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Familiar acts are beautiful through love.—SHELLEY.

Gutter Christians.

CHRISTIANITY has had its saints and its men of genius. Freethinkers can appreciate the beautiful character of a St. Francis or a William Law, and admire the writings of an Augustine, a Pascal, a Hooker, a Taylor, or a Newman. Such men were endowed by nature with great minds or gracious tempers. They would have adorned any system which commanded their adherence. Christianity did not produce them; it simply made use of them, as it made use of the architects who planned its cathedrals and the artists who painted its madonnas.

Christian writers, however, are not all men of genius, nor is every Christian advocate a saint. The great majority are commonplace in mind and character. Their work is done in a merely professional spirit. They simply earn their bread in that way. One young man takes "holy orders" just as another young man becomes a doctor or a lawyer. Very little intelligence is required to see through the cant language of the men of God. They talk of "calls" but they are just accepting a superior situation. What to a layman is a better berth is to the clericals a greater sphere of usefulness; but it means the same thing in the end—improved salary, higher station, and a larger share of all the good things of this world.

Within the lowest deep (to use Milton's splendid paradox) there is a lower deep, wherein we find the Christian controversialist, who is generally the most intolerable and despicable of all Christians. When he bows his head in prayer he looks the meekest of men, when he sings a hymn he looks seraphic. But let him catch sight of an opponent, and he is immediately filled with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Evil passions gleam through his eyes and sometimes foam upon his lips. He is a more or less rank embodiment of the spirit which came not to send peace but a sword.

We will notice a few historical cases in English controversy, as we have no time at present to look abroad. Lord Clarendon, a layman, criticised Hobbes with courtesy, and even with deference; Bishop Bramhall criticised Hobbes as though he were an idiot and a ruffian. Bishop Berkeley—who, according to Pope, had every virtue under heaven—declared that Anthony Collins (a man as good as himself) deserved to be denied the common benefits of light and air, merely because he was a Freethinker. Bentley also replied to Collins with the most absurd arrogance; which, indeed, he always displayed in criticising "infidels." Bishop Warburton was Bentley's equal in this ridiculous ill-behavior. "Bully to Sneak" wrote Coleridge on a copy of Warburton's correspondence with Bishop Hurd. An appalling collection of slang might be made from the author of the *Divine Legation of Moses*. Dr. Johnson himself, who loved an argument, grew rabid at the mention of Rousseau and Voltaire, and said that they deserved hanging above any prisoner at the Old Bailey. Most of the orthodox replies to Hume were monstrously insolent; even

critics of a more gentlemanly temper, like Campbell and Beattie, wrote as though they had the great Scotchman before them with his hands behind his back, like a naughty schoolboy before an angry dominie. Gibbon's orthodox "answerers" were generally so vulgar, and even brutal, that he was obliged to say, in his fine manner, that "a victory over such adversaries was a sufficient humiliation." The replies to Thomas Paine were the work of Christian ruffians. Bishop Watson was the only one who attempted to answer Paine's arguments. The others only called him names; apparently on the principle that to charge a Freethinker with drunkenness and profligacy is the shortest and easiest way of proving that the Bible is the Word of God. What has been spoken and written about Bradlaugh and Ingersoll is too well known to the majority of our readers. They have been assailed with every conceivable calumny, short of murder; nor would the calumniators have stopped there if a charge of murder did not involve the production of a corpse.

It was wittily said (by old Bishop South) that the interpretation of prophecy is a subject which either finds a man cracked or leaves him so. Change "cracked" into "malicious" and the same might be said of Christian Evidences. By a curious fatality, the defence of the Christian religion nearly always brings out the worst elements in a man's nature. It makes him quibble and sophisticate for certain; it often makes him guilty of misrepresentation and sheer lying; and he is very fortunate if it does not make him a thorough-paced blackguard, ready to use the vilest insults and the blackest slanders against his opponents. Think of Torrey, think of Dixon, think of Warschauer. Think of the distinguished Christians (they must be nameless here) who besought Mr. W. T. Stead not to expose a Christian evangelist for sake of justice and fair-play to "infidels" like Paine and Ingersoll.

Christian Evidence advocates in this country—and they appear to be of much the same breed in America—spend most of their time in calumniating Freethinkers. Vulgar personalities are the staple of their speech. This is the only element that their audiences find interesting. When they attempt argument—which, it must be admitted, is rarely—they are as dull as ditchwater and as dry as a remainder biscuit, and their audiences desert them for a livelier entertainment.

There is no Christian Evidence speaker to-day quite on the level of the black Edwards and the debaucher and bigamist Walton Powell. But the competition in blackguardism amongst the fraternity still continues—and will probably do so to the end of the chapter. One loosens his vicious tongue and gains the applause of the baser sort of Christians; not to be outdone, another "goes one worse" and becomes the dirty hero of the hour.

Freethinkers should not advertise such Christian ruffians. By going to their meetings, by opposing them, above all by debating with them, they help to play their miserable game. The line should be drawn somewhere; and should it not be drawn at ignorance, conceit, malignancy, lies, and Billingsgate? An honorable combat in a fair arena is to be welcomed. But what is gained by fighting a chimney-sweep in the gutter?

G. W. FOOTE.

What God Owes to Man.

IT is not customary—at least in religious circles—to talk of God's debt to man. The emphasis is laid in the other direction, and the talk is all of man's debt to God. Yet a little reflection will show that this is a reversal of both the logical and moral order. The mistake committed is precisely that which occurs in the talk of a child's duty to its parents. And one may well ask, What duty is it that a child owes to a parent, as such? The organic relationship between the two was none of the child's seeking. It was entirely a creation of the parents. The child did not ask to be born, it had no hand in being born, it did not select the parents it possesses. As the child grows, it does incur duties on a basis of human relationship, both to its parents and to others. But as offspring to parent, while the relation does endow the child with certain rights, it is not clear that it saddles it with any duties. There are duties and there are rights in the relations of parent and child, but the rights are on the side of the child, and the duties are on the side of the parent.

Does the case stand differently with God and man? Clearly, it does not. God, we are told, is our creator. Well and good. If we accept the statement as true, this gives him the duties of a parent, the responsibilities of a creator. Man, as a species, has no more to do with his creation, than has man, as an individual, with his birth. And God can no more evade his duties and responsibilities than an earthly parent can evade his. Those Catholic theologians who argue that man can have no rights against God confuse the power to do wrong with the right to do it, and the inability of the wronged to enforce redress with an absence of moral status. Against God man may have no power of resistance, but the legitimacy of his claim to fair treatment remains unimpaired.

We may look at the matter from two points of view. Assume, with the theologian, that God made man; in that case, the question arises of what God owes humanity. Or, we may assume, with the scientist, that man made God. God is then an ideal conception; and this meets us in a variety of forms, from the bloodthirsty deity of earlier days, to the mild-mannered reforming deity of our own time. And in that case, God, as a mental fact, owes to man all that it has undergone in the shape of modification and improvement.

Let us take the first alternative. The old theology assures us that God made man for his own glory. The Bishop of London assures us—and it is a subject on which he can claim to know as much as anyone else—that before creating man God was perfect and complete. Presumably, a perfection with no one to contemplate it was unsatisfying, and so, "for the greater glory of God," man was created. Man was, therefore, brought into the world—either instantaneously or slowly—in order to satisfy the designs of deity. And having been created by a being infinite in power and wisdom, he has a distinct claim for consideration and fair treatment. Were it conceivable that all men could be consulted before birth as to whether they should be born or not, and that all the consequences of being born could be foreseen, it is certain that a fair number would decline the venture. And of those who accepted it, the vast majority would probably suggest improvements in the "divine plan." But being thrust into this world unconsulted, man has at least this claim against God—that matters should have been so arranged that to each individual should be granted the same chance of happiness that every parent would guarantee his child had he the power.

What are the facts? Instead of man finding himself guided, warned, protected, as every earthly parent worthy of the name guides, warns, and protects his children, his "Heavenly Father" appears to have exhausted every possibility in laying pitfalls—mental, moral, and physical—for his destruction.

True, the pitfalls are ultimately avoided, but those who avoid them do so only because they have observed others fall in. Every lesson learned is by experiment, and a successful experiment implies a series, more or less lengthy, of failures. True, also, the sight of man struggling with, and surmounting, danger and difficulties is an inspiring sight. But there is another side to the picture. All who struggle do not conquer. Thousands go under in the fight. Nay, the very inspiration derived from the successful contest would be impossible but for the failures against which it is contrasted. Success is set in a background of failure, happiness in a background of misery, life is framed in death.

