Those of us who had the privilege of listening to his address, left the theatre feeling that a fine ideal had been held up to us, and that our day's pleasuring had given us a mental and moral stimulus. It was a great moment for us all, and one that will endear to all present the memory of the Freethought Conference of 1911.

K. B. K.

### The Sunday Evening's Meeting.

THE brilliant, if somewhat oppressively warm weather, broke up before the evening meeting at the King's Hall—thunder growled and lightning flashed. Presumably God was showing his wrath and visiting his anger upon Birmingham for allowing the National Secular Society to hold its Annual Conference there. His wrath must have made him careless, for we learned afterwards that the lightning had struck some Christians who were holding an open-air meeting on one side of a Birmingham street; while, beyond giving them a slight shock, it had done no harm to two Freethinkers who were standing on the other side.

Perhaps the storm and heat had affected the attendance somewhat. Certainly, we expected a larger gathering. But the "saints" and the general public who had braved the weather were rewarded by a fine display of oratory. The President led off with a brilliant speech, and all the other speakers were in fine form, while the enthusiasm displayed by the audience was worthy of a packed meeting.

It was pleasant to notice so many women's faces amongst the audience, showing that women no longer boycott the Freethought movement, and there were even some tiny children present who appeared to have been infected with the general enthusiasm. It was pretty to see the mites applauding heartily and apparently thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Some notable veterans were present also, Mr. Ridgway, in spite of his eighty odd years, showing the enthusiasm of a youth. But the majority of the audience were rigorously youthful, auguring well for the future of Freethought in Birmingham.

After the meeting many of the delegates and their friends adjourned to the Colonnade Hotel, and a pleasant evening was spent fighting old battles over again and hearing accounts of new victories in the Freethought cause.

K. B. K.

### Correspondence

#### THE NEBULAR HYPOTHESIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Adamson's claim that Thomas Paine was the discoverer of the "Nebular Hypothesis," I cannot see what connection there is between the quotation he cites from the *Age of Reason* and the "Nebular Hypothesis." To say that the fixed stars are suns with planets circling round them is not to propound the "Nebular Hypothesis," or anything like it. The "Nebular Hypothesis"—to put it in

shorthand—states that at one time, many millions of years ago, the sun, the earth, and the other planets existed as a vast nebulous mass, such as, with the aid of powerful telescopes, we see in the heavens to-day; that this nebula, condensed into a molten mass, and under the influence of known laws, threw off the planets and formed the solar system as we know it now.

I have searched the *Age of Reason* in vain for any hint that Paine was acquainted with this theory. Even if he had made a lucky guess at it, he would not have been its founder. Science is not founded upon guesses; there is no guess-work in the books of Kant and Laplace; it is all worked out mathematically by the aid of known infrangible laws.

I certainly made one error, which Mr. Adamson did not correct. I stated that Laplace published his work three years later than Kant. It should have been five years later, Kant's work being published in 1791; but I find that this was a reprint, the first issue being published in 1755, thirty years before the *Age of Reason*.

Strange to say, in all the years I have been writing for the *Freethinker* I have only twice been criticised—not that I object to criticism, I welcome it; it shows, at any rate, that someone does one the honor to read one's articles—and both times it has been regarding Thomas Paine. Some years ago I wrote out a list of Freethought works, and was taken to task because I had omitted the *Age of Reason*. I allowed judgment to go by default.

Now, I cannot see eye to eye with my Freethought friends regarding the *Age of Reason*. Probably I shall get into trouble for saying so, but I will give my reason. When I was breaking with Christianity I was told that the *Age of Reason* was the most advanced work against religion; I read it and was charmed with Paine's clear and vigorous style. It completed the separation from Christianity but it confirmed me in my belief in a Creator and the existence of Jesus as a great and good man, and it delayed my emancipation from those beliefs for a considerable time. I have never recommended the work to beginners and never shall.

Paine was a great man, a brave man; the liberty we enjoy to-day we owe largely to him; but I do not think his book is suitable for the propaganda of Atheism. It is full of appeals of Rousseau-like fervor to belief in a Creator. I should feel very inconsistent if, while I attack the religious ideas of Rousseau and Pope, I were to urge people to read the same ideas in the *Age of Reason*. As a Unitarian tract nothing could be more admirable; but I am not advocating Unitarianism, I am advocating Atheism.

W. MANN.

#### CHINESE RELIGIONS.

An authority on the religions of the Chinese, writing in such a remote past as fifty years ago, began certain diatribes with these amusing words: "The real religious beliefs and practices of a heathen people are hard to describe intelligently." In this opinion a great number to-day will smilingly concur, since it is a fact that gradually, but irresistibly, the standpoint of mediæval bigotry is waning in popularity. For, let us inquire what constitutes a heathen people? Is it clay images? Then the great Roman Catholic Church is heathen. Is it belonging to a non-Christian faith, or to no faith at all? Then Jews, Mahomedans, Deists, and Atheists are heathen. But these four important classes are always specifically excluded, because (unlike the Roman Catholics) they have no clay images.....Originally, it is well to observe, a heathen was a Gentile—that is, a man who was not a Jew, with the further implication that if he served Jehovah, he did so by forbidden methods, and that in consequence of his erroneous faith he was practising moral abominations abhorrent to the true people of God..... Hence, it follows that the Chinese, because they are not Christian, are heathen.....The word "heathen" undoubtedly conveys, apart from its theological odium, a moral reproach. It means unenlightened, barbarous, bad, wicked, sinful. In a very comforting sense, therefore, it implies those who differ from us. How grateful we should all be! The poor Buddhists, who believe it is not only cruel, but sinful, to kill living things no matter what they may be; who have made of their Nirvana a heaven far more wonderful than the narrow little personal heaven of Judea, which is just above the clouds, and over which reigns the anthropomorphic God; who have laid down a Rule of Life admirable in its tenderness; who have had the audacity to antedate by several centuries the Christian monastery, Christian celibacy, the Christian dress and caps of the priests, Christian incense, Christian bells, the Christian rosary of beads, the Christian lighted candles at the altar, the Christian intonations at the service, the Christian ideas of Purgatory, the Christian praying in an unknown tongue, the offerings to departed spirits in the temple; these wretched Buddhists are heathen! Poor pitiful people!—Putnam Weale, "*The Unknown God*."



**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

**LONDON.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, A. B. Moss, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, C. Cohen, Lectures.

FINSBURY PARK: 11.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and Walter Bradford. Newington Green: 7.30, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture. Highbury Corner: Wednesday, at 8, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "Immortality."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Why I Reject Christianity."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Miss Kough, "Immortality."

**COUNTRY.****OUTDOOR.**

CHOBLEY (Cattle Market): Friday, June 16, at 7.45, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Mysticism in the Making."

DARWEN (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, June 18, at 3, "In the Valley of the Shadow"; 7, "Kingcraft—Past and Present" (with some reference to the forthcoming Coronation of George V.). Monday, June 19, at 7.30, "Origin of the Christ Myth."

GREAT HARWOOD (Market Square): Tuesday, June 20, at 7.45, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Gods in Decay."

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Cross): 8.45, Geo. T. Whitehead, "Ennobling Christology." Saturday, at 8, Geo. T. Whitehead, "Hospitals and Asylums."

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This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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