

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*The world rolls round for ever like a mill ;
It grinds out death and life and good and ill ;
It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.*

*Man might know one thing were his sight less dim ;
That it whirls not to suit his petty whim,
That it is quite indifferent to him.*

JAMES THOMSON ("B. V.").

Our Brother Christ.

ACCORDING to the Free Church's Catechism, one of the latest theological statements—Jesus Christ is not God the Son, but the Son of God. God, in his great love, sent him down from heaven into the world to be "our Savior from sin." "He was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary"—which is a pretty thing in a Catechism primarily meant for children, who must either take it as they take medicine, in simple blind trust, or ask for explanations. In the latter case, we pity the teachers who have to enlighten their juvenile minds on such a mystery. The rest of the gospel fairy-tale is added as introductory to the statement of the benefits we receive from his incarnation. First, he is a "Mediator between God and man." But why does God, who is called our father, want a mediator between himself and his own children? Why does he want his first son to suffer before he relaxes his grim frown on the rest of the family? Is this the way that just and sensible human parents are expected to act? But even after his suffering we derive no advantage unless we repent and believe—faith being even more necessary than good conduct. And how are we enabled to repent and believe? Only by "the secret power of the Holy Spirit." Everything depends upon that personage, who really determines who shall go to heaven and who shall go to hell, so that all the co-operative work of the Father and Son is lost unless the other person of the Trinity is favorable.

Jesus Christ is not only the mediator between us naughty children and our heavenly father, but he "reveals to us what God is," and "as perfect Man represents our race before God"—which we take to be a rare argument in a circle. Moreover it is stated that "We have in Him a brother man who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, as well as a perfect example of what we ought to be."

Now we regard this as a pack of nonsense. To begin with, a perfect example cannot well exist, and if it did we could hardly know whether it was perfect or not, for all our knowledge is relative. A perfect man has never been found. Whenever he is found he will probably be a perfect nuisance. Moreover, a perfect example, if it did exist, would be too cold and remote. How could we imitate one who had absolutely no failings? A great character, lofty in spite of its defects, stimulates and inspires us; but we should turn with despair, and perhaps some secret ill-temper, from the incarnation of impeccable virtue. Some such feeling as this prompted the saying of a certain statesman about a great rival,

that he was without a single redeeming vice, and taught in a Sunday-school. Some such feeling, too, or the apprehension of it, suggested the modifying statement that Jesus Christ is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." It is a sort of graceful concession. But it does not amount to much, after all; for, if he could not possibly sin, he was really not liable to temptation as we are. A temptation which cannot succeed is a temptation only in name. Temptation is generally looked upon as purely external. But this is a mistake. It is always subjective as well as objective. The external appeal must find an internal tendency. A glass of whisky is no temptation to one who abhors intoxicants. A beef-steak is no temptation to a confirmed vegetarian. A half-crown is no temptation to a millionaire. An open razor is no temptation to suicide, unless the beholder is depressed or desperate. Consequently, to say that any person was tempted, but was without sin, and, in fact, *could not sin*, is to say that he was *not* tempted, for it implies that there was not even an incipient vicious inclination within him to respond to the outside stimulus.

This Catechism only follows the cant of declining orthodoxy in talking of Jesus as a "perfect man" and a "perfect example." This laudation of Jesus is like the laudation of the Bible—a sign of the decadence of positive faith. As we have remarked in our *Book of God*—"Anyone who sincerely believed in the deity of Jesus would shrink from praising his human virtues. To such a person it would savor strongly of impertinence. Nor would anyone who really believed the Bible to be the Word of God make it the subject of meaner panegyrics. It seems ridiculous to argue that God wrote with unusual power and sublimity, and is actually the very first of known authors."

Even if Jesus was a perfect man, intrinsically, he was certainly not a perfect example. No one is an example to another except in the same circumstances. Now it is indisputable, if there be any truth in the Gospels, that Jesus had not to confront most of our difficulties. He does not appear to have ever supported anyone but himself, and he was able to work miracles whenever he pleased, as when he sent Peter fishing for money to pay the tax-collector. Christian divines say he lived and died a virgin; at any rate, he was not a husband, and we suppose it may be assumed he was not a father. That is to say, he evaded, or did not assume, those very relationships which involve the most constant, and often the most onerous, duties of the vast majority of men. He was therefore no example to us at all in the main business of our lives.

From another point of view, the "brother man" nonsense becomes conspicuous. Take away the miracles—that is, the superhuman elements—from the biography of Jesus, and there is not enough left to furnish forth a common newspaper obituary. What he was, what he said, and what he did, as a mere man, is entirely concealed by the evangelists. Perhaps we ought not to say that they concealed it. They may have been more ignorant than designing. They produced an ideal portrait from legend and tradition. Jesus Christ is an ideal creation. He belongs rather to fiction than to history. To call him a "brother man" is sentimental absurdity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Our Need.

SEVERAL of the speakers at the meetings of the British Association dwelt upon the necessity for the cultivation of a higher intellectual standard among the general public, and the difficulties that beset the scientific teacher in its absence. This is not the first time the Association speakers have struck this note, and its recurrence only serves to show that it is felt as a real obstacle to the spread of scientific knowledge. Nor can it be said that since Sir Norman Lockyer raised this matter in his presidential address, some nine or ten years ago, that there has been a very substantial improvement in the general condition of affairs. In some directions things have distinctly deteriorated. There has been an increase in the spirit of militarism, and although the cry for conscription under the euphemism of compulsory service has not succeeded, yet there has been a fairly successful attempt to indoctrinate the children of the country with military methods and the military spirit. Moreover, the outburst of unreasoning royalism on the death of Edward the Seventh, and on the Coronation of the present King, must have come as a surprise to many, and have given them very serious cause for a little earnest consideration.

The need for a nation to secure the best possible mental equipment is to-day greater than ever. Emphasis is laid upon the necessity for our maintaining a supremacy in trade or armaments, forgetting that neither are enough to maintain real national greatness. Venice could not maintain its greatness by trade, nor Spain by its armies. America, above all, is bound to fall back upon the brain of the nation if it is to hold its own. The force of social life, and the conditions of national competition, become more mental in character, however material may be their form. The whole tendency of evolution is the gradual replacement of brute force by brain power. Even war becomes more and more a matter of brains rather than a matter of muscle, and bids fair to be more so in the future. Inventions applied to weapons and machinery, and organisation applied to the human material, inevitably drives one to the conclusion that in future the race will be, not to the nation that can turn out the greatest number of prize animals, but to the one that has best developed and organised its intellectual resources. In brief, the history of man is repeating the lesson of the relations between man and the non-human universe. Just as in the latter case man owes his supremacy to his bigger and better-developed brain, so, in the contest between nations, it is the nation that is best equipped mentally that can look forward with the greatest confidence to the future.

Yet, the truth must be told, the people of this country do not take the task of education with anything like the seriousness that it appears to be taken in France, Germany, and America. According to a calculation made by Sir Norman Lockyer, the money expended by the State upon scientific research during the nineteenth century amounted to about £1,200 annually. This was surely not due to our inability to afford more; it was simply that to most people scientific research is a more or less harmless hobby to which little importance is attached. Governments would have spent more in this direction had there been any keen recognition of its necessity. For a government that lives upon popular suffrage cannot be expected to lead public opinion in any genuine sense of the word. The real leadership in such cases lies with public opinion immediately, and ultimately with the moulders of public opinion. And, unfortunately, those who have the easiest access to the public ear are not concerned either with the importance of mental development or the value of scientific discoveries. One speaker at the British Association meetings remarked that Cambridge could turn out plenty of trained scientific men if they were needed, but there was no demand for them. And another

speaker pointed the moral by remarking that the money wasted in searching for coal, all of which might have been saved had trained geologists been consulted, would have provided the Geological Survey with a perpetual income adequate to all its requirements.

The nation's urgent need is a wise utilisation of its mental resources. Most of our problems come back to this point. The question of the conservation of our coal supply, the question of afforestation, the land question, even the adjustment of the relations between capital and labor, are all primarily mental problems. We need to look at life as a whole, and to face its problems with the security and confidence of a well-informed mind. It is not a question of cultivating right feelings. In the absence of right knowledge, these are apt to be more harmful than beneficial. Above all, it needs to be realised that indulging in a debauch of mere feeling is calculated to use up the energy that ought to be spent in rightly directed action. Nothing, of course, can be done without feeling; but it is unwise to establish it in the position of supreme dictator. And with many the mouthing of pretty sentiments, empty declarations of boundless love, and the beauties of sacrifice seems to yield all the satisfaction that comes from profitable action. Their lives are passed in a dream-land of emotional aspiration, while the real world of life is so much the loser by their enervated personality.

Now, one would have to be a fanatic of first-class power to argue that established religious beliefs are solely responsible for this state of affairs. Still, it would be indeed strange if a religion so long established as Christianity has been, enjoying so much power, and carrying the weight of social standing, and in virtue of these facts creating an atmosphere for each generation to move in, it would be strange indeed if it did not exert an important influence on the general run of life. Unconsciously people acquire a certain traditional way of looking at things, and attach a conventional value to particular human qualities. And the traditions established by Christian teaching are mostly in the wrong direction. Of all the thousands of sermons that are preached year after year, in hardly any is there found an emphasis on the value and importance of intellectual development. Quite the contrary. One meets with plenty of warnings, veiled and open, against intellectual pride, lavish advice to cultivate habits of contentment, with half-maudlin verbiage about cultivating a spirit of humility and dependence towards some mythical monstrosity or other, but little of real value. The Pagan world, as represented by its best thinkers, taught and practised the need for looking at life and death with courage and discernment. Christianity has always worked hard to surround death with an atmosphere of mystifying terror, and to cover life with a fog of foolish sentiment.

When the religious teacher does deal with the intellect, it is to show up its weaknesses and to dwell upon its failures. The scientist is content to point to its strength and successes, and to use these as incitements to further triumphs. The one thing that a religious teacher notes with pleasure is the confession of a scientific leader that he is unable to offer a complete explanation of this or that phenomenon. He cackles joyfully that science cannot explain the origin of life, the origin of conscience, or the origin of something else. Rationally brought up, people would see in this a cause for sorrow, not for rejoicing. There is really nothing elevating in the thought that we are ignorant, and that our attempts after knowledge have been fruitless. It is well to remember our limitations; but we should remember them as barriers to be surmounted, not as indications that we have reached the limit of our resources. Let anyone bear in mind the cumulative effects on the average mind of religious teaching of the kind noted; let him also bear in mind the opposition that has been offered to the great discoveries in science; and above all, that for generations the practical direction of education—such as there was—remained

in the hands of the clergy, and that the same influence is still powerful, and it will not be denied that there is here a very real cause for the condition of things lamented by the British Association's speakers.