It is, then, not merely the failures that impugn God's treatment of man; the successes, or the means by which success is achieved, do this no less thoroughly. For the moral claim on God holds good of every individual. It is not as a species that man claims fair treatment, but as an individual. We blind ourselves to the real issue by talking glibly of the progress and perfection of man. As a species man does progress and does develop. But as an individual man's progress is sharply limited. His sacrifices benefit a generation to come, as the sacrifices of a generation that has gone benefit him. An inconsiderate egotism leads us to excuse the process because we are, so far, the last term, and represent, so we flatter ourselves, an improvement on what has gone before. But it is this "before" that constitutes the indictment of Deity. For each one of that "before" had exactly the same claim to consideration that we have. The knowledge that we have might have saved them; the comforts that we possess might have made their lives happier. The race grows greater in knowledge and in strength, but the tragedy of human disappointment and suffering is repeated generation after generation. And while this is so there remains an indictment of God's treatment of man.

It is said in reply that man suffers because of his ill-deeds and of his ignorance; and by no other method could he be cured of either. Well, this is obviously not true of all men; and even if it were, it would not meet the case. The ill-doing and the ignorance is all part of the plan, and needs explaining. But God, as the author of nature, does not punish man only for his ill-deeds; he is ready to punish him for good deeds and to reward him for bad ones. A man who exposes his life in a good cause stands no better chance of preserving it than he who risks it in the interests of a bad one. A man runs no greater chance of contracting the germs of consumption through getting wet while committing a burglary than he would hastening to relieve a case of distress. Nay, the selfish indulgence that leads a man to refrain from an errand of mercy because it is a wet evening may protect him from ills to which a more generous nature is exposed. God not only punishes the good with the bad; he rewards the bad with the good. Popular experience endorses this in the maxim, the rain falls upon the just and unjust alike. And in saying this, common sense is expressing the opinion either that nature is devoid of intelligent guidance; or, if intelligent guidance is there, it is oblivious to all ethical considerations.

Now let us take the other alternative—that man created God. In that case, God's debt, although of a different nature, is still considerable. For, in this case, "God" is a mere reflection of human nature, and can never be more than an idealised human nature. While man is savage his gods remain savage also. As he becomes civilised, so his gods undergo civilisation. The tribal god, with no concern for the welfare of any outside the boundaries of the tribe, is man in the tribal stage of morality. The God of Paul, who does with his creatures as a potter does with his clay, is man under the government of an oriental autocracy. The God of a much later date, laying down certain laws, and governing the universe and man by those laws, is man with a partly developed scientific conception of the nature of existence. And the God of our own day,

more ready to save than to damn, more interested in conduct than opinion, more concerned for human life here than life the other side of the grave, is Man socialised, conscious of his strength and possibilities, and convinced of the reality and value of social life.

It is not, then, God that civilises man, it is man that civilises God. The gods improve only as man improves, and if man could give this subjective creation of his an objective and independent existence, "God" should express thanks to man for having raised him so far above the condition in which the world first found him.

In sober truth, the antithesis of God and man is a false one. The distinction between God and man is not a distinction between two existences, but between man as he is and man as he was. Man is not really improving a god, he is improving himself; and, in the process, refining the ideal of human nature bequeathed him by the past. For all the gods are man-made, born of man's ignorance, and fashioned by his fear. Once fashioned they exist as facts with which human nature has to deal. True, they are mental facts only, and exist only so long as they are believed in; but this type is the most tyrannical in their dominion over the human mind. Man's deliverance from this bondage can come in but one way—by recognition of the nature of the fact before which he bows. As in so many other cases, ignorance is the condition of servitude, knowledge the condition of power and freedom. The greatest enemy that man has to conquer is himself. That accomplished, all other obstacles to his welfare can be taken in detail.

C. COHEN.

Essential Christianity.

CHRISTIANS are often exhorted by their pastors and teachers never to acknowledge defeat either at home or abroad. Christ is on the throne, and his reign is gloriously triumphant. On foreign mission fields Christian countries must be depicted as veritable paradises. Such things as slums and crimes and iniquitous conditions, which, as a matter of fact, are more prevalent in Christendom than in Heathendom, must never be mentioned. The very idea that Christianity is a failure anywhere cannot be tolerated for a moment. Christ was born to reign, and he shall reign till all enemies have been put under his feet. Such is the claim boldly made by all the ambassadors of the Cross everywhere. That *appearances* are against it is as boldly admitted by many; but then comes the comforting assurance that "things are not what they *seem*." In *seeming*, the days of Christianity are numbered, but not in reality. Such was the consoling message which the Rev. J. G. Stevenson, M.A., of Beckenham, delivered recently at the annual meeting of the Somersetshire Congregational Union. He said:—

"The fortunes of Christianity are closely akin to, but they are not identical with, those of organised Christianity. The faith is always a bigger thing than the Church.....Hence the strength of Christianity and the strength of organised Christianity are not necessarily the same thing; and the comment gains in relevance when we realise that at no epoch has there been so much diffused Christianity, so much Christianity of atmosphere, as there is to-day."

Granting, for argument's sake, that there is such a thing as unorganised Christianity, will Mr. Stevenson be good enough to tell us where it is to be found and wherein its value consists? Can we conceive of an unorganised man and of his being of any possible service to the community? The moneron is described as an unorganised living substance; but, then, the description of the moneron is not complete until it is added that it is the simplest and lowest life-form known to science, and never becomes organised. There is no organised moneron, and there is no unorganised man. Therefore, the difference between a moneron and a man is chiefly one of organisation.

Now, as there is no distinction between man and organised man, so we hold that there is no distinction between Christianity and organised Christianity; and we maintain further that the reverend gentleman himself utterly failed to distinguish between them. Here is his definition:—

"Christianity is the totality of that Divine life mediated to humanity through the person of Jesus. No lesser definition does it justice."

We are not afraid to affirm that this definition does not do it justice. Who knows anything about "the totality of Divine life," or about any portion thereof? Who is competent to declare that any Divine life was "mediated to humanity through the person of Jesus"? Mr. Stevenson has ventured beyond his depth, and all his efforts to extricate himself are unavailing. "The totality of that Divine life mediated to humanity through the person of Jesus" becomes almost immediately "some great eternal spiritual temple, a building of God, a house not made with hands, but upraised by the tender and pitying will of the Eternal." And before we know where we are this wonderful temple has developed or deteriorated into what is called the Church.

Let us now examine the conclusion of the whole matter. "Essential Christianity," we are told, "is Divinity expressed in human terms, and there shines through all its earthly dress bright shoots of everlastingness." That is to say, Christianity is Divinity so veiled that it is impossible to recognise it. In other words still, if Christianity is divinely expressed in human terms and within human limitations, it follows that neither Christianity nor Divinity can be legitimately differentiated from Humanity. Consequently, when Mr. Stevenson says that "essential Christianity is what it is just because Jesus Christ was in time what God the Father is in eternity," he is talking sheer nonsense. The reverend gentleman has, at best, only a dim, confused notion of what Jesus Christ was in time, while as to what God is "in eternity," or anywhere else, he has absolutely no knowledge. It is true that he speaks of God as if he were on terms of closest intimacy with him, and had been by his side from all eternity; but it is his ignorance alone that enables him to do so. "When God abdicates and the throne of the world is empty," he cries, "it will be time for us to fear for essential Christianity." Does he really have the temerity to assert that God occupies the throne of the world to-day? If by God he understands an infinitely powerful, wise, and beneficent Being, we have the courage to solemnly declare that no such Being has ever governed this world.

Mr. Stevenson is honest enough to recognise that "these considerations, while irrefutable from a Christian standpoint, yet have no power for those who do not share our faith." "At best," he adds, "they are appeals to an external authority, and many in this age are suspicious of such appeals." Then he refers to the argument from experience, which is all in all to Mr. Campbell, and admits that it "is by no means a final or even a safe test in all directions; but since it is one of the great tests of the age" he thinks that he is "justified in pointing out that our faith is no mere focus of filmy ideals that draw on to-morrow because they have no yesterday." And this is how he puts the argument:—

"For two thousand years Christianity has been on trial; and it exists to-day by a process of the survival of the fittest. All history is revelation: and we can learn much from considering how and with what the faith has struggled, and not only survived but conquered."

Essential or unorganised Christianity has now vanished from the sermon, the only Christianity that can be tested having been very elaborately organised almost from the first. Mr. Stevenson has the pulpit style to perfection. He refers to "a merely human standpoint," as if any other standpoint were possible to a human being. He says "humanly speaking" such and such things emerge, as if a man could speak otherwise than humanly. But even "humanly speaking," the reverend gentleman is

wrong in stating that Christianity "started with a carpenter and a few fishermen" If the New Testament is to be credited, it started with a crucified and risen Lord, in whose name alone salvation was obtainable, and who came to be preached everywhere as the only Redeemer of the world. Its ideas came from all directions, from Palestine, Greece, and Rome, from Egypt and the Far East, and got woven round about a legendary or, as some argue, a wholly mythical Jesus Christ; and thus constructed Christianity took its place among several other religions essentially identical with itself and began its own struggle for existence. And a stupendous struggle it turned out to be. Now, remember that, according to the divines, God was behind Christianity and working mightily for its prosperity, while he was against all other religions and working as energetically for their downfall. The amazing fact is, however, that at the close of the third century it was still in the thick of the struggle for survival. It was now in hot competition with Neoplatonism on the one hand, and Manichæism on the other; and it was impossible to predict which of the three world-religions would carry the day. What had God been doing for three hundred years? What was the good of possessing omnipotence if he could not have his way in his own world? Can Mr. Stevenson explain this supreme mystery? It looks as if God had abdicated, and the throne of the world had been filled by a powerful opponent for three whole centuries. And when Christianity's partial victory took place, it was by no means an event to exult over. It was not the triumph of truth over error, but of tyrannical power over weakness. It was the conversion of the emperor that turned the scales in favor of Christianity, and it was only by the sword that Paganism was suppressed. Is not Mr. Stevenson aware of this? Has he forgotten the infamous Theodosius, with his sixty-six enactments against heretics, as well as many others against Jews, apostates, and magicians? Is he unmindful of the grim facts that under Theodosius all Heathen temples were razed to the ground, and all forms of heretical as well as non-Christian worship absolutely forbidden? Does he imagine that a God of justice and love was on the throne of the world when the blood of Pagans and of heretics was flowing in copious streams in most parts of Christendom? Mr. Stevenson mentions "the brutality and sensuality sanctioned by the Mohammedanism of to-day"; but these are as nothing, even in the exaggerated account of them, when compared with the brutality and sensuality sanctioned and practised by the Christian Church in all the ages of her supremacy; and the Church is still committing murders in the name of Christ.

Mr. Stevenson seems to forget that mere survival is not a proof of superior excellence. What has demonstrated its fitness to survive may yet be a curse to the world in which it has survived. This is peculiarly true of Christianity. It has survived because it has always ingeniously and often most wickedly adapted itself to the conditions of survival. The law of Natural Selection is terribly cruel, and it exhibited all its potentialities of cruelty in its elimination of all the non-Christian cults in the West. Ignoring all that, Mr. Stevenson, addressing his fellow-believers, and not subject to the law of cross-examination, contented himself with saying complacently, "It must suffice that it [Christianity] survived them all." We say, "Yes, it has survived, not by its intrinsic merit, but by the intervention of the secular arm." But now, at last, the process of its own elimination has actually commenced. It is gradually dying, being slain not by a rival superstition, but by the bloodless sword of truth. Mr. Stevenson exclaims: "That is not true. It is the Church that is crumbling into dust; it is the creeds that are being discredited and left behind; it is organised Christianity that is getting into popular disfavor and being superseded. I am here to assure you, my friends, that essential Christianity can never pass away, but that, on the contrary, it is even now marching on to victory." Illusive moonshine, and

nothing more! Unorganised Christianity is a mere dream of the homiletic fancy, and has never had a tangible existence. Christianity is passing; and our duty consists in seeing to it that it is being displaced by a well-matured scientific Humanitarianism which shall make justly and fairly for the welfare of man as a citizen of this world, and of no other.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Escuela Moderna: A Monument at Brussels, and a New Martyr in Valencia.

THE date of the inauguration at Brussels of the monument to the memory of Francisco Ferrer was originally fixed for October 15, being the Sunday nearest to the second anniversary of the fateful October 13, now known throughout the world as Ferrer Day. Various local circumstances made necessary the brief postponement of the ceremony of inauguration; the chief reason being that the communal elections throughout Belgium were to take place on October 15, and the second ballotings on the 22nd of same month. The elections were to be a hard, stand-up fight between the Clericals and reactionaries on the one hand, and the Radical, Socialist, and Freethinking *Cartel* on the other; the principal bone of contention being whether the present clerical government is to continue its long-lived mismanagement of the country, and, incidentally, allowed to perpetuate in the schools the cretinisation of the people or not. Ferrer, from his lowly grave by the sea beneath the frowning walls of Montjuich, could well afford to wait while his friends delivered battle against the Clericals, especially when, as in the electoral contest in Belgium, the fight hinged on the reactionary educational proposals of a Government sold body and soul to the Church. The postponement, after all, was only to November 5, and the short delay was justified and rewarded by the triumph of the *Cartel* and the rout of the priestly party throughout the country. This victory sounds the death knell of clerical rule in Belgium, and unites every section of advanced opinion in favor of the complete secularisation of education in the schools. Towards that result Ferrer, who, like the Cid Campeador, wins victories even after his death, has contributed in no small measure by the fact that his martyrdom awakened in many minds a spirit of revolt against the sleepless antagonism of the Church to human freedom.

The ceremony of inauguration is now definitely fixed to take place at Brussels on Sunday, November 5, at half-past ten in the morning. The funds towards erecting the monument were raised by international subscription, to which the N. S. S. contributed, and the event will bear a distinctly international character, owing to the presence of delegates from Spain, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, Cuba, and other countries. The N. S. S. will be represented. Judging from the enormous concourse at the inauguration of the Memorial Stone in the Grand' Place in the summer of 1910, there is likely to be a very large gathering at the ceremony of inauguration. Speeches are to be delivered by the delegates sent as representatives of the various national societies of Freethought, and elaborate arrangements are being made in order that the event shall be one of the most striking amongst the recent memorable demonstrations of organised International Freethought. Incidentally, November 5 will initiate the arrangements for the International Freethought Congress at Munich to take place in 1912.

There is the more need for an imposing manifestation of international sympathy with Ferrer and the cause he represents on account of the vileness of the present reactionary policy of Canalejas. Canalejas, whose name is José, wears as many coats as his Egyptian and Brummagem prototypes. He

has forsworn in power all the democratic principles he professed whilst he was not privileged to bask in the sunlight of the thirteenth Alfonso, and bids fair to out-Maura Maura in the ruthlessness of his attacks on the most elementary principles of justice. He has plunged Spain deeper than ever in the mire of Morocco; he has not lifted a little finger to suspend or abrogate the infamous "law of jurisdictions" under which the great Spanish caricaturist, Sagrista, has been condemned to nine years' penal servitude for his splendid design in honor of Ferrer; he has suspended the constitutional guarantees of the country, and has placed the newspapers under a disfiguring and revolting system of censorship. The state of emasculation in which, thanks to Canalejas, one receives one's newspapers to-day from Spain—often they trickle in after long delays; and sometimes the wrapper comes before, like a John the Baptist announcing a Jesus who never turns up—is worthy quite of the Spain of the Inquisition. Apparently Canalejas has one of two objects in view: either, by his excesses of tyranny, to drive the Spanish people into revolution and Alfonso into exile, or else, by repression at home and aggression abroad, to smother the intellectual life of the country. His latest crime of this sort has only just come to light. In *El Pais* of October 14 there appeared a letter from which we learn that Canalejas has renewed against the Escuela Moderna of Valencia the proceedings that were employed by Maura against Ferrer; in other words, the attempt is being made to saddle upon the managers and professorial staff of the Escuela Moderna responsibility for the recent strike troubles in Valencia.

It appears from this letter, signed by the secretary, president, and treasurer of the school, and by José Casasola, the director, that on the night of September 18 the signatories were arrested in their houses, taken to the civil authorities, and then to the artillery barracks, where they passed a day and a night in a dungeon amidst the worst possible conditions (Ferrer's letters to myself make it clear that vermin and foul air are the least harmful conditions of the Spanish prison). On the following day they were handcuffed and locked in chains, and taken to the "Model Prison" at Valencia; and, after a delay of four days, were submitted to examination. Up to the date of the above letter no specific charge was made against the prisoners, although for twenty-three days they had remained in what is literally *durance vile*.

There is no doubt in the mind of the writers that they were imprisoned because of their official connection with the Escuela Moderna of Valencia. The School was closed; then dissolved "by order." It had been re-established in August, 1910, for the diffusion of scientific culture, and stood absolutely neutral in political and social questions. It has now about five hundred members, belonging to every shade of political opinion, including monarchists.

Professor Casasola and his colleagues are still in prison. It is Ferrer's experience in 1906 renewed again. And unless the public conscience of Spain and the civilised world rebels against this wrong Casasola may be kept rotting in prison for thirteen months without formal accusation or trial—as happened to Ferrer himself. All the circumstances of the present case lend grave suspicion as to the ulterior intentions of the Government. It looks as though another Ferrer case is being plotted, for fear of the contagion of Rationalist ideas in the schools.