Some time ago it was calculated by a President of the British Association that to place England upon the same educational level as Germany would demand the capitalisation of a sum of £24,000,000. This is a prodigious sum, but is certainly less than we spend on religion every year of our lives. Put the matter upon the lowest grounds—upon the grounds of mere commercial competition—should we not have a much better return for our money if this huge expenditure on religion were devoted to a more effective intellectual equipment? As things go, we cripple scientific progress in two ways: first, we starve the scientific worker, and then we limit his audience by giving him a people so poorly educated that they fail to realise the importance of his work or the value of his message.

Whatever may have been the exaggeration of the famous generalisation which traced *all* progress to a growth of knowledge, there is no question that it contained a very important truth. For one may, in a broad sense, at least, express the difference between ourselves and the savage in terms of knowledge. Each age discovers and invents; it hands on its discoveries and its inventions to a succeeding generation, and a very little reflection serves to show that it is this accumulated knowledge of the race that is the essence of what we call civilisation. Strip man of these, and even allowing for the possibility or their absence of feeling and a sense of morality unchanged, civilisation would practically disappear. Not that the moral feelings would remain unchanged. They would deteriorate, and that rapidly. For it is the application of art and science to life that really provides the occasion of their development. On the unconscious side, the influence of inventions applied to life, the effect of improved sanitation, greater medical knowledge, better cities, and better government, are all agencies that profoundly affect morals. And, consciously, the perception of the ties uniting people, the better knowledge of our fellow man that is derived from a freer communication with them, gives the intellectual basis for a conscious direction of moral forces.

After all, while there is every cause for regret, there is little cause for surprise, that we do not, as a nation, adequately recognise the value of intellectual development. Modern science is little more than 200 years old, and, in the sense of its work being at all appreciated by the popular mind, less than half that age. During the whole of this time, and for long before, science had to fight the many centuries of Christian training, as it still has to fight the influence of the huge army of Christian preachers. The obstructive influence here is still active, although it has assumed a modified form. The scientific worker is no longer burned, or even banned, but his power is minimised by his not having an adequately equipped public to which he may appeal. If we cannot fight revolutions with rose water, we certainly cannot solve serious social problems with showers of sloppy sentiment. We need intelligent appreciation of the facts, and we need courage in applying the remedies that knowledge indicates as needful. Given these two things, and most of our ills, whether social or individual, are curable. But we need a public free from the demoralising influence of superstition if the cure is to be realised in fact.

C. COHEN.

"Big Things."

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, is a man whose proper category, if it exists, is extremely difficult to describe. He is a bundle of tantalising contradictions. As a literary critic he occupies a deservedly high position. His knowledge of the world's best books is at once extensive and profound—a most rare

combination. He has a literary sense and style of no mean order. It is as a theological thinker alone that he is a psychological problem of surpassing complexity. He is a theologian who never gets tired of denouncing theology; a superstitionist, who avails himself of every opportunity to gird at superstition; a spiritualist, who has no patience with spiritualism; an eulogist of Christianity, who yet finds his best Christians among Pagans. He preaches the Divinity of Christ whilst ridiculing the Church's dogma regarding it. In an interesting article in the *Christian World* for September 7, entitled "Concerning Big Things," he comes before us as a zealous magnifier of certain Pagan philosophers; but he extols them in the interest of the Christian religion. Quoting from Socrates, Plato, and Longinus, he assures us that "they were better Christians than we are." Of those eminent Pagan teachers, only the third belongs to the Christian era. Longinus flourished in the third century, and was an old-school Platonist in a world of Neo-Platonists. But the most interesting fact, in this connection, is that Longinus was the teacher of Porphyry, one of the subtlest, fairest, and most unanswerable opponents the Christian Church has ever encountered. And yet, in spite of this fact, "J. B." declares that Longinus was a better Christian than any we meet with to-day.

Let us now examine this abnormal divine's "Big Things." The remarkable coincidence is that, in the main, they are our Big Things too. It is worthy of notice, for example, that whilst characterising Rabelais and Voltaire as jesters, who, with their *vire enorme*, "made fun of Church and State, of theology and philosophy, of heaven and hell," he is yet fair-minded enough to add that both "did some very big things and some very serious things." He even goes to the length of citing the famous exclamation of Jowett, of Balliol, namely, that Voltaire "did more good than all the Church Fathers put together"; and he might have quoted Coleridge's estimate of Rabelais as one who was "beyond a doubt among the deepest as well as boldest thinkers of his age." Here, then, we have two notorious Free-thinkers who are acknowledged to have lived and labored on behalf of the Big Things of life. When Voltaire said, "I play with life, it is the only thing it is good for," it does not follow that he treated it as a very small affair. It must be borne in mind that the seriousness at which Rabelais and he jibed was a repulsive and demoralising pose, a piece of wicked and intolerable hypocrisy, and that, being such, it richly deserved the sneers hurled at it. As "J. B." himself observes, "the comic aspect of things has its appeal to all healthy minds," and "our laugh, be sure, comes of one of our finest human faculties." But the reverend gentleman warns us that "the joke may be carried too far." "We shall miss life's meaning," he adds, "if we let it end there," as if he knew quite well what life's meaning is, or that it has a meaning. He forgets, however, that "littleness and greatness" are purely relative terms, and have no significance apart from their relations. Big Things and Little Things exist only in our own minds. To Nature all things are alike.

"J. B." informs us that "we are in a big Universe," and that "we are the only creatures on this planet who are aware of the fact." This may be perfectly true, though we have no means of ascertaining what the Universe is to an ant or an ox. Some animals may know much more than we give them credit for, while we ourselves know much less than our pride allows us to admit. But, in any case, the possession of mere knowledge confers no inherent greatness upon us, nor adds to our intrinsic value. Supposing we do know that the Universe is infinite and eternal, which we do not, how much better are we in consequence? Furthermore, the Universe, as we know it, is neither infinite nor eternal. Everything that comes within our ken has had a beginning and shall have an end. Sun and moon and stars are passing forms. The solar system is galloping at top

speed to the end of its comparatively brief day. This is a scientific commonplace, and in face of it how laughably absurd is the following assertion:—

"He (man) stands up consciously as part of an infinity of extension, an eternity of duration. He is infinite and eternal, because these two things, infinity and eternity are, in his apprehension, the basis of his mental structure. There could be no infinite around him unless there were an infinite within him. For all creatures are the size of the world they live in. The star could convey no message to us were it not that our nature is starry, on the scale celestial."

This may be orthodox mysticism, but it is neither good science nor sound philosophy. The *sum* of matter may be infinite and eternal, but its *forms* are ever undergoing a process of perpetual change. Man is one of the *forms* of matter, and, like all other forms, his destiny too is to have his day and cease to be. And what on earth does "J. B." mean by the statement that his nature is "starry"? Have not astronomers discovered that the material of all known stars is identical with the material of our planet? The "scale celestial" is, therefore, a figment of the theological fancy.

"J. B." passes on to expatiate on the big career upon which man is launched. He tells us that "we are thrust upon great adventures." What exactly these "great adventures" are we are not told. Instead, we are presented with a long rigmarole about encountering the unknown, about the discipline of Nature's silence, about taking leaps in the dark. The consequence is, on the essayist's own showing, that "we are ever near neighbors to catastrophe." The marriage venture, for example, is a leap in the dark, and in what countless instances is it a leap into darkness and chaos and anguish and despair. Listen:—

"The maiden in her twenties receives her offer of marriage, to which she must give her 'yes' or 'no.' Her life hinges on that answer, but there is no word given as to what it will mean to her of happiness or sorrow. She must will herself away in the dark."

Our author treats the Christian law of marriage as if it were a law of Nature, or according to him, of God, and then he coolly adds, "Consider our capacity of suffering." Thus, life is represented as a long series of perilous adventures, ending with "the tremendous adventure of death," which is described as "the leap into that greatest unknown."

Now, the chief peculiarity of these perilous and often disastrous adventures is, according to our essayist, that they are signs "of what is thought of us by the ruling Power." The wisdom and love of that ruling Power express themselves by subjecting us to these awful risks. Our Heavenly Father shows us how much he cares for us by the amount of suffering he makes possible for us. Such is the scheme which he has ordained for the development of our character. All this would be wholesomely amusing, were it not for the tragically cruel idea that underlies it. How blood-curdling is the following description of it:—

"Our doubts, our fears, the fateful decisions thrust upon us; life's appalling possibilities, its immense despairs; these are no scheme for ants and moles. The scheme supposes our greatness. It is a plan for heroes; for the making of them, at least, if they are not that already. The scheme were ridiculous if it meant anything less than this. Its size, its character fit in, not with the infinitely little, but with the infinitely great."

Surely, the majority of people would rather part with their so-called greatness than possess it at such terrific cost. The Framer of us has fallen upon a horrid method of signifying to us that he accounts us big.

We now come to a long paragraph in which Nature takes the place of "the Framer of us"; and it is possible, after all, that Nature is "the Framer of us." But here again "J. B." flounders helplessly in a continent of mud. By Nature "we are called upon for big things. She puts no bounds to our possibilities. The stuff in you, she says, is the essence of all that was, and is, and is to be. She is ambitious for us, as a mother who discerns in her chil-

dren divine capacities." But the truth is the other way about. If man is to be thought of as in any sense distinct from Nature, it is he who makes demands upon her, not she upon him. She does not consider him in the least. She showers no favors upon him, nor grants him any special treatment. Her floods, her volcanoes, her earthquakes, her lightnings, her fires, all these and more are his implacable enemies, and they destroy him without a moment's hesitation. At best, he can only dodge them by his superior wits, which he has acquired as the result of his varied experiences in the long course of his evolution. She does not care a jot whether he lives or dies. He must study her ways, master her laws, investigate and learn to draw upon her resources, and gain proficiency in the art of running away from her when the black frown is upon her brow, if he expects to live in any degree of safety and comfort. Instead of accounting him great, Nature treats him as if he were on the same level and of the same calibre as the ant or the ox. And, after all, wherein does man's superiority consist? According to its size, an ant's brain is at least equal to his own; and it would be difficult to prove that London, Glasgow, Liverpool, or Manchester is better managed than an ant community.