I know the excellent work of the Escuela Moderna of Valencia. I have before me its magazines (I was an occasional contributor) and its publications dating back to the beginning of 1907. I know that in December of that year the school already counted 150 scholars of both sexes, with 40 candidates subsequently admitted when the school premises were enlarged; and that eight free schools in Valencia adopted the methods and program of the School.† And I know that the distinguished

scholar, Professor Samuel Torner, who founded the School, and all but equalled in Valencia the work accomplished by Ferrer in Barcelona, was imprisoned for his educational labors during the reaction organised by Maura in 1909, and on his release was banished from Spain.* It is quite possible, not only from the above precedents, but from the well-known ferocity of the Spanish Clericals and their governmental abettors, that a fresh crime is in contemplation, with Casasola as its victim and the Escuela Moderna as its objective. In view of this possibility (for with the Clericals, as with their God, all things are possible), the eminent Spanish deputy and Valencian publicist, Senor Rodrigo Soriano, has made an appeal to the International Freethought Federation at Brussels to sound a note of warning and alarm, and arouse the public indignation of Europe against the impending crime.

The General Council of the International Freethought Federation has at once taken action, and now makes an appeal to Freethinkers throughout the world to join its protest against the reign of terror which the reactionary policy of Canalejas imposes upon Spain. After the forthcoming Ferrer inauguration at Brussels, measures will be taken by the delegates from the various nationalities to organise the international protest against the revival in 1911 of another Ferrer case, with all the old accessories of trumped-up charges and brutal repression. It is to be hoped that English Freethought bodies and advanced movements generally will co-operate on behalf of the cause of intellectual liberty attacked in the personality of Casasola.

There is, unfortunately, no doubt that there is ample room for apprehension. Some two thousand political prisoners are now languishing in the verminous gaols of Spain, principally in connection with the recent strike troubles, though many are still left over from the savage repression that followed the July (1909) revolution. It is specially in Valencia where the horrors of the recent repressions are in evidence. There, the members of the working-class societies, as well as the professors and the whole Committee of the Escuela Moderna, are under arrest and their headquarters closed. At Callera all the political centres—even the liberal monarchical centre—are shut up by official decree; and the members of the various groups and three hundred suspects are packed away in prison.

According to private, but sure, sources of information obtained by Charles Malato,† who is specially qualified to know the truth about these matters, the authorities at Callera are employing the following gentle methods for persuading the prisoners to reveal the names of the men who shot a local magistrate during the strike *émeutes* :—

The prisoners are hung up by the legs and beaten with repeated cudgellings of a stick. At Sueca, to these physical tortures moral tortures are super-added, the prisoners being conducted to the prison-cemetery after being threatened that they are to be buried there alive. This little trifle of frightening the prisoners with the news that their last hour has come is an amusement of which the organisers of torture in Spanish prisons are particularly fond. In quite recent years, when the *Mano Negra* horrors were enacted, the prisoners were sometimes taken, with eyes bandaged, to the shooting-ground, and the mock firing party were told off to fire at the victims either with blank cartridges or to shoot harmlessly into the air. "Your comrades are shot," they would be told;

* He is now at Buenos Aires, carrying on there the work of the Escuela, and edits a fine illustrated 16-paged review—*Francisco Ferrer* (Buenos Aires, Chile, 1233)—dedicated to the cause of Rationalism in education.

† *La Bataille Syndicaliste* (Paris, October 13 and 17). The *Daily Chronicle* of October 28 publishes a telegram from Madrid stating that "Three Republican M.P.'s, Senor Azzati, Senor Barrol and Senor Beltran, have visited the Prime Minister and denounced the civil guard for having tortured some prisoners after the revolutionary riots in September in order to compel them to confess who were the murderers of a magistrate. Senor Azzati says he was an eye-witness of the tortures, and related horrible details. He says he saw the prisoners with their faces bleeding. The tortured men will be presented to Parliament."

* Written before October 22, when the censorship ceased.

† Vide my *L'Ecole Moderne*, 2 ed., p. 47 (Brussels, 1909).

"your turn has now come!" M. Charles Malato's informants assure him that the groans of the tortured victims at Cullera are heard in the Calle de la Virgen—what crimes and stupidities have been wrought in Spain beneath the eyes of the Maiden Mother of God! At the Model Prison at Valencia, where Casasola and his fellow Rationalist teachers are now immured, similar cruelties are, it is stated, being enacted. The conditions of Ferrer's prison-treatment were vile and repulsive enough, but there were two reasons why he was spared the additional horrors of personal physical torture: the first, that his assassins were ready to make any sacrifices of unessentials, as they knew his life was forfeit, a prize providentially dropped into their hands; and, second, his magnetic personality was in the eye of all Europe. In Casasola's case we have a man unknown yesterday to the outside world, and against such an one, representing a cause so much feared in Spain as is that of Rationalist and scientific education in the schools, any extremes of cruelty are possible at the hands of a Government which is the least civilised of any in Europe, with the exception, perhaps, of Russia. In these circumstances, Casasola's case and the fate of the Escuela Moderna and its Committee need to be watched and safeguarded, especially with the reaction in full flood, and the Church tenacious of power and mediævally unscrupulous as to the means adopted for its retention.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

More "Truths" About Thomas Paine.

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

SEEKING information regarding certain points in the career of Thomas Paine, a correspondent writes to the New York Times:—

"Not long since I read a statement in which it was said that Thomas Paine had direct descendants living in America. Now, I have always been under the impression that he had no children, and in that case could have no direct descendants. Please throw a little light on this question, and also tell me where Paine died and was buried."

And the editor of the Times, with more willingness to oblige than capacity for imparting correct information, replies:—

"Paine died childless, and therefore left no direct descendants. He was married twice, his first wife dying within a year of the marriage and before he came to America. He left his second wife to join the wife of a Paris publisher, and by this he lost many of his friends. He died on the farm in Westchester County that was given him by the State of New York in recognition of his services to the country. The monument to his memory on the road between White Plains and New Rochelle was provided for in his will.

William Corbett, the British radical, subsequently removed Paine's body to England, and eventually it found a final resting place in France."

The man who removed Paine's bones to England was Cobbett, not Corbett, but such is fame; and if the body ever found a resting-place in France the most diligent researches of Paine's friends have failed to uncover the fact. It is not known where the remains of Paine were finally interred. He died in New York, not on his farm. His monument at New Rochelle was not provided for in his will, as the editor of the Times has it, but was erected by a subscription taken up by Gilbert Vale, his biographer, more than twenty years after Paine's death. He did not desert his wife to join another woman. The statement that he did is too false and libellous to be excused by ignorance. At Sandwich, in Kent, England, September 27, 1759, he married Mary Lambert, who died in 1760. At Lewes, March 26, 1771, he married Elizabeth Ollive. Three years later, by mutual consent, husband and wife formally separated. But instead of joining "the wife of a Paris publisher," Paine came to America and espoused the Revolutionary cause. After the war in America, after he had written the *Rights of Man* in England, that is, about 1790, he went to France and became acquainted with Nicholas Bonneville, the "Paris publisher." Paine returned to America in 1802. A year later, learning that Mrs. Bonneville was without a home in Paris, and remembering the kindness of the family toward him, he invited her and her son, afterward General Bonneville, U.S.A., to his home in this country. She came in 1803, when he was some 66 years old, thirty years after he had separated from his wife. And that is how he "joined" the wife of a Paris publisher.

It requires a native scent for scandal to discover anything in these facts by which Paine should have lost "many of his friends." Paine lost his sunshine friends by writing the *Age of Reason*, but the work gained him thousands of steadfast ones who cannot be alienated by all the slanders his enemies, in their malice and ignorance, may invent.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

The Greatest Orator.

In the campaign of 1876 "Bob" Ingersoll came to Madison to speak. I had heard of him for years; when I was a boy on the farm a relative of ours had testified in a case in which Ingersoll had appeared as an attorney, and he had told glowing stories of the plea that Ingersoll had made. Then, in the spring of 1876, Ingersoll delivered the Memorial Day address at Indianapolis. It was widely printed shortly after it was delivered, and it startled and enthralled the whole country. I remember that it was printed on a poster as large as a door, and hung in the post-office at Madison. I can scarcely convey now, or even understand, the emotional effect the reading of it produced upon me. Oblivious of my surroundings, I read it with tears streaming down my face. It began, I remember:—

"The past rises before me like a dream. Again we are in the great struggle for national life. We hear the sounds of preparation—the music of boisterous drums—the silver voices of heroic bugles. We see the pale cheeks of women and the flushed faces of men; and in those assemblages we see all the dead whose dust we have covered with flowers."

I was fairly entranced. He pictured the recruiting of the troops, the husbands and fathers with their families on the last evening, the lovers under the trees and the stars; then the beat of drums, the waving flags, the marching away; the wife at the turn of the lane holds her baby aloft in her arms—a wave of the hand and he has gone; then you see him again in the heart of the charge. It was wonderful how it seized upon my youthful imagination.

When he came to Madison I crowded myself into the assembly chamber to hear him: I would not have missed it for every worldly thing I possessed. And he did not disappoint me. He possessed in high degree all the arts of the old-time oratory. He was witty, he was droll, he was eloquent: he was as full of sentiment as an old violin.

A large, handsome man of perfect build, a face as round as a child's and a perfectly irresistible smile. Often, while speaking, he would pause, break into a smile, and the audience, in anticipation of what was to come, would follow him in irresistible peals of laughter. I cannot remember much that he said, but the impression he made upon me was indelible.

After that I got Ingersoll's books, and never afterward lost an opportunity to hear him speak. He was the greatest orator, I think, that I ever heard; and the greatest of his lecturers, I have always thought, was the one on "Shakespeare."

Ingersoll had a tremendous influence upon me, as indeed he had upon many young men of that time. It was not that he changed my beliefs, but that he liberated my mind. Freedom was what he preached: he wanted the shackles off everywhere. He wanted men to think boldly about all things: he demanded intellectual and moral courage. He wanted men to follow wherever truth might lead them. He took a powerful hold upon my imagination: he was a rare, bold, heroic figure.—*Senator La Follette, in the "American Magazine."*

A GIRL'S ESSAY ON BOYS.

Boys are sort of men that have not got as big as their papas. Therefore boys must have been made before men. Girls are women that will be ladies by-and-by. Man was made before woman. He was called Adam. But man was not perfect. So Eve was made. Eve has been liked so much better than Adam that there have been more women than men ever since.

Boys are a trouble. They wear out everything but soap. If I had my way half the world would be girls and the rest dolls. Except my papa. He is so nice that I think he must have been a little girl when he was a little boy.

"It's a long way from this world to the next," said the dying man. "Never mind," said his friend, "you'll have it all down hill."

Catholics believe in purgatory, which is a convenient stopping place, but Protestants are compelled to go further and fare worse."

Acid Drops.

We see that the *Freethinker* has been occupying the attention of the Ilford Urban District Council. Our old friend, Dr. R. T. Nichols, one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, and a member of the Board of the Secular Society, Ltd., devotes some of his time and money to promoting the circulation of Freethought literature. One of his steps in this direction was a recent offer to supply the *Freethinker* weekly, free of charge, for use at the Public Library. His letter was brought before the Council, and the Library Committee recommended the Council to take no action. Councillor Bailey dissented from this view of the matter. While not a Freethinker himself, he believed there were Freethinkers in the town, and he could not see why this paper should be excluded from the Library. Councillor Everett also hoped the paper would be accepted. Councillor Church, however, raised a curious objection. He said that he had looked into the pages of the *Freethinker*, and he had found that "it was not a free thinker at all; it did not allow anyone else to think." Now we have been thinking this over, and we have come to the conclusion that Councillor Church is a flagrant fool or a subtle humorist. Councillor Davis was more straightforward. He hoped the faith of those who wanted to exclude a paper that laughed at it was not as weak as their action represented it. "Of course," he said, "if it were unclean they would not take it, but they had on their bookshelves to-day some quite unclean publications compared with this." Then came Councillor Brand—carrying the branding irons. He had spent all his spare time the previous Sunday in reading the *Freethinker*, and "he arrived at the conclusion that it was one of the most demoralising and blasphemous publications he ever came across." That settled it. Brand had spoken. What he meant by "demoralising and blasphemous" was not very clear. But this much was certain. The paper had incurred the great, wise, and noble Brand's severe displeasure. And the Council immediately adopted the Library Committee's report. Probably it will be a year before Dr. Nichols renews his offer. In the meanwhile we suppose we ought to reflect upon our enormous wickedness. Perhaps we should also ask the saintly Brand to pray for us.

The local *Recorder* appears to possess a rather intimate knowledge of Councillor Brand. After noting his statement that he spent his Sunday leisure in reading the *Freethinker*, our contemporary remarks that "It must have furnished a remarkable change from his customary mental pabulum." We should think so.

The *Recorder* offers a criticism on its own account:—

"The *Freethinker* is a cleverly written paper, but it is hardly the class of literature that one would care to place in the hands of uninformed young men or susceptible young women. Materialism and Atheism are sufficiently rampant already. There is no need to spread the evil through the medium of the public library."

We beg to assure our contemporary that the *Freethinker* has little attraction for "uninformed" readers, whether young or old. As for the "susceptible young women," they had far better read the *Freethinker* than the Bible or a number of novels that figure on the shelves of most self-respecting libraries. We may also suggest that if Atheism is "evil" to Christians, Christianity is also "evil" to Atheists, and that the wise course is mutual toleration and equal justice.

The *Christian World* complains of the disparity in the number of public positions held by Nonconformists and Churchmen. It says that in Suffolk out of 345 magistrates only 49 are Nonconformists. We accept the figures as accurate, but what then? Of course, so far as a magistrate is appointed because he is a Churchman, we join in protest with the *Christian World*. But we protest with equal strength against a man being appointed because he is a Nonconformist, and we hope we should protest against an appointment because the selected person was an Atheist. But instead of the *Christian World* protesting against religious or non-religious opinions being either a qualification or a disqualification for public office, it urges Nonconformists to see that more of their number are elected. In this way public offices are to be scrambled for by candidates whose chief qualifications are that they belong either to some local little Bethel or to the National Church. Whether a man ought to be a magistrate or not is to be settled by his belief in baptism, in inspiration, in Apostolic succession, or in some other stupid religious doctrine. One could hardly demand a better illustration of the lack of principle in modern Nonconformists, and also of how effectually they serve to distort the sense of justice and obstruct genuine social progress.

In the course of a review of a recent work on the Bible the *Christian World* marvels that men of ability like Newton and Milton should have passed over the evidence as to the real character of the writings—a character made clear by modern criticism. It answers its own wonder with the smug reflection, "To each age its own measure of revelation." The real answer is plain. People—even men of marked ability—did not see the plain facts before them because of the thick wall of prejudice erected by carefully instilled religious prejudice. And often, when they did see, religious terrorism often induced them to keep their discoveries to themselves. As a mere matter of fact, criticism of the Christian conception of the Bible goes as far back as the time of Celsus. The Church answered his criticism by effectively destroying his writings. At a later date they destroyed both critics and their writings. But at the time of Newton—who, as the discoverer of universal gravitation, stands a monarch in the intellectual world, and as a writer on the Bible stands for little more than sheer imbecility—the character of the Bible had been fairly well indicated by Spinoza. But the influence of organised Christianity kept such teachings away from the general public, and handed them round among a select few as a kind of secret doctrine. And not the least of Christianity's crimes against man is that, in virtue of its terrorism and bought advocacy, it retained the intellects of men like Newton in the bondage of a degrading superstition.

The problem of how a man like Newton could be the author of a book on Biblical prophecies is really on all-fours with the problem of how so many men who are leaders of thought in other directions become hawkers of imbecilities when they turn to religion. How could Faraday join in with the Sandemanians? How can Sir Oliver Lodge publish his puerilities in defence of religious belief? Perhaps as good a reply as any is that of Faraday—he declined to use his reason in relation to religion. Not many are candid enough with themselves to make such an avowal, but it is evidently the rule of practice. The writer marvels that Sir Isaac Newton failed to see the significance of certain facts in connection with the Bible. But this is quite paralleled by the inability of contemporary religionists to see the significance of facts that are equally plain. The ordinary Christian can reject without hesitation the absurdities of other religions or sects, and accept without question parallel absurdities in his own faith. He can smile with amused contempt at the follies of past generations of believers, without ever reflecting that he is all the time providing a fund of amusement for those that succeed him.

Rev. T. T. Evans, of Abertillery, speaking at the funeral of a local publican named Williams, praised the deceased as a steady financial friend of the Church. Whatever were his faults, he never lost faith and trust, and never denied his God and Savior. For his own part, the speaker said, he "would rather be a faulty Christian than a spotless infidel." We dare say he would. It is so much easier. Not that "infidels"—as Mr. Evans politely calls them—affect to be "spotless." They leave that sort of pharisaism to the religionists. We say good-bye to Mr. Evans, with a most perfect assurance that he will remain "a faulty Christian."

At the inquest on a bluejacket named Manning at Chatham, it transpired that he had been living for two years with a broken back, caused by a heavy blow from a swinging boom on the battleship *Cornwallis*. Manning was a Catholic, and he earnestly entreated the Admiralty to send him to Lourdes, where thousands of afflicted Catholics go every year in order that the Virgin may, if possible, heal them of their diseases. The Admiralty paid his expenses to Lourdes, where he stayed some time, without gaining any help from the Mother of God; indeed, he came back worse than he went, and in less than three weeks died of heart failure. We presume this case will not be included amongst the wonders wrought at Lourdes.