Of course, we all believe that some things are relatively bigger and more valuable than others. We are in full agreement with all that "J. B." so eloquently says about millionaires and their ideals. It is a calumny even to imagine that Freethinkers aim at nothing higher than the acquisition of material goods and the enjoyment of fleshly pleasures. They are as fully convinced as any theologian that man lives his best life "by admiration, hope, and love"; and they differ from him only in that they find the objects of admiration, hope, and love, not beyond the skies, in a realm nobody knows anything about, but down on this homely earth. For them the Big Things are the things that make for the welfare of humanity here and now. Intellectual enlightenment, moral enthusiasm, the passion of love seeking and finding incarnation in the service of man, these are the Big Things which it is worth while to cultivate above all else. In Christendom, however, these things are still so scarce that "the ruling Power," or "the Framer of us," or the Watchman who is said to have his eye upon us, is clearly seen to be nothing but a mere sham. "J. B." endeavors hard to justify the belief in him; but every Freethinker feels compelled to exclaim in the words of Addison—

"Believe who will the solemn sham, not I."

J. T. LLOYD.

The Peculiar Faith.

CHRISTIANS are a peculiar people. They themselves not only admit the soft impeachment, but consider it a distinguishing mark of grace. Their peculiarity chiefly manifests as a species of mental topsyturvyism. For instance, such conditions as mourning, being slandered, down-heartedness, or being reviled, are considered by Christians as occasions for rejoicing and being exceeding glad. When a Christian feels merry he is exhorted to sing psalms. Fancy a man in a state of hilarity letting himself go in terms of some of these forms of Hebrew poetry. It is only a spiritual Mark Tapley that could rise to it. But then Mark Tapley was peculiar.

The Christian idea of good news is also peculiar. A Christian is one who is saved by grace. Apart from grace, so the "Good News Standard" tells us, every man of us is doomed to hell. Hell, however, is a word no longer fashionable among modern Christian theologians. Let us say, then, doomed to some region "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." This is Christian gospel: good news. This is only one of the soul-comforting foundation-truths—the very words of Jesus Christ—which, unless a man receive and believe whole-heartedly, let him be anathema. Fancy this being good news!

Mind you, it is only a remnant, according to the election of grace, that *can* be saved, and these are saved willy-nilly, irrespective of personal merit. The great majority of human beings, therefore, for the most part admittedly every whit as good as the saved, are lost; that is, are condemned to suffer whatever horrors are implied under the symbol of gnawing and burning, gnawing and burning for ceaseless æons: the suffering never exhausted, the sufferer never consumed. If the terms "worm" and "fire" are not to be taken literally, but symbolically, let it be distinctly remembered that a sign signifies. Here it signifies a never-ending torture that can be best symbolised by the gnawing and burning of a body that is, after all, never eaten, never consumed. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Imagine the very elect, hugging to themselves their own fancied security, being comforted with such "good news." Go ye into the world, preach *this* good news to every creature, and verily there shall be added unto the Freethinkers daily such as shall be saved.

Now, as long as the Bible was believed to be the veritable Word of God, its difficulties were evaded by the easy hypothesis that, as such, it transcended human understanding. Thus it came about that its doctrines were softened in the pulpit, its indecencies glossed over, and its barbarisms condoned. But when the light of criticism was shed upon these sacred Scriptures, then, indeed, it—the Bible—presented itself to the world as being what it really is, a literary amalgam of very indifferent constituents, a hotch-potch of legend, myth, fable, and falsehood.

Moreover, the most astonishing part of all this is the fact that criticism comes with the most damaging effect from within the Christian Church. Its most enlightened leaders have surrendered its "inspiration," have explained away its miracles, and ignored its metaphysics. The Christian ethic is now so attenuated that it is reducible to a single formula, which formula was in vogue centuries before the Christ was heard of. But verbal inspiration is the stronghold of Christian theology. Without it the Christian has no documentary authority. The whole fabric of his faith is shattered. The foundation of his spiritual edifice is rudely undermined. For a little while longer, perhaps, you may count your nominal Christians by millions; but the frantic manoeuvres of the parsons and the preachers clearly show that their superstructure is already tottering, that its fall may be predicted with certainty, and great will be the fall thereof, for it was built upon the sand.

Said the Apostle Paul, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." This is indeed true. It is both mysterious and mystifying. The Christian mind has always been on the rack. Given a tender conscience, a tendency to introspection, and the only appeal in the last resource to "oracles" which preach sometimes the law of Liberty and at others the law of Necessity, what else can be expected but mental torture? However ideal a life a man may endeavor to lead, so tortuous are the ramifications of mind-influence upon mind, one could never be sure that he might be a cause of his neighbor's damnation. Notwithstanding the fact that the Bible teaches predestination over and over again, Christians somehow *feel* that they are responsible beings, and the mass of humanity is not really affected by metaphysics. They are constantly on tenter-hooks lest they may be a cause of stumbling to a weaker brother. And well may they be horrified at the logical conclusions derived from the Written Word. Now, Biblical criticism is good as far as it goes. It has already shaken the faith of thousands of Christians all the world over, and these are just so many incipient Freethinkers. But let us be fair. Christian ministers cannot both eat their cake and have it too. To the man in the street the Bible is either God's Word or not God's Word. His inference, too, is cogent, viz., that the very fact that human intelligence is competent to criticise God's Word, and to find in it so many inaccuracies, stamps

it at once as being anything but God's Word. Nor is there any occasion for any of that very feeble substitute for orthodox Christianity called New Theology, which everybody now knows is neither "new" nor "theology," but nothing more nor less than very ancient ethics. The wayfaring man, though a fool, can see through a man preaching in a pulpit from a text-book which, in private life, he acknowledges to be no longer authoritative. What humbugs such creatures must know themselves to be.

But to those who will have no more exploded theology, what advantage is there? Much in every way; for now Liberty may attain her perfect work. If Jahweh is a myth, it follows that the Jahwehhood of Jesus is also, and all the attendant mythology and accretions of doctrine and ritual that have been foisted upon the superstitious and the ignorant. If Christians could only see it, they themselves are free. Free to enjoy a peace of mind that passeth anything they have yet experienced, a peace which no creed can give *nor take away*.

HENRY FLEMING.

Labor and Education.

[A leaflet circulated at the Trade Union Congress by the Secular Education League.]

THE Trade Union Congress has repeatedly declared its adherence to the principle of Secular Education.

Of late years, however, a vigorous opposition to the majority vote has been raised by the Catholic members. They are not at all likely to defeat it, but they may lead some votes astray by their pathetic if illogical appeals.

They argue that Secular Education amounts to a kind of persecution of their Church and faith, and that the Trade Union Congress, in supporting it, is trespassing beyond its true province. They argue that the Congress, representing Labor interests only, has no right to interfere in matters of religion.

These arguments sound plausible to some hearers who have not really grasped the meaning of Secular Education.

Secular Education is not an interference in matters of religion. It is precisely the contrary. It only prevents the representatives of religion from using the State schools as instruments for the propagation and maintenance of their faith. They have no moral right, and should have no legal right, to carry on their work in the State schools, which, being maintained by the whole community, should be exclusively devoted to education, and not to those subjects on which there is a profound disagreement among ratepayers, parents, and teachers of all varieties of religious belief.

Secular Education is not an attack upon, nor even a criticism of, religion. It simply forbids the annexation by religionists of educational machinery belonging to and maintained by the State.

Certainly the Trade Union Congress should not discuss religion. Nor has it ever done so. It exists for quite other objects. In the same way, the national education system should not be used for teaching religious doctrines. It should exist for quite other objects.

Catholics have a perfect right to the fullest control of schools which they build and maintain themselves. They have no such right of control over schools built and maintained by the State. Neither have Churchmen, Nonconformists, nor any other religionists any such right.

Catholics suffer no special disability under Secular Education. They are simply prevented, like all other religious bodies, from using other people's money for their own objects.

The principle by which religion is excluded from the Trade Union Congress is the very same principle by which the teaching of religion should be excluded from the State schools.

It is to be hoped that the Trade Union Congress will continue to regard public education as a public matter in which it has a public interest; and that it will re-affirm, by an increased majority, the policy of "the Secular Solution" of the religious difficulty in national education.

All the meaner side of Catholic doctrine comes from Jesus, and all the noble morals of successive Reformers from Paul, who had imbibed Greek as well as Hebrew thoughts.—*F. W. Newman.*

Acid Drops.

One wonders how the victorious Republicans in Portugal managed to refrain from reprisals on their bitter and brutal enemies. Considering what human nature is, this self-control is an eloquent tribute to the wisdom and humanity of their principles. What the advanced men in religion and politics had to suffer under the Catholic Monarchy may be inferred from a recent event in Spain. Firmin Sagrista, a young Spanish draughtsman, drew three cartoons for a Spanish newspaper, with a view to the approaching anniversary of the death of Ferrer. These cartoons are said to be just of the same character as political cartoons in other countries. But he was brought, under a law passed by the detestable Moret, before a military tribunal in Barcelona, which condemned him to twelve years' imprisonment! The monstrous infamy of it is enough to take one's breath away. The Supreme Court at Madrid, however, confirmed the sentence. He had insulted the army! In other words, he had suggested what the universal civilised world knows to be true, that the execution of Ferrer was a judicial murder by a court-martial on behalf of the Catholic Church. Such sentences seem to be sacred, and therefore above criticism, under the rule of the Jesuits in Spain.

Carlyle called the Papacy "The Great Lying Church." He might as truly and justly have called it "The Great Bloodthirsty Church" or "The Great Beastly Church." The last reminds one of Giordano Bruno's "Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante."

Mr. Justice Avory, in sentencing to death the Indian bath attendant found guilty of murdering Alice Emily Brewster, a stewardess on the P. and O. liner *China*, said: "Your prayers for pardon to which you have alluded, should be addressed to your Heavenly King. I can only exhort you to prepare to die." How grand it sounds! And what humbug it is! The judge might as well have put it quite plainly: "King George isn't likely to pardon you. You had better try your luck with King Jehovah—or whatever his name is in your language. You aren't fit for this world any longer; you must try your luck in the next." Mr. Justice Avory is not a humorist, or he might have added, if he had been free to do so: "You won't get pardoned here, but God may pardon you, for *c'est son métier* (as Heine said)—it is his business."

Dr. Torrey is creeping back to England again by way of Dublin, where he is filling a soul-saving engagement. Beatrice offered to eat all the enemy that Benedick killed in the war. One might offer to eat—fried or grilled, whole or filleted—all the souls that Dr. Torrey will catch in Dublin. From the Irish capital, we understand, he will proceed to Bristol, where we hope he will embrace that comical convert of his. We predict that Dr. Torrey will be a failure on this visit. Our pamphlet, and Mr. W. T. Stead's brave article, let too much daylight in upon the peculiarities of his mind and character.

Mr. R. J. Campbell, in a recent sermon, frankly admits that one of the best men on earth to-day, a doctor of medicine, is a Freethinker. Once he saved the popular preacher's life at a great sacrifice to himself. He is a man who revels in serving others, doing good being his religion. He has absolutely no sense of God, and it is inconceivable to him how anybody can believe in him. Mr. Campbell has great admiration for him. And yet the man of God cannot dismiss without insulting him. He says of him, in effect: "He misses much, poor man. He is blind and doesn't know it; and he is blind because God wills it. His blindness may last as long as his earthly life; but when the struggle of his earthly life is over we shall see a wonderful change. Then we shall see on his face the shining of eternal glory, and on his forehead written the name of Christ." The unknown is the preacher's city of refuge; but it is a city in which only cowards have their abode. Mr. Campbell knows no more about the future than we do; and it is possible that his doctor-friend is a gainer, not a loser, because he is without the superfluous burden of superstition which Mr. Campbell still carries and does his utmost to persuade others to do the same.

The Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ has quenched the fires of animosity between two South American countries, Chili and Argentine; but if he did this, why did he ever allow such fires to be kindled? Why did he permit the cruel wars whose record darkens the page of history? If Mr. Rushbrooke can prove that Christ has ever brought about peace, then it follows that the re-

sponsibility for all national and international animosities, disturbances, and massacres rests on Christ's shoulders.

Some Freethinkers fondly imagine that the religion of "gentle Jesus" has been shorn of its worst features. This is not the case, for the priest still instills the poison of hell into the minds of children. A booklet, entitled *The Blessed Sacrament, from the Writings of the Saints, etc.* (Mowbray & Co), and intended for children preparing for communion, speaks of "the life in hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire—above, beneath, on this side, on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire." One is tempted to say of such a book "To the fire with it!" We would not burn the author, but a little *singing* might do him good.

We did not notice at the time, but better late than never, that one of the principal witnesses against those concerned in the recent "bucket shop" frauds was a Church of England clergyman, the Rev. William Francis Rickman, vicar of Powerstock, Dorset. This sanguine man of God, being anxious to defy his Master, Jesus Christ, by laying up for himself treasures on earth, parted with £2,600 in various instalments, in the hope of getting more than "shent per shent" for his money. All he succeeded in getting was a paltry £50 interest, while losing all his principal. The reverend gentleman is too simple for this world. Perhaps he will do better in the next. He is £2,600, at any rate, nearer getting through the needle's eye into the right department.

Our readers will have noticed in the daily press the case of the too-credulous City solicitor who paid a medium £2 per week for spiritualistic sittings, and further advanced sums of money for the use of a deceased friend who was expected to materialise and profitably invest the money. The *Church Times* remarks that this is an illustration of the ease with which the man who "loses his faith" will abandon himself to the wildest excesses of credulity. This is the pot calling the kettle black with a vengeance. It seems to us that the solicitor had never abandoned his faith, he had only transferred the object of his affections. His case is an illustration of the truth that the really religious mind is not altered by losing this or that object of devotion. It may remain as active in relation to other forms of religious belief, or it may find expression in connection with other things that are not definitely religious at all. Much of our trouble in sociology is due to this emergence of the religious mind in non-religious spheres. It is the type of mind that needs eliminating; the destruction of religious forms is only a step towards that end. And we are of opinion that many of the beliefs championed by the editor of the *Church Times* are not a whit more rational than those which brought the City solicitor into the Bankruptcy court.

It may be safely assumed that had Professor Macdonald, in his address before the Physiological Section of the British Association, dealt exclusively with the discoveries and triumphs in the physiological world, his lecture would have gone unnoticed by the religious press. As it is the address has been hailed with acclamation; it has been described as of "unusual interest," to have been "profound and suggestive," and even "momentous." Apparently it has been all these things because Professor Macdonald found a foothold for religion—in the region of the unknown, as usual. After reading as lengthy a report of the address as could be obtained, at present, we quite fail to see in what way the Professor has made the case for the belief in a "soul" any stronger than it was before. All that his address really emphasised was our lack of knowledge concerning the working of the brain, as well as the small acquaintance we have with the mode of production of other vital phenomena. With all this there is no need to quarrel, nor have we any desire to question his statements. On what is known in physiology, and on what is not known, the Professor is an authority. We are not, and we have too often had occasion to advise others of the danger of making rash statements unsupported by knowledge, that we desire to be cautious ourselves.

But when Professor Macdonald leaves the region of actual knowledge and enters that of pure speculation, his authority as a scientist vanishes, and we may meet him on common ground. And here we venture to think the Professor is just a little at sea. Professor Macdonald suggests that as the eye is formed in the absence of light, and the ear in the absence of sound, so the brain may be an instrument "tra-versed freely as the ear is by sound." The brain thus becomes an instrument shaped by a certain set of conditions to become the play of some new force—mind. It is of the

utmost importance in such discussions to get one's terms clear; and so we would point out that the ear is not traversed by sound at all. Sound is the subjective aspect of a purely physical phenomenon—a series of vibratory shocks upon a sensitive portion of the organism. This distinction is not unimportant. It is, indeed, vital. We have a psychological and a physical aspect to certain phenomena. That is all we know. That there is more than this is a sheer guess, quite unsupported by facts. We have the same thing with color. Color does not traverse the eye; there are vibratory impacts with varying degrees of velocity; and differing degrees of velocity give us the subjective aspects—red, blue, green, etc. Similarly we are told "mind in man is associated with the brain." Association usually implies the possibility of disassociation, and if Professor Macdonald uses the word in this sense he is suggesting something for which there is not a shadow of a shade of proof. There is no evidence available against the statement that brain and mind stand to each other in the relation of organ and function.

Professor Macdonald says: "In the case of the brain such phenomena as sleep and deep anaesthesia familiarise us with the fact that the mind was not necessarily always associated with the brain, but only with this when in a certain condition." With all due deference to Professor Macdonald, we beg to say neither sleep nor anaesthesia point to any such fact. In the first place, we do not know that the mental functions are absolutely quiescent in either sleep or anaesthesia. We only know they are reduced to a low point. And even though the mental functions were in absolute abeyance, there might be here no more than the cessation of a function in the temporary quiescence of its organ. The Professor admits the weakness of his whole case by saying that "there is no scientific evidence to support or rebut" his theory. Quite so; it is totally unsupported by facts. It is a pure guess, and, although given from a scientific rostrum, is of no more value than other guesses given us by preachers of religion. Like them, Professor Macdonald is building on the want of knowledge instead of on its possession. And a scientific theory should certainly have more to be said in its support than that there is nothing for or against it.

Mr. Robert Blatchford makes some sensible remarks on Professor Macdonald's fire-new and hoary-old "proof" of the soul in his address to the British Association:—

"Prove that man has a soul, and I'm with you; it is exceedingly interesting; but I see nothing in Professor Macdonald's address to prove that Christ was the son of a virgin, or that David and Jacob were not scoundrels, or that Elijah went to heaven, or that I shall go to hell, or that three persons are one person, or that a pope or a bishop knows any more about God than I do."

Excellent! And quite true.

The England of to-day, Mr. Blatchford finds, is "not weighed down by superstitious fears," it has "shaken off the authority of priests and prophets and has begun to do its own thinking." This is a great improvement. "And I own thinking," Mr. Blatchford says, "that I have helped a little in this beneficent change." He has—but it would be more graceful to let others say so. The history of the fight for Free thought will not be the endorsement of each fighter's opinion of himself. And perhaps the pioneers who bore the heat and burden of the day, in spite of the reticence so often shown towards them, will count for more than is imagined by those who came on the battlefield in the cool of the evening—when the trumpets of superstition were already sounding a retreat.

The *Church Times* publishes a letter from the late Bishop of Salisbury on the question of miracles. The Bishop says it is an "alarming phenomenon" to find people claiming "that perfect freedom of scientific research and statement of supposed scientific conclusions must be allowed to the clergy on all historical and literary questions, notwithstanding the undertakings on the strength of which they received holy orders." And he adds, "It is clear that, if this freedom were pressed to an extreme, it might justify them in denying two such Articles of the Faith as the existence of our Lord Jesus Christ as an historic person and the inspiration of the prophets by the Holy Spirit." We quite perceive the "alarming phenomenon" from the Bishop's point of view, but from the social point of view it is surely far more alarming that perfect freedom of research, thought, and speech, should be either denied to, or surrendered by, a body of men who claim to be the moral guides of the people. The Bishop's reason for his conclusion is quite Christian in character—if pressed to a logical conclusion, scientific research would justify the denial of the historicity of Jesus and the doctrine of inspiration. This being so, the Bishop

feels that he is justified in denying to his clergy the freedom that should be possessed by all, and, as a nation, we are stupid enough to maintain a body of men who must not only agree to surrender their right to discover and speak the truth concerning religion, but, having done so, will be inevitably led to oppose the same freedom when exercised by others.

The Rev. C. Guest, vicar of Christ Church, Burton-on-Trent, is a most interesting relic of a dead and buried age. One would not be surprised to hear that he belongs to the antediluvian era. Writing in his parish magazine, he enumerates the causes of the present Labor troubles. Having mentioned Socialism, "the irritation of the masses against the classes," the foolish speeches of such extreme Radicals as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, as secondary causes, he finally claps his pen upon "the real and originating cause of our distress," which is "the displeasure of God against our nation for our manifold transgressions and mighty sins." There you have it as pat as anything. Because we prefer golfing to church-going, lectures and concerts and week-end excursions to sermons and prayers, on the Lord's Day, the Day's Lord is having his revenge upon us by raising up Socialists and Laborites and Radicals to set class against class and so make our land the habitation of bitter jealousy and strife and suffering and misery. This is his Divine method of punishing us for putting him on the shelf. And it never dawns upon this revered gentleman that he is representing the Deity as a Diabolical Fiend, a Hideous Monster, absolutely unworthy of the allegiance of any sane people.

Another Burton-on-Trent parson, this time of the Wesleyan persuasion, complains that this age is shockingly neglecting and forgetting God. The funds are in arrears, the chapels are empty, even the Sacrament is no longer appreciated—why? Because the love of amusement is exterminating the love of God and heaven. In other words, theatre-going is destroying the taste for the chapel performances. After all, the men of God are only fighting for their own hand, just as do the theatre-managers.

"Clergyman" writes a letter to the *Liverpool Post and Mercury* on "Hooliganism." One cause of it, he says, is drink, and especially drink amongst women. Another cause is the disappearance of "corporal punishment in schools." The reverend gentleman declares that the cane is good for children, as the "cat" is good for certain criminals. He repeats the old falsehood that Judge Day stamped out garotting by means of the "cat" in Liverpool. He is positively in love with the "cat." He even says that it "morally regenerates." In that case it should be applied at once to certain clergymen. And the performance might be called "cat and dog." But, seriously, is it not astonishing that "Clergyman" makes no reference whatever to spiritual remedies? Early closing of public-houses, the cane in schools, and the "cat" in prisons—these are the reverend gentleman's proscriptio for "Hooliganism." Such is the result of being brought up on the brutalities of the Bible.

A correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* revives an old story, and a good one. An old female pow-opener was in attendance on the rector when a City architect came down to a certain village to go into the question of the restoration of the church. Poking the woodwork with his cane, the architect said, "There's a good deal of dry rector in these pews, Mr. Rector." Before the latter could reply the old woman cut in with, "But, lor, sir, it ain't nothink to what there is in the pulpit."

More "Providence." The latest report is that 100,000 persons have been drowned in the floods which occurred along the great Yangtse River, while 95 per cent. of the crops have been spoiled. "He doeth all things well." And he has done this particularly well.

"I know," said John Wesley, "that were I to preach one whole year in one place I should preach both myself and my congregation asleep." A crowd of other preachers could say the same, but they don't. The way the "popular" preachers manage it is to take long holidays.

John Wesley noticed some members of his congregation slumbering in the midst of his sermon. He stopped his discourse and shouted "Fire! Fire!" There was a commotion, and someone cried out "Where, sir? Where?" "In hell," shouted Wesley, "for those who sleep under the preaching of the Word."

Ruskin tells a better story than that in *Præterita*. Carlyle, in his younger days, once went to the little Cumberfrees Church, in Dumfriesshire, where the minister, sometimes called "Daft David Gillespie," used to speak his mind very plainly from the pulpit. While the minister was preaching a sermon on "Youth and Beauty being laid in the grave," something tickled Carlyle, and he was seen to smile; upon which the preacher stopped suddenly, looked with a frown at Carlyle, who was sitting in Ruskin's aunt's pew, and said, "Mistake me not, young man; it is *youth alone that you possess.*"

A preacher said the other day that "music, with its subtle suggestions and perfect harmony, was a part of that unseen world where every ideal was real." There never was a bigger mistake. Every scientist knows quite well that music is a skilful combination of sounds, and sounds are impossible without air, which is purely material. Music is a human invention to give harmonic expression to certain feelings, aspirations, and sentiments. It is a reality of this world. The preacher talks with such exceeding glibness about "that unseen world" simply because he is in total ignorance of it. All we know is that music, as we know it, is possible only in a material world.

We have several times mentioned the fact that the late King Edward minimised his religious devotions. He liked short sermons; that is, in preference to long ones,—and he insisted on having them cut down for *his* consumption. The late Canon Ainger has left on record that, one Sunday in April 1902, at the Chapel Royal, he received notice that the King was going to attend the 12 o'clock service, and that the sermon was to be "not more than a quarter of an hour; twelve minutes would be better." The loyally subservient man of God unfortunately had brought a long sermon in manuscript, and there was no time for rearrangement; so he sacrificed some pages and read the rest "at motor-car speed." The Bishop of London fared even worse than that on one occasion. King Edward gave him *five minutes* for the sermon.

M. Eugene A. Hecker has issued through Messrs. Putnam's Sons an interesting and carefully done *Short History of Woman's Rights*. The following account of the distinction between the Roman and Christian legal conception of woman's place in society is well put, and we agree with M. Hecker that it goes a long way towards explaining the injurious influence of Christianity on the social position of women:—

"The Roman jurist derived his whole sanction from reason, and never allowed religious considerations, as such, to influence him when legislating on women. He recognised that laws are not immutable, but must be changed to fit the growth of equity and tolerance. No previous authority was valid to him if reason suggested that the authority's dictum had outlived its usefulness and must be adapted to larger ideas. It never occurred to him to make the inferiority of women an act of God. On the other hand, the Church referred everything to one unchanging authoritative source, the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles; faith and authority took the place of reason; and any attempt to question the injunctions of the Bible was regarded as an act of impiety to be punished accordingly. And as the various regulations about women had now a divine sanction, the permanence of these convictions was duly assured."

This is a very valuable passage.

The story of Earl Russell's imprisonment in Holloway Gaol has been revived lately. When he entered that establishment he was asked what his religion was. He replied "Agnostic." This puzzled the official, who supposed it was Protestant—not Catholic, and wrote him down so; and thus Earl Russell's religion figured as "Prot." on the card outside his cell-door. Not a bad story, but we have heard a better one. A gentleman seeking furnished rooms found some quite suitable, and everything was arranged very nicely. "There is one thing," the gentleman said, "I ought to tell you: I am a somnambulist." "Oh," replied the householder, "that's nothing; I'm a Methodist."

"How many articles, my lord?" inquired the railway porter of the late Bishop Stubbs, on his arriving at Oxford from Paddington. And the absent-minded Bishop replied "Thirty-Nine."

Mrs. Charles Calvert's *Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage* contains some good stories. Here is one. Towards the end of a long engagement at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, the theatre was one night burned to the ground. Mrs. Calvert was in a baker's shop the next morning, and a dirty, unkempt woman, coming in for a loaf of bread, said to the

attendant who handed it to her: "Ha! The theatre was burned down last night. Eh, but I'm glad on't. God *must* put a stop to the devil's work somehow."

Another of Mrs. Calvert's stories concerns not herself but another stage lady:—

"A story is told of Mrs. Pritchard, the celebrated actress. She was seeking shelter under an archway to avoid a sudden storm. A clerical gentleman was sheltering there too, when a ragged, wretched-looking woman came towards them and solicited charity. The gentleman had, probably, no small change; at all events, he offered nothing, but Mrs. Pritchard gave the woman a shilling. After the beggar had gone, he said, 'That was very good of you, madam. May I ask your name?' 'I am Mrs. Pritchard, the actress,' was the reply. The reverend gentleman drew himself up, and saying, icily, 'I am extremely sorry to hear it,' walked away."

"Fast wending towards its finality" is Mrs. Calvert's opinion of this sort of intolerance. We should put it differently. The Church has fought the Stage, and the Stage has triumphed. The Church never tolerates anything it once opposes except with the toleration of fear.

We have always said that some of the "miracles of healing" which take place at Holywell, Lourdes, and other Catholic shrines may be quite real—and quite natural. Nobody ever goes to such places with one leg and comes away with two. The people who "recover" are sufferers from nervous or allied disorders, and great excitement is apt to rouse them up; but not permanently,—they generally sink back into their old troubles when the excitement passes away. A curious illustration of what we mean appeared in Tuesday's newspapers. Mrs. Cranor, of County Clare, had a severe illness when in America last December, which left her without the use of her voice. On Monday, while motoring in Blackpool with her husband, their car and another car collided. As the chauffeurs were arguing, Mrs. Cranor suddenly said to the driver of the other car, "You never blew your horn." Her husband was delighted at her regaining her speech, but when the excitement of the collision died away she lapsed again into speechlessness.

Rev. F. B. Meyer, addressing the Federation of Free Church Councils at Gloucester, said (we quote from the local *Citizen*) that "He was broken hearted that the Churches had been ignored, and had not been called upon by either side, in the great labor unrest." At the same time he admitted that "they did not deserve to be called in." So *that's* all right. And why does the reverend gentleman cry over spilt milk in public?

The newspapers have had occasion lately to refer to the famous Australian bushranger, "Captain Moonlight." They did not omit to mention the fact that he was originally the Rev. Andrew George Scott, of the Church of England. Neither did they venture to state how this affected the common orthodox argument that religion is the only support of morality.

Religion is at any rate the support of some businesses. Cardinals' robes are all made of brilliant crimson cloth made for generations by the same family of cloth merchants at Burtscheid, near Aix-la-Chapelle. The secret of the dye has been handed down from father to son. And the family have been, and are, Lutherans. What would Luther say to it?

Hannah More was a noted pious writer more than a hundred years ago. She favored Rowland Hill's Sunday School Society, but she declared that "the curriculum should be confined to the Bible, and the Catechism, and such coarse works as will fit the children for servants." Blessed be ye poor!

Two clergymen—the Rev. Schofield Battersby and the Rev. Urbane Moorhouse—had a difference at Little Harwood, near Blackburn, and one of them had to seek police protection. They "love one another" still.

Robert John McAdam, who murdered his father and mother with a hatchet in their beds at Dungannon, Tyrone, according to his brother's evidence at the inquest, "was very religious and a total abstainer." There is no moral. There would have been a big one if he had been "very irreligious."

"God-liver oil" is advertised in the Aryan Coronation Number published at Calcutta. What has happened?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

October 1, 8, 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, Birmingham Town Hall; 29, Liverpool.
 November 5, Leicester; 12, Manchester; 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London
 December 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £289 0s. 3d. Received since:—N. C. Himmel, 5s.; A. H. Sizer, 1s. 6d.; W. H. Reynolds, £1 1s.

THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £134 2s. Received since:—A. D. Howell Smith, 2s.; T. Griffiths, 5s.; A. J. Bowers (U.S.A.), 5s.; N. C. Himmel, 2s. 6d.; J. G. B., 1s.; A. H. Sizer, 1s. 6d.; L. Ketteridge, 2s. 6d.; David Wild, 2s. 6d.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges 5s. from Bethnal Green Branch.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings that arrived while we were at Yarmouth.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.—Your assurance that you did not utter the nonsense attributed to you by the Christian scribe was hardly necessary.

FREETHINKER (Liverpool).—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

T. GRIFFITHS.—We note your subscription is "a slight acknowledgment for personal benefit received from the Freethought party at Parliament Hill Fields," where Miss Vance has done so much good work.

A. J. BOWERS.—Shall be seen to. Your and your wife's good wishes are conveyed to Miss Vance.

BRUMAS—in reply to A. E. S.'s query—says that the *Freethinker* can be obtained every Thursday at Byren's newsagency, Aungier-street, Dublin. Any newsagent can obtain it from Dawson or Eason, both wholesale agents. "While I am writing," this correspondent says, "I may as well tell you that myself and a good many more in Dublin find more wit and wisdom in one page of the *Freethinker* than in all the speechings and preachings of the Kingdom-Come Society. Though we have never seen you, we think of you as an old friend, and we know you have not labored in vain."

W. H. HARRIS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

A. ASHMAN (Abertillery).—You consider the Welsh riots not the outcome of religious or racial difference. You say that "investigation has proved that these Jewish tradesmen have been guilty of moral crimes such as rack-renting, revivals of the truck act, and the cornering of provisions when the means of distribution were at a standstill." You may be right, but we should like to see the investigation conducted more judiciously, and the accused tried by something better than mob law. Besides, you don't mean to say, do you? that Jewish tradesmen were the only sinners? And how does the price of provisions explain the looting of a jeweller's shop? The case seems to us simpler than you represent it. The strike was only the cover for hoodlums who saw the opportunity of an exciting and profitable "day out."