The Society of the Sacred Mission held its annual meeting the other day, and the principal topic discussed was the supply of the clergy. The Director of Kelham College, the Rev. D. Jenks, gave a very doleful account of the present outlook. He said the College had about four hundred applicants, but "A large percentage were not worth looking at; they were amiable, well-disposed youths of no ability or power." We can quite believe this, but judging from the clergymen one meets, there are not many of them rejected. Good men, Mr. Jenks went on to say, offered themselves but rarely. What made the matter worse was that those who were entering other professions were "considerably above the average of those who were offering themselves at theological colleges." This was a solemn way

of saying that all the Church gets is the fool of the family—a fact that has long been recognised, and which receives constant illustration in the quality of clergymen one meets.

We take the following from an American exchange:—

"Sharon, Pa., Oct. 7.—'Have a drink,' said A. M. McVey, of the Church of Christ, as he passed a bottle of carbohic acid to F. J. Ebeling, of Willoughby, O., of the Reorganised Church of the Latter Day Saints, during a debate on church matters, the other evening. Mr. Ebeling declined to drink the poison and the moderator of the meeting declined to allow a decision.

"The two men have been conducting a series of debates in South Sharon. Some of the 'stunts' pulled off have been of the hair-raising variety and the press agent does not miss an opportunity. As a result the debates have been well attended, the moving picture shows indicating a decided slump in patronage.

"At the close of the debate the other night Mr. McVey affirmed that his church is in harmony with New Testament Scriptures in origin, practice, and organisation. Mr. Ebeling, on the negative, set forth the miraculous powers spoken in the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark as a part of the New Testament church, therefore necessary in the Church of Christ. The latter had just repeated Mark xvi. 18, 'They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.'

"Mr. McVey was not slow to seize the opportunity and, drawing a bottle of carbohic acid from his pocket, tossed it across the stage to Ebeling and dared him to drink it.

"If you believe in miracles, and that your prophet, Joseph Smith, can save you, swallow that poison. It will also prove faith in your argument,' declared Mr. McVey.

"Ebeling toyed nervously with the bottle, but did not swallow the contents."

We had a poison-drinking correspondent like that once. He wrote that he was prepared to imbibe it at our office, and we informed him that the stuff was ready. It was innocent enough, but he never called.

William Pritchard, farmer, of The Field, Llandysilio, committed suicide by cutting his throat, under the influence of religious mania. He had just read the Prayer Book through and said "I cannot find in it there is forgiveness." He walked about his bedroom nearly all the night, exclaiming that the hand of God was on him. Poor fellow! And oh the blessed consolations of religion!

A Hull clergyman lodged a complaint against Arthur Roberts' sketch, "The Girl Who Lost Her Honeymoon," at the Palace Music Hall. The man of God was shocked (so he said) by some indelicate remark, and the Chief Constable, with a solicitor, waited on Arthur after his performance for an explanation, with the result that he lost a supper to which he was invited. The only proof of the "indelicate" was that people laughed at it; but Arthur declared that the laughter of his audience was precisely what he was out for. He broadly hinted that the reverend gentleman had supplied the indelicacy himself. Anyhow, he positively refused to cut out the "offensive" line or any other in the sketch. So the man of God didn't score heavily, after all.

Emperor William has been dealing out another dose of religion to his much-enduring subjects. During an audience he gave to the chief dignitaries of the Synod of the Province of Brandenburg, he referred to the case of the Cologne pastor, Dr. Jatho, who has recently been deprived of his living for heresy. His imperial Majesty said that there always had been such heretics and there always would be, but the Church of Christ always overcame its adversaries. The best way to meet them was to saturate oneself with the Holy Scriptures. William is saturated. He drops texts as Jack Falstaff dropped fat.

A middle-aged man, named Verity de Verity, son of a former vicar of Habergham Eaves, Burnley, was charged at Accrington with sleeping out—an offence, by the way, that Jesus Christ must often have committed, if it be true that he "had not where to lay his head." Verity de Verity told the magistrates that he was waiting for Charles Bradlaugh's millennium: eight hours' sleep, eight hours' play, eight hours' work, and eight bob a day. But that millennium was not Charles Bradlaugh's. It originated amongst the Chartists. Bradlaugh was far too strenuous a character to devote sixteen hours out of every twenty-four to sleep and amusement. Verity de Verity belied his name on that occasion. However, he was discharged.

Canon Robinson Duckworth, of Westminster Abbey, left £23,303 10s. 1d. He must be in a warm place now if the New Testament be true.

More poor Jesusites! Rev. Arthur Kaye, of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, left £7,712. Rev. James Burkitt, of Blackheath, left £22,713.

Rev. F. B. Meyer seems to have lost his head over the Wells and Johnson affair. Speaking at a Wesleyan meeting at Manchester quite recently, he said:—

"The deepest thing in one's life, after God, is England. God is first, but England ought to come next. He believed that the Almighty had chosen the Anglo-Saxon race to uplift the world, and it was undoubtedly from the Anglo-Saxon race that all civilising influences were emanating to-day. He was not a Puritan for the sake of being a Puritan. He didn't want to limit people's sports and recreations just because he wanted to bring everyone to his own little measure. He didn't think it was fair for any man to do that. His object was to try to save the country from everything that was blighting her, blasting her influence, and lessening her power for good—to save her for the high purpose to which God had called her."

Did anybody ever see such egotism? England is God's elect country because Mr. Meyer was born in it. And God's calling of England for a high purpose will be in vain unless Mr. Meyer keeps her up to the scratch.

A Christian medical missionary in China, Dr. Apsland, writes that the recent plague there was a blessing in disguise. He says: "Out of this great calamity has come the birthday of Western medicine. Dead is the faith in quacks, charms, and incantations, and amongst the officials in Manchuria there is the imperative desire to accept and use all that medical science can give." This may be true, but we fail to see what promise there is in this for Christian propaganda. If medical science has not made for a strengthening of faith in Christianity in Europe, we quite fail to see why it should have a reverse influence in China. The Chinese are not savages, and their criticisms of Christianity are not likely to be lacking in strength. Of course, the missionaries are inclined to see the hand of Providence in the plague, so long as it opens the way to Western ideas—under cover of which *they* hope to steal in. But we wonder what would have been said had the Government of China, with a desire to introduce Western medicine, deliberately inoculated the people with the plague virus. In their case it would have been called wholesale murder. In the case of Providence it is concern for human welfare. The distinction is curious.

The Archbishop of York says the Church is not an organisation for inquiring into the truth, but an organisation for the delivery of a message. Preachers may be thinkers, but within limits. Hear, hear! This is delicious. It is also true. In fact, it is deliciously true. The Church must deliver a message; whether it is true or not is not its concern. If it is not true, so much the worse for the truth. And preachers may think—within limits. If they find themselves overstepping the limits, we presume the best plan is to stop thinking and go on preaching. All we can say is that the Archbishop's deliverance sums up the universally adopted rule of Christian practice. Others may not be honest enough to say as much, but they all practise it.

Cornelius Dampen, a Roman Catholic priest, has been fined £5 14s. and 10s. 6d. costs at Gravesend for smuggling. He appeared in the dock in clerical costume. Happily the ancient powers of the clergy have petered out. The man of God, on this occasion, was not able to strike his prosecutors dead.

Torrey and Alexander are both this side of the horring pond again. But they are no longer working together. The holy partnership is dissolved.

Rev. W. P. Jones, of Doncaster, has preached a "striking sermon" against "Working Men's Clubs." He says they mean soaking beer and neglecting home. Well, suppose for the sake of argument they are—which is surely an exaggeration. Are there no *other* clubs in Doncaster? And why doesn't the reverend gentleman include them in his denunciation? But it was ever thus. It is always the morals of the poor that the clergy are anxious about. The *poor* are preached at—the *poor* have to be saved—all missions are for the *poor*. People who go to hell, as Ingersoll said, all *walk*.

Mr. Jones might devote some of his moral exhortations to his own profession, who appear too often in the police news.

The Dublin British and Foreign Bible Society reports that at the Coronation naval review 20,000 penny Testaments were distributed amongst the sailors of the fleet in seventeen languages. Good God! Do they talk as many languages as that?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 5, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester: at 6.30, "The Crescent and the Cross."

November 12, Manchester; 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London.

December 3, Stratford Town Hall; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 5, Stratford Town Hall; 12, Hammersmith Ethical Society; 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 5, Queen's Hall, London; 12, Queen's Hall, London; 19, Leicester; 25, Stratford Town Hall. December 31, Harringay.

T. J. DAVIES.—Very glad to hear of the continued spread of Freethought in South Wales.

ARTHUR BROOKES.—You have not taken the trouble to read what we said; at least, you do not understand it; yet on turning back to it we see it as clear as daylight. We did not ask why "Agnostics" prefer to call themselves so, nor did we quarrel with their right to do it. What we asked them to do was to "tell us what difference there really is between Agnosticism and Atheism"—what "logical and essential difference." You do not attempt to do this.

O. BRYAN HOARE.—Of course "emotion is as much a part of mind as intellect." How on earth could a reader of this journal imagine that we thought otherwise? But we fail to see how this entitles you to quarrel with Mr. Cohen's use of the word "religion." He used it in its common meaning. Surely it is just and honorable to use all words in that way. Would it be sensible to use language in a special way to please a small percentage of one's readers? Words have no meaning at all *per se*; their significance is a matter of arrangement and agreement.

H. T. HILL.—We note that you cycled eighteen miles to hear Mr. Foote at Birmingham and felt "amply rewarded for the wetting" you got.

F. D. RIRZ.—Hope to find room shortly.

A. J. ARMSTRONG.—We cannot help you to the authorship of the lines, which do appear to us as valuable.

R. POLWARTH.—You will have enough to do if you listen to orthodox liars about Ingersoll. He never lectured on temperance, to begin with; so he couldn't have stolen a clergyman's lecture on the subject. The idea of Ingersoll stealing matter from anybody—especially a clergyman—is really rich. Does Andrew Carnegie pick pockets?

D. W.—We don't print your name. The bits will be handy. Thanks.

J. T. E.—You suggest that "the whole of the Freethinkers and Rationalists" should congratulate Mr. J. M. Robertson, by means of a dinner, say, on his political success. Have you ascertained if he would welcome such a tribute? And is his political success an advantage to Freethought? With regard to Mr. Waldron, we fancy you take him too seriously.

E. ANDREWS.—You evidently think we have a lot of time on hand. We give references to special things, but to give references to common news, which is in all the daily papers, is quite superfluous. It might help you, but where do we look in?

A. BUTLER.—Glad you enjoy the *Freethinker* more and more.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

G. FISHER.—Balance handed to Miss Vance, who will acknowledge it privately, as the public subscription is closed.

W. JUDD writes:—"I wish to thank you for opening my eyes to the religious bogey. I look for the *Freethinker* every week with increasing interest. I don't know what I should do without it."

J. KING.—We answered the Rev. W. L. Watkinson's book on "The Influence of Scepticism on Character" many years ago. Our article—a long one—was reproduced in our *Flowers of Freethought*.

J. C. MAAGAARD.—Thinking over the matter, with thanks to you for your trouble, we have decided that it is not worth further attention.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote pays Leicester his annual visit to-day (Nov. 5), lecturing in the evening at the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, on "The Crescent and the Cross," which ought to draw a crowded audience. All seats are free, with a collection (we trust a good one) in aid of the expenses.

The rain slightly affected Mr. Foote's afternoon audience at Liverpool, but, in spite of the rain, the hall was packed in the evening, every inch of room being occupied. Mr. Foote was in excellent form, and both lectures were thoroughly enjoyed by his auditors, whose laughter and applause were very frequent; a fact which annoyed a critic in the afternoon, who thought the lecturer should be more serious. What the gentleman meant was *solemn*. Mr. Foote is always serious enough. We may add that Mr. Joseph Bates occupied the chair at the afternoon meeting, and Mr. J. Hammond, the Branch president, in the evening. The latter assures us that the fillip expected from Mr. Foote's visit was fully realised.

The important course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures at the Stratford Town Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., starts to-day (Nov. 5) with a lecture by Mr. Cohen on "The Kingdom of Man." All seats are free, but there will be the usual collection, and we hope the local "saints" at least will be prepared for a liberal contribution when the box reaches them. We know the locality is not a rich one, but we think the collections might be a little larger than they have been lately.

Mr. Lloyd occupies the Queen's (Minor) Hall platform this evening (November 5). It is some time since the London "saints" have been able to hear him, and they should avail themselves of this opportunity. Mr. Lloyd's ability, accomplishments, earnestness, and eloquence ought to command large audiences even in London, which we know has always been one of the most difficult places for Freethought advocacy. Its very size is a serious disadvantage. Still, the Queen's (Minor) Hall is not the Albert Hall—and it ought to be filled for any leading Freethought lecturer.

Mr. Lloyd had good audiences at the King's Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday. In the afternoon he performed the pleasant ceremony of "naming" a baby—Lilian Amelia Jessie Burdett, which excited much interest.

Miss Kough occupies the Birmingham platform this evening (Nov. 5) at 7 p.m. She will deal with the interesting and important question "What is Belief?" We bespeak for her a good audience and a cordial welcome.

Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., has gained a Government secretaryship worth £1,200 a year. We are glad of this in one way, for Mr. Robertson has never concealed his Atheism, and has never (we believe) called himself an Agnostic. His writings leave no doubt as to his hostility to the Christian superstition. His being offered such a post, therefore, indicates a certain growth in toleration. It may not be philosophical or reasoned toleration; it is at least practical toleration,—the recognition that Freethought must at any rate be put up with. Moreover, if posts worth £1,200 are knocking about in the political world, we don't see why all of them should fall to the lot of professed Christians. Christians are not everybody nowadays. There are others.

Mr. Robertson is not likely to recant or drop his opinions for any post in the world, but from the very nature of the case he will have to give nearly all his time to politics henceforth, and Freethought will necessarily command less and less of his service. We believe his first Freethought article was contributed to a publication we were connected with in 1879. That is thirty-two years ago. During that period a good deal of Freethought writing has proceeded from Mr. Robertson's pen, including one really important book, *Pagan Christs*.

The *Nation* expresses a belief that Mr. Robertson's appointment "will command warm and universal approval"—which is rather too much to say of any man, and not exactly complimentary to a party politician. Our contemporary says that "Mr. Robertson should be in the Ministry"—which we dare say he will be in good time. But what does our contemporary mean by coupling this with the statement that "Nonconformity is not fairly represented" in the Ministry? Surely it doesn't take Mr. Robertson for a Nonconformist. Most of the Liberal papers have been very shy of referring to Mr. Robertson's religious views, but they have not ventured to class him with the Rev. F. B. Meyer.

Christ and Labor.

DURING the past few weeks, I have occupied some of my leisure time in reading through several of the addresses delivered by eleven Labor members of Parliament and others at Browning Hall during April and May of this year, and issued collectively under the title of "Christ and Labor."

And my first remark about these addresses is that I find them to contain a large number of cant phrases about Christ and his wonderful influence on mankind, about "the greatest man the world has ever seen," etc.—with a capital "M"—"being crucified on a cross," and precious little about what Jesus had to say on the Labor question that could be of any practical value to working men of to-day. But when I come to look at the career of most of these Labor leaders I am not astonished, for I find that they either have been, or are, local preachers or Christian temperance workers, or Christian missionaries of some sort or other in the various districts in which they have lived nearly all their lives; and, consequently, that they not only bring to the discussion of the problems they propose to consider a plentiful lack of information, but also a woeful lack of the critical spirit without which all such addresses become nothing more than mere expressions of empty sentiment. None of the Labor leaders seem in the least degree aware of the fact that there is not an atom of evidence that the Jesus of the Gospels ever lived; certainly no evidence that any man ever lived who was born with only one human parent, and who, after a career occupied for the most part in the performance of a number of useless miracles, was crucified; and then, having been dead for a few days, miraculously resurrected himself and ascended bodily, without any apparatus and in defiance of the law of gravitation, to a place which theologians call "Heaven," but which is absolutely unknown to astronomers or to any other scientific investigators.

Nor do any of these Labor leaders appear to have the slightest acquaintance with any of the critical works dealing with the alleged teachings of Jesus; but they seem, in all their speeches, or perhaps more correctly speaking, in all their religious addresses, to take it for granted that the Jesus of the Gospels is an undisputed historical character, and that his alleged teachings are above all human criticism. In fact, they speak of him as their "Lord and Master" and as the "Christ" and "Savior of Mankind."

Well, as persons who profess and call themselves Christians, I do not object to them making such assumptions, but I respectfully point out that they cannot expect to convince unbelievers of the truth or value of their belief by such a method.

If their addresses are meant to put fresh inspiration in the hearts and minds of Christians only—well and good; but then I do not quite see the value of issuing these addresses as propagandist leaflets to the world at large, because the majority of people would certainly regard them only as fervent exhortations to the faithful. To be sure, I am aware that these addresses have been very highly praised by eminent divines, dignitaries of the Church of England, such as the Archbishop of York, who said:—

"I am deeply impressed by the testimony thus given by these *good men* to the influence of Christ. I have rarely been impressed with greater hopefulness for the future of religion among our working people than I have been by reading the summary of these speeches."