COURIER JACKY.—Always pleased to receive useful cuttings.

S. CLOWES.—We think you are mistaken. We don't remember drawing up a list of the best hundred books for Freethought students. We printed a list drawn up by Mr. Mann. The authorised editions of Darwin's *Origin of Species* is still copyright. Murray (Darwin's publisher) issues a shilling edition. Other cheap editions (every one of them) are merely reprints of the earliest editions which are out of copyright. A list of books, as suggested, is being prepared by the N. S. S.

J. P. SAVAGE.—Another correspondent was in front of you. Thanks, all the same. We are delighted that we have so many readers in Dublin.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Pleased to note your address—107 Morley-street, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne—as that of the new secretary of the local N. S. S. Branch; and that you will be glad to hear from anyone willing to give the Branch assistance. We shall be prepared to pay Newcastle a lecturing visit this winter if a suitable hall can be obtained. We understand that is possible now.

C. T. SALDANHA (India).—We did not read the article you refer to. To tell the truth, we are very little interested in the literature of "psychic marvels." After allowing for imagination and imposture, there may be a balance needing strict scientific investigation, but "personal testimony" is of extremely small value. "Facts" are not facts merely because they are printed, and discussion on assumed facts is a mere waste of time. The honesty of the witnesses is nothing to the point. Thousands of honest people "saw" the things reported in witchcraft trials. We know now that they didn't. To use the language of paradox, necessary in such a case, they told the truth but it wasn't true.

A. E.—Thanks for cuttings.

A. H. SIZER.—The N. S. S. secretary will attend to your application for membership. Glad all your six children are withdrawn from religious instruction.

JAMES NEATE.—There is bound to be regret, of course, that the President cannot take one of the Stratford Town Hall lectures in November. He regrets it himself. But he will try to make amends in the spring.

W. H. REYNOLDS.—We note your hope that the N. S. S. President "may long be with us to carry on his noble work, and to occupy the proud position of Leader of Freethought in this country." Your letter re Sir Thomas Browne shall appear next week, with an editorial note upon it.

JOSEPH BATES.—Thanks for notice that "the first cases of Gott and Stewart are down for hearing on September 21." Please go over and send us a prompt report. Meanwhile please send us your postal address up to Monday morning.

H. J. HYETT.—We are obliged.

ANONYMOUS (Liverpool).—What is true in any book cannot authenticate what is false. The topography of the Acts of the Apostles does not authenticate its history. The very idea is absurd. The topography of Spain is all right in *Don Quixote*. Are we therefore to believe that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza were historical characters?

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.

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.

"Modern Female Prophets" is the general subject of Mr. Foote's opening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall the first three Sundays in October. The female prophets are (1) Mrs. Annie Besant, (2) Mother Eddy, (3) Miss Marie Corelli. Each prophetess will have an evening to herself in this course.

We call attention once more to the Bradlaugh Dinner, which takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday evening, September 27, under the presidency of Mr. G. W. Foote. The tickets are 3s. each, part of the cost of the dinner being defrayed through a bequest (for the purpose) under the will of the late James Dowling. A descriptive report of the proceedings, together with a verbatim report of the Chairman's speech on Charles Bradlaugh's career, will be published in the *Freethinker*. There should be a large gathering on this occasion if only to show the falsehood and absurdity of the orthodox boast that "the Secularism of Bradlaugh is dead."

The subscription to the Vance Testimonial Fund is fairly gratifying (we are speaking solely from our own point of view), but we hoped it would be somewhat larger. It ought now, at any rate, to be made up to £150. That could be done easily if the laggard subscribers only hurried up a little. The tail of the procession is always extraordinarily slow. It reminds us of the man we read of in a facetious seventeenth century book, who was so slow that he was run over by a funeral. Yet it includes some good folk. Their only fault, very often, is that they hate taking trouble and are such born procrastinators that they will merely "think it over" when Gabriel blows the resurrection trumpet. But to be brief—and not too personal. We beg all who mean to subscribe to the Vance Testimonial Fund to recollect that twelve o'clock will soon strike. It is intended to present the Testimonial to Miss Vance at the "social" at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday evening, October 5. We shall be disappointed if it doesn't amount to £150,—and delighted if that millionaire comes along and makes it a good deal more.

The "social" at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday evening, October 5, is sure to include most of the leading "saints" in London, and, we hope, in the exceptional circumstances, a few provincial ones. There will be some music, a little dancing, and opportunity for conversation. Members of the N. S. S. have free admission and the privilege of introducing a friend.

We are to glad to hear that Sunday's demonstration on Parliament Hill Fields was the largest yet held this season; also that the N. S. S. speakers, especially Mr. Cohen and Mr. Heaford, were in fine form. The Christian Evidence people had a counter demonstration, the oratory from their platform chiefly consisting in personalities, which appears to be the loftiest flight of their eloquence.

The Bethnal Green Branch is going to continue its Sunday open-air lectures in Victoria Park through October, mainly to advertise the Stratford Town Hall lectures in November.

We do not grieve at the death of Mr. Joseph H. Ridgway, of Birmingham—an obituary notice of whom appears in another column. We rejoice that he lived. He had emptied the cup of life, and it is now shattered. We spoke of him in the highest terms some years ago, when we were raising a

small testimonial for him in the *Freethinker*, which realised some £50 and helped to soften his last days. He was one of the stalwarts; possessing brains though not blessed with much education, a thoroughly dauntless courage, and an invincible honesty. Such men do nothing in the world but good.

After all the whip-up made by the Catholic Labor leaders, at the instigation of their priests,—and all the wily tactics their priests devised for them in order to obscure the real issue—the annual resolution in favor of Secular Education was carried again at the Trade Union Congress by an overwhelming majority; the figures being 717,000 against 120,000. At least 20,000 of the minority vote was gained by false pretences; the priests having put up Mr. Sexton and Mr. O'Grady to argue, with long and serious faces, that it is unjust to use Catholic members' subscriptions to promote Secular Education—as if Secular Education were some special kind of sectarian education, whereas it is the elimination of *all* sectarian education from State-supported schools. This controversial trick appears to have deceived some of the weaker brethren, but the vast bulk of the Labor men stand quite firmly by the old standard.

We regret that there was a "scene" before the Congress would hear Mr. Sexton. The right of free discussion should always be respected. The resolution, moved by Mr. Thorne, was an old one, and the Congress considered that, as Mr. Sexton's speech in opposition had been heard six times, the vote should be taken without unnecessary debate. But this, however natural, was a mistake. Even a triumphant policy should show civility to criticism. No doubt the Congress will be more patient with Mr. Sexton next year.

Men may be colleagues though thousands of miles apart. We will therefore speak of Mr. George Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker* in terms independent of geography, and say that we are happy to see our colleague rebuking New York's new Public Library committee for not having the Dresden edition of Ingersoll's complete works on its shelves. There are many "answers" to Ingersoll in the Library, but Ingersoll's replies to them are not there. Besides, Ingersoll's works are literature, and great Public Libraries should not ignore literature—which is much scarcer than a good many people imagine. No one need rely on *our* authority; our opinion may be called partisan. But what does that matter? It was Gladstone who said that "Colonel Ingersoll writes with a rare and enviable brilliancy." Of how many authors in one generation can that be said?

We are glad to see the name of Burke in the fine tribute to Ingersoll that Mr. Macdonald quotes from Putnam's *Four Hundred Years of Freethought*. "Cicero and Burke, and Lincoln in one or two speeches," Putnam says, "are almost the only orators who have given anything to the living literature of all ages." Ingersoll was another such exception. Burke, however, was not an orator in the sense that Ingersoll was. He appears to have had no platform power. His speeches were really compositions. He was not an orator in the fullest sense of the word. He was really one of the greatest of English prose writers, and it is difficult to quarrel with Hazlitt's noble tribute to his eloquence. Hazlitt differed from Burke in religion as well as in politics, but he knew genius when he saw it, and his literary judgments were not affected by vulgar party passion. Admirers of Thomas Paine need not fancy that Burke was nobody because he was answered so effectively in the *Rights of Man*. Burke was a great thinker—not in Paine's way! but in his own. No man ever had—certainly no man up to the time he wrote—such a profound sense of the organic nature of human society. Let us honor Burke as well as Paine. They saw opposite sides of the same thing. It was a pleasant thing, and not a foolish thing, when a friend of Hazlitt's bound up Burke and Paine on the French Revolution in one volume, and declared that they made a perfect book together.

"Religious persons in Chicago, whom our informant describes as Moodyites, are circulating petitions against the Freethought meetings which the police have unsuccessfully tried to suppress. Not satisfied with this, the Moodyites have invaded the territory of the Freethought speaker with their choirs and a brass band and drowned him out in a volume of sound. This proved too expensive to be kept up, and the persistence of Mr. Weber, who does the speaking, won out. Secretary Reichwald, of the American Secular Union, states that Mr. H. Percy Ward, who has been lecturing Sundays at the Garrick Theatre, will try open-air meetings during the hot weather."—New York *Truthseeker*.

New Testament "Teetotalism."

IN dealing with the New Testament, let us begin with Paul. The great Apostle always enjoins sobriety, but never teetotalism. Even when he specifies the proper characteristics of a bishop, he merely says "not given to wine" (1 Timothy iii. 3)—which, of course, refers to *excessive* drinking. No one would say that a man was "given to wine" who drank a glass or two at dinner.

In another epistle the becoming way of life is laid down for "aged" men and women. The men should be "sober," and the women "not given to much wine" (1 Titus ii. 2, 3). This is a reprehension of excess, and also a permission of moderate drinking. Indeed, in the first epistle to Timothy the Apostle distinctly prescribes the use of a stimulant:—

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (v. 23).

It has been suggested that Timothy's wine was for external application; it was to be rubbed in; Paul was recommending an embrocation. But this suggestion is really too facetious. The author of it must surely have been a sly dog, who wanted to throw ridicule on teetotalism or the Bible, or perhaps on both. Macknight thinks that Paul's advice to Timothy may have been more than personal, and intended partly to condemn those who had a superstitious objection to the use of wine.

Jesus Christ was no more a teetotaler than Paul. There is no evidence that he ever drank water when there was anything better going. His enemies twitted him with being no Nazarite, and provoked him to the following exclamation:—

"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. xi. 18, 19; Luke vii. 33, 34).

One of the miracles of Jesus Christ was turning water into wine. After his baptism, according to Matthew, he fasted forty days in the wilderness; but three days after his baptism, according to John, he was at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The company, on this occasion, was numerous or thirsty, or else the host was too poor, or too economical, to provide a requisite quantity of liquor. At any rate, they presently "wanted wine," and Jesus Christ manufactured a hundred and twenty gallons for them. It was generously done. They had plenty, and it was first-class.

Commentators differ as to the quantity of the fluid, and there appear to be no data for a precise estimate. The lowest computation, however, is seventy-five gallons; which is enough to illustrate the *temperance* character of this miracle.

The chairman of the function was loud in his praises of the "fresh tap":—

"When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John ii. 9, 10).

It is a natural inference from this passage that the folk at that marriage feast were "well on" before the miraculous wine was passed round the table. The little speech of the "ruler of the feast" is admirable. His accents are those of a seasoned old toper, who knew the ways of the world on such occasions. He had seen dinners and suppers open with good liquor, and poor stuff introduced when the guests were fuddled and incapable of discrimination. Of course, *he* could discriminate, but what was one amongst so many? On this occasion, however, he was agreeably surprised. The wine positively improved just at the point where his experience led him to expect deterioration, and he thought it only an act of justice to make a flattering speech to the bridegroom.

According to John, this was "the beginning" of Jesus Christ's miracles. His very first performance was turning water into wine to keep a spree going. Elsley says the guests were filled or satisfied, and not absolutely intoxicated. Perhaps so; but *qui s'excuse s'accuse*. And the wine was not poor and thin, but good strong tippie, with excellent body and flavor. It will not do, therefore, to champion teetotalism, or even temperance, on Gospel principles. Jesus Christ would not be eligible as a member of any Christian Temperance Society.

It is idle to attempt to explain away this miracle, by one of those devices which are resorted to by Christians who find the letter of Scripture inconvenient. To argue, for instance, that the wine must have been innocuous, or that there must be an arithmetical blunder in the text, because Jesus was too holy to do anything wrong or improper, is simply to appeal to individual prepossession. What the Bible says must stand, at least in a discussion as to what it teaches. Archbishop Trench, in his well-known work on *The Miracles of Our Lord*, answers this argument very explicitly. After rebuking those who imagine that the guests had drunk to excess before the miracle was performed, he proceeds to rebuke another set of complainants:—

"Of a piece with this is *their* miserable objection, who find the miracle incredible, since, granting that the Lord did not actually minister to an excess already commenced, still, by the creation of 'so large and perilous a quantity of wine' (for the quantity *was* enormous), he would have put temptation in men's way;—as though the secret of temperance lay in the scanty supply, and not in the strong self-restraint! In like manner, every good gift of God which pertains to this present life, every large abundance of the vineyard, might be accused with equal truth of being a temptation; and so in some sort it is (compare Luke xii. 16), a proving of men's temperance and moderation in the midst of abundance. But man is to be perfected, not by exemption *from* temptation, but rather by victory *in* temptation. And for this large giving, it was only that which we should look for: a King, he gave as a king" (pp. 108-109; fifth edition).

Dr. F. A. Paley, the author of an almost classical work on *The Gospel of St. John*, is quite sarcastic in his note on this miracle:—

"The quantity of wine (and good wine) made between sixty and seventy gallons, *after* the wine at first provided had all been consumed, is a difficulty that may be left to 'Total Abstiners' to explain" (p. 12).

The last supper that Jesus took with his apostles was seasoned with wine. Theology says that the bread symbolised his body, and the wine his blood. Protestants take the holy communion in both forms. Catholics are only allowed to eat the body of Christ in the form of a consecrated wafer. The priests, however, both eat his body and drink his blood. For the best part of two thousand years, therefore, Christians have used intoxicating liquor in the Eucharist.

Willet's *Synopsis Papisimi* gives a long account of the dispute between the Catholics and Protestants with regard to watering the wine in the Eucharist. Following the Jewish custom, the Catholics mixed the wine with water, and condemned all Churches that did not follow this practice. The Protestants, on the other hand, insisted on the wine being undiluted, as more scriptural. Willet gravely argues from Isaiah i. 22, "Your wine is mixed with water," that the mixture is an evil adulteration. His last argument is, that the Catholic Church had condemned certain heretics called *Aquarii*, because they celebrated the Eucharist with water only. He adds that the Papists are *Semi-Aquarii*—that is, Half-Waterites.

It is only of late years—in fact, since the Temperance movement became important—that an attempt has been made to substitute a more innocent beverage. Here and there the attempt has been successful, but in the vast majority of churches and chapels the wine used is one that you might get drunk upon if you took a sufficient quantity.

Now this is not teetotalism, nor is it even temperance. It is beyond doubt that many Christians struggling against the lust for drink have had their appetite whetted at the communion table. "Not a few victims saved through abstinence from this vice and crime and sin," said Dr. Norman Ker, "after manfully resisting the temptation of the world for years, have been tempted again to ruin by partaking of alcoholic wine at the Holy Communion" (*Wines, Scriptural and Ecclesiastical*, p. 109). He mentions the case of a reformed drunkard, who was induced to take the sacrament, and was found afterwards mad with drink in a gin-shop near the church. Dr. Ker was supported on this point by Sir Benjamin Richardson, who said: "The danger is very great with regard to a considerable number of people. Hardly a month passes but someone speaks to me on this very point which Dr. Ker has brought forward."

In no honest sense of the words is the New Testament a teetotal book. Ruskin expressed *his* view of the matter very plainly. He was ready to join in restricting the causes of drunkenness. "But all such appliance," he continued, "I consider temporary and provisional; nor, while there is record of the miracle at Cana (not to speak of the sacrament) can I conceive it possible, without (logically) the denial of the entire truth of the New Testament, to reprobate the use of wine as a stimulus to the powers of life."

"Wine," as the Rev. C. Bodington puts it, "is forbidden in the Koran, not in the Bible." Mohammedanism is a teetotal religion—Christianity is *not*. Rightly or wrongly, Mohammed prohibited the use of wine altogether, while Jesus Christ drank it himself and (miraculously) manufactured it for others. With what feelings must a Mohammedan, who has never tasted the forbidden drink, visit (say) London, the capital of the British Empire, and see people calling themselves Christians—some of whom, perhaps, have at some time or other subscribed to send out missionaries to convert Mohammedans and other "heathen"—reeling about in the public thoroughfares, stinking, helpless, and quarrelsome!

G. W. FOOTE.

A Weather Fragment.

To Freethinkers, as to the unsaved world in general the state of the weather is always a subject of topical interest. Climatic conditions most constantly bear upon the lives of the rural and urban population alike. Countless conversations between strangers in all parts of the world are opened with some preliminary remark about the weather. Few epistolary communications that ever came under the writer's notice have failed to contain some reference to atmospheric conditions. When the fires of a heated argument are dying, a fresh stimulus may be imparted to a flagging discussion by some controversial remark about the weather. The superabundance or deficiency of heat or moisture, determine the heaviness or lightness of the harvest. The scarcity or abundance of our field and garden products have important bearings on the market prices of corn, fruit, vegetables, and meat; and these in their turn help to determine the purchasing power of the public. An eminent mathematician, political economist, and logician, the late Professor Stanley Jevons, even traced financial panics to the climatic conditions resulting from the activity of the spots that appear on the surface of the sun.

In recent years science has applied observational and statistical methods to the study of meteorology. Time-honored superstitions and semi-sacred fictions are being banished by the exact processes of modern science. Prayers for sunshine or for rain are seen to be equally ineffectual; the state of the weather is now known to be absolutely dependent upon solar and terrestrial forces, which leave no opening what

soever for the interfering operations of any alleged miraculous or supernatural power.

Aristotle, the Herbert Spencer of ancient Greece, appears to have been the most rational pioneer in meteorology. His treatise on Meteors is crammed with information of varying value. Aristotle was probably indebted to the Egyptians, but his reasonings present a far more modern appearance than theirs. His disciple, Theophrastus, continued the work of the master, and bequeathed a treatise to posterity, which breathes the scientific spirit throughout. The Roman poets and philosophers, Lucretius, Virgil, and Cicero, displayed considerable interest in meteorological problems; but the Latins did little when compared with the Greeks. When the civilisation and culture of Rome were eclipsed through the triumph of barbarism and religion, all scientific inquiry was stifled and suppressed. The old Greek spirit was not re-born until comparatively recent years.

I purpose giving in this article an outline of our recently acquired knowledge of the conditions which govern the formation of true and false dew, hoar frost, and fog. Until the commencement of the seventeenth century, the opinion was almost universally entertained that "the dew of heaven" descended from the upper atmosphere. This view was challenged by Nardius, and a reaction consequently set in against it. One seems to have ocular demonstration of the formation of dew through the precipitation of the watery vapor of the air upon some colder body. And what seems a corresponding occurrence takes place when a tumbler of very cold water is carried into a hot room; the outer surface of the glass vessel is immediately dimmed by the precipitated moisture of the air. The illustrious Dr. Wells, whose theory was, until quite recently, generally accepted, arrived at the conclusion that dew is always condensed from the atmospheric air. But the problem was not finally solved until that able and ingenious Scottish physicist, Dr. John Aitken, had concluded his classic researches. This man of science began to doubt the validity of Dr. Wells' explanation, when he checked the results of his own observations upon the summer temperature of the soil at a slight depth beneath the surface, and of the air above it. A thermometer placed amid plant-stems, just under the surface, registered a temperature 18° higher than one placed on the surface itself. This indicated that so long as the temperature of the upper soil remains above the dew-point (the temperature at which the formation of dew commences), vapor must necessarily ascend from the air. This moist air consequently intermingles with the air which it invades, and its contained moisture will be precipitated in the form of dew whenever it comes in contact with a surface which has a lower temperature than that of the dew-point. This explanation of the terrestrial origin of dew has been rigorously tested by check experiments, and has always emerged triumphant from the ordeal. Perhaps the most convincing experiment is that conducted with the aid of a fine balance which weighs to a quarter of a grain. Obviously, if dew-forming vapor ascends from the soil for any length of time on a dewy night, the earth which parts with its moisture must lose weight. This has been proved in the following manner: A slice of turf six inches square and a quarter of an inch thick is cut from the ground and carefully weighed in a sensitive balance. Loss of weight through evaporation is guarded against by weighing the clod in an open shed. The pan of the balance, with its contained turf, is then replaced in its original position in the earth. When they are re-weighed five hours later, the turf will be found to have lost part of its weight. The vapor which arose from the grass during the deposit of dew accounts exactly for the observed difference in weight.