And of the Rev. Canon Scott Holland, who wrote:—

"I have only just had time to glance through this amazing volume of witness. I know of nothing like it. It is humiliating to recall how little I have dared to hope or pray for anything so deep and wide and free as this great movement on behalf of the soul and for the name of Christ coming out of the very heart of England's labor."

But praise from such a quarter has no recommendation to the Freethinker, who decides questions upon their merits without regard to outside authorities.

Besides, these expressions of praise from Church divines for Nonconformist lay preachers are too much in the nature of the praise of professional preachers for amateurs in the same line of business. It will be observed that the Archbishop of York speaks of these Labor leaders as "good men"; and I have no desire to call the statement in question for a single moment. But is it at all likely that he would describe in the same terms other Labor leaders, just as earnest and sincere as the eleven chosen missionaries of Browning Hall, but whose opinions on religion were diametrically opposed to those now under consideration? I fancy not. To a Christian divine a man is good or bad just in proportion as he agrees or disagrees with him on religion. What an extraordinary narrowness of view such a state of mind manifests! Could you have greater evidence of the evil results of Christian training than this? Canon Scott Holland speaks of the little book as "this amazing volume of witness." Undoubtedly it is an "amazing volume"; but if it is a witness of anything at all, it is a witness of the extraordinary credulity of these Labor leaders, and the still greater credulity of the audience—or, more correctly speaking, of the congregation—that listened to them. To put this matter to the test, let me ask one question. What could Jesus, assuming him to be a man and not a God, living nearly two thousand years ago, know of the Labor question as it affects us to-day? What could he know of Trade Unions, or of their conditions, of their hours of labor, or rates of pay? The only utterance bearing on the Labor question that I remember in the Gospels to have been attributed to Jesus was one in which he commanded that a man should be paid one penny for one hour's work, and that other laborers who had toiled hard all day should only receive the same payment. This kind of teaching, I venture to say, would not meet with practical approval by the secretary of a Trade Union to-day.

Mr. Arthur Peters, J.P., in his address on "Christ and the Workers," gave his interpretation to the meaning of the following utterance attributed to Jesus: "Ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always." This is what he said:—

"When I was in Ireland some few years ago, residing for a short time in the city of Dublin, I was struck with the grandeur with which our Roman Catholic friends decorated that beautiful Cathedral of theirs standing in the middle of the great city. Many hundreds of thousands of pounds must have been expended on the building, yet all around it one could not fail to notice the terrible poverty which exists even to-day. I am not here to criticise the builders for that expression of their belief. But what I have never been able to understand is the way in which some people endeavor to use these words of our Master almost as a kind of declaration of Divine authority that we should always have poverty in our midst. I decline, emphatically and distinctly, to accept that as the teaching of our Lord Jesus. If there is a meaning to be understood from these words, I think it is this: We have the poor because we have not the Christ."

Indeed! Then what is the meaning of all those passages in the Gospels extolling poverty as a blessing and riches as a curse? Jesus never said anything on the blessings of moderation; he always went to the extreme. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," and "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." But Mr. Peters will not believe that Jesus meant what he said when he contradicts what Mr. Peters thinks he ought to have meant. If, however, Jesus was God, and was in favor of poverty as a blessing two thousand years ago, why should he, as the immutable Creator of all things in heaven above and earth beneath, change his opinions to-day to suit the views of eleven Labor leaders, because they desire to glorify his name in Browning Hall in the year of grace 1911? And if Jesus was only a man, however great and good, he could not possibly have foreseen what the Labor conditions of a little island like England, or of a great country like France or Germany, or even America—none of which he had ever seen or heard of—could have been nearly two

thousand years after his death. The fact is, all these people who preach about Jesus and his teachings, and try to fit them into modern requirements, merely juggle with words. They twist and distort them out of their natural meaning for their own purposes. But surely the day will come, as the courageous Bishop Colenso said, when such teachers will be regarded by the masses of the people, not as the friends, but as the enemies, of mankind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Noah and the Flood.

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the day of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."—JESUS CHRIST (Luke xvii. 26, 27).

THE Bible is a most entertaining book—more entertaining, indeed, than it is instructive. Its stories are the most marvellous that were ever imagined, soaring easily in the sky of fiction above the wildest flights of fancy that were indulged in by Gulliver, by the Baron Munchausen, or by the writers of the *Arabian Nights*. To verify this statement, one has only to refer to Noah and the Flood.

Now, Noah himself was a most wonderful man; not, however, from what he said or did, but because he is the central figure of the most tragical story that was ever written. He belonged to a race, the members of which numbered their years not by tens but by hundreds, and whose lives ranged from nine hundred to one thousand years. Fancy a man one hundred years old being a mere child! Fancy a man being still in his teens after having lived one hundred and ninety-nine years! But so it was—or, rather, so the Bible tells us it was. Noah was no exception to this rule of longevity, for we read that he was five hundred years old before he married and begat children (Gen. v. 1-32); and that, after living four hundred and fifty years longer, he died in the odor of sanctity (Gen. ix. 28). He is described as having been "a just man, and perfect in his generations," and as having "walked with God" (Gen. vi. 9). Yet—beyond his having built the Ark and navigated it during the Flood—we know nothing of him except that, on one occasion, at least, he got beastly drunk, and, on coming to his senses, indulged in cursing (Gen. ix. 20-25). Perhaps this is the reason why people, when in their cups, swear so much.

It is a great pity that the history of this immediate descendant of the grand old gardener was not written at greater length; because it was in his days that those heavenly courtships took place between the "sons of God and the daughters of men," which resulted in the latter bearing children who became "giants in the earth, and men of renown" (Gen. vi. 4). But we must be content with what has been provided for us, and fill in the outline by drawing upon our imaginations, as the Biblical writers did upon theirs.

Who these sons of God were is not known. But, if Scripture be true, we must conclude that they were not mere ordinary mortals, but supernatural beings who had been attracted from heaven to earth by the charms of womankind. According to tradition, two angels named Aza and Azael, some few hundreds of years after the creation of Adam and Eve—and before the Flood two or three hundred years was a mere nothing—paid a visit to the earth to see what it was like. Of course, they belonged to the masculine gender, for it does not appear that there are any females in heaven. And why should there be, when we are assured by Christ that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. xxii. 30). These angels, as soon as they saw the daughters of men, fell in love with them; and thereupon determining to exchange heaven for earth, they clothed themselves with flesh, and "took them wives of all which they choose" (Gen. vi. 2). For

ought we know to the contrary, it was these angels, who first practised polygamy on the earth. This is strong proof that the master passion of the world is love. By love I do not mean the modern, sordid sentiment which allies itself with money-bags, as is generally the case amongst the members of the black-coated army; but real, genuine love—such love as these angels possessed, or rather which possessed these angels:—

"Such love as sweetens sugarless tea,
And makes contentment and joy agree
With the coarsest boarding and bedding;
Love, that no golden ties can attach,
That nestles beneath the humblest thatch,
And flies away from an emperor's match
To dance at a penny wedding."

—Hood's "Miss Kilmansegg."

Now, in those days—that is, when the sons of God made love to the daughters of men—we are told that the "wickedness of men was so great, that it repented the Lord that he had made man" (Gen. vi. 5, 6). Yet the same book tells us that "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent" (Numbers xxiii. 19); and that "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James i. 17). How is this for consistency? And yet it is the simple truth, if one be only simple enough to believe it. Bishop Warburton says that the expression "it repented the Lord" does not mean that the Lord repented, but something else; though what that something else is the learned bishop does not say. To call it, as he does, "a figurative expression that is adapted to our apprehensions," is simply to beg the question. As a matter of fact, ancient Hebrew may mean anything or nothing. According to the translators of the Revised Version of the Bible, the Hebrew noun for which hitherto the word "giants" has done duty is untranslatable. Rosenmuller and others, however, assert that the proper translation of the word is "banditti" or "robbers"; and that, according to the original, the phrase "men of renown" really means men who were distinguished for their wickedness. In such matters as these, therefore, you pay your money and you make your choice. This, however, does not much matter; for the story is as unbelievable as it is untranslatable.

But whether the Lord "repented" or not, it is certain—that is, as certain as anything else in the Bible is certain—that the Lord had determined to destroy "all that he had created upon the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air" (Gen. vi. 7). "All," did I say? No! Not all! For Noah had "found grace in the eyes of the Lord"; and him, and his wife, and his sons and their wives, this unchangeable God had resolved to spare; as also "of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort" (Gen. vi. 18, 19; vii. 2, 3).

What barbarity was here displayed! What had the little children, and the cattle, and the birds, and the creeping things done that they should be exterminated in