Another illusion was shattered by the discovery that the so-called "dewdrops" which sparkle in the rays of the risen sun are not true dew at all. Dr. J. G. McPherson, in his excellent volume on Meteorology, illustrates the difference between true

and false dew in a very interesting manner. He invites us into his vegetable garden when a clear, still, starlight night has succeeded a brilliant summer day. The broccoli are seen jewelled with sparkling drops, but the pea-plants growing near them are quite dry. When the plants are closely examined it is immediately apparent that the broccoli water-drops are not distributed in a manner that in any way denotes the action of the conditions which govern ordinary radiation and condensation. There is no uniform arrangement of the watery film upon the leaves; but the "dewdrops" are dotted at short distances apart, along the edges of the blades. Dr. Aitken and other observers have noted that these drops are the healthy exudations of the living plant which have been conveyed along its veins, and deposited on its surface by powerful root pressure. The roots perform similar functions to those of a force-pump, and maintain a constant pressure within the tissues of the plant. When roaming through a meadow on a summer's evening, the writer has been frequently struck by the fact that the grass is sometimes moist enough to thoroughly soak the boots, while the surrounding atmosphere remains quite dry. Dr. Aitken's investigations fully explain this phenomenon; the water globules which precede the genuine dew are simply the exuded juices of the plants.

Dead or dying leaves present a very different appearance on a clear night, when compared with a "dewdrop"-forming plant. The true dew is uniformly spread over all parts of the exposed surface of a decaying leaf. The watery juices elaborated by living and growing grass are invariably deposited near the tip of the blade in the form of liquid globules. The real dew is deposited later in the night, and evenly covers the entire blade.

The beautiful snowlike frost crystals are simply dew reduced to the solid state. Jack Frost is one of the most exquisite artists in the universe. His crystal palaces in field and hedgerow are familiar to all lovers of nature's beauties. Yet the same physical causes which give birth to dew at ordinary temperatures are precisely those that produce hoar frost at temperatures near the freezing point. If the large leaves of the plane-tree which lie about in winter be examined in time of frost, it will be at once observed that no white frost appears on the upper surfaces of the leaves. But when that part of the leaf which touched the earth is inspected it is seen to be completely covered with a thick uniform layer of white frost. Where several leaves lie one above the other, the lowest leaf, which is alone exposed to the bare ground, carries its mantle of white upon its under-surface. The upper leaves, however, are quite free from any film of frost. This fact alone demonstrates that the white frost has not fallen from heaven, but has arisen from the earth.

The warmth derived from the daytime action of the sun is stored for the time being in the superficial strata of the earth. The soil retains the heat gathered during the hours of sunlight until evening. As the cold of night comes on, the aqueous vapor from the still warm earth rises from its surface, and is arrested by the chilly surfaces of the leaves. When these leaf-surfaces are sufficiently cold, the water vapor, in its passage from the earth, is transformed into the frozen state.

The fog fiend was for many centuries the source of much discomfort and disgust to the dwellers in England's mighty metropolis. The dangers and inconveniences which invariably accompanied Mr. Samuel Weller's "London particular" are remembered by all who carry their memories of the metropolis through an interval of twenty years. But the beneficent activities of the County Council and other municipal bodies have materially lessened the taste and density of the pea-soup fogs which once constituted the chief horror of a calm winter's day. Fogs are sufficiently unpleasant in the country, and extremely dangerous at sea, but are, nevertheless, quite cheerful and consoling when compared with one of the genuine old-fashioned London visitations.

The density of a fog is dependent upon the quantity of dust suspended in the atmosphere. In a dustless atmosphere no fog can possibly be condensed. The moisture responsible for the formation of fogs would assume other forms. It would merely reveal its presence as dew upon the grass, roads, or pavements. In the absence of dust-laden air, the conditions which engender fogs would saturate the walls of our houses with moisture.

A very simple experiment will demonstrate the truth of the foregoing statements. If two closed glass receivers be placed side by side, one containing ordinary air and the other filtered air, and if jets of steam be driven into these, very different effects are produced. In the vessel containing unfiltered air, the steam rises in a dense cloud, which quickly assumes the form of a beautiful white fog which is quite opaque. In the vessel containing the filtered air, however, the steam remains invisible; there is not the slightest indication of fog. In the vessel containing the ordinary dust-laden air, fog is immediately formed; in the air which had been deprived of its dust-particles no fog ever appears.

Fog, then, never arises in the absence of dust; the larger the quantity of dust suspended in the atmosphere, the denser the fog. The floating matter of the air is both organic and inorganic. Microscopic particles of inorganic dust may produce very appreciable foggy. If the two-thousandth part of a grain of fine iron be heated, and the dust-particles be introduced into a glass receiver of filtered air, the introduction of a jet of steam into this receiver immediately occasions an appreciable cloudiness.

This explains the presence of fogs in our great cities. Fires and furnaces are largely accountable for fog; the burnt sulphur particles ascending from chimneys being mainly responsible. It is immaterial whether the bright flame or the smoky fire is used; both generate fog. It is, however, the sulphur liberated by the combustion of coal which is the active agent in the production of town fogs. The burnt sulphur is precipitated in the atmosphere in minute specks, and the amount of burnt sulphur is almost incredible.

"No less than seven and a half millions of tons of coals are consumed in London. Now, the average amount of sulphur in English coal is one and a quarter per cent. This would give no less than 93,750 tons of sulphur burned every year in London fires. Now, if we reckon that on an average twice the quantity of coals is consumed there on a winter day than is consumed on a summer day, no less than 347 tons of the products of combustion are driven into the superincumbent air of London every winter day. This is an enormous quantity, quite sufficient to account for the density of fogs in that city."*

T. F. PALMER.

ELECTED TO HEAVEN.

An African Methodist revival was in progress at Buxton, Ia. Brother Johnson had "wrestled" long and hard in an effort to "got religion." At last the minister rose wearily.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I move you that Bro' Johnson's sins be forgiven him."

"I second dat motion," came simultaneously from a dozen dusky throats. And his sins were unanimously forgiven.

SHE NEEDED THEM ALL.

There are 250,000 words in the English language, and most of them were used last Sunday by a lady who discovered after coming out of church that her new hat was adorned with a tag on which was written: "Reduced to \$2.75."

AU REVOIR.

Long-faced Individual: "I tell you, young man, you are going straight to hell."

Young Man: "All ri', old chap! See you later."

* McPherson, Meteorology.

In the beginning of human society the city was only a larger family; the family had sacred rites which constituted it; hence it was natural that the city should also have its rites, and that whoever refused to conform to them should cease to form a part of the city. When the State constituted itself upon wider bases, embracing multitudes more or less devoted to the same belief, it was very natural that there should be a State religion. But to-day all is changed. There are no longer believing multitudes; there are individuals who believe. Whether it be a cause of regret or rejoicing, the people of the great cities no longer go to church or to the temples, neither can they be again led thither. The secondary cities and the country obey the same tendency. The progress of public instruction will diminish day by day the sum of superstitious virus which is inoculated in humanity, and the day can be foretold in which faith in the supernatural (I do not say the ideal) will have the same value in the world as witches and spirits have now. —Renan.

We live in a transition period, when the old faiths which comforted nations, and not only so, but made nations, seem to have spent their force. I do not find the religions of men at this moment very creditable to them, but either childish and insignificant, or unmanly and effeminating. The fatal trait is the divorce between religion and morality. Here are know-nothing religions or churches that proscribe intellect; scortatory religions; slave-holding and slave-trading religions; and even in the decent populations, idolatries wherein the whiteness of the ritual covers scarlet indulgence. In creeds never was such levity; witness the heathenisms in Christianity, the periodic "revivals," the Millennium mathematics, the peacock ritualism, the retrogression to Popery, the maundering of Mormons, the delirium of rapping, the rat and mouse revelation, thumps in table drawers, and black art. —Emerson.

The pagans liked gods in human form, and Paul humored them by setting up a human god, who had suffered, and therefore could sympathise with suffering. —F. W. Neumann

Obituary.

On Thursday, the 7th inst., passed away, at the ripe age of 85, the oldest member of the Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S., in the person of Mr. Joseph H. Ridgway.

Chartist and Freethinker, Ernest Jones and Charles Bradlaugh were his heroes, and his voice would break with emotion when he spoke of their struggles, their sufferings, and the injustices meted out to them.

He was a Vice-President of the N. S. S., and for many years President of the Birmingham Branch. Those of us who know him so long remember how ably he filled the latter position. He had the strictest sense of duty towards his office that a man could have, and his advice to us in the critical times we passed through was invaluable. In his speeches there was charm and dignity, and, when presiding at lectures, he drew respect and obedience from opponents.

Through his long illness, painfully marked by a failing brain, he was devotedly attended by his daughter. Physically strong to the last, his mind wandered over the old fields of work and feebly addressed imaginary audiences.

On the occasion of his Golden Wedding, he was presented with a framed testimonial and a purse (subscribed to by friends far and near), the former setting forth, in terms of high appreciation, the valuable work he had done for the cause of Freethought, thanking him for the same, and expressing kindest wishes towards himself and Mrs. Ridgway.

The funeral took place on Sunday, the 10th inst., at the Lodge Hill Cemetery, in the grave where his wife lies buried, and was attended by a large number of members and friends of our Branch as well as many others to whom he was well known.

The Secular Burial Service was used. —J. PARTRIDGE.

On September 3, Mary J. Humble, widow of the late John Forster Humble, of Wolsingham, Co. Durham, died in London at the residence of her son-in-law, Mr. Joseph Collinson. The late Mrs. Humble was an Atheist of life-long standing, and a great admirer of Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. G. W. Foote, whom she heard on many occasions at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Willington, and elsewhere. She was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, and died as she had lived. Mrs. Humble had reached the advanced age of eighty years. Her husband (also a well-known Freethinker) pre-deceased her ten years ago. —J. C.

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 Bandstand): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A. Allison, "Jesus as a Strike Leader."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The King of Glory."

FINSBURY PARK: 11.30, Miss K. Kough, 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, R. H. Rosetti, "Sir O. Lodge's Reason and Belief."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.30, Miss K. Kough, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. Davidson, "Christian Socialism."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Rosetti, "The Life We Know."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ROTHERHAM (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, at 7.30, "Philosophy of Materialism"; Monday, at 8, "Atheism and Death"; Tuesday, at 8, "Kingcraft—Past and Present"; Wednesday, at 8, "The truth shall make you free"; Thursday, at 8, "The Paradox of Christian Socialism."

SHEFFIELD (near the Monolith): Joseph A. E. Bates—Thursday, Sept. 14, at 8, "The Nature and Origin of Christian Worship"; Friday, at 8, "Credulities in Decay."

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

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President: G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary: MISS E. M. VANCE, 2 Newcastle-st., London, E.C.

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Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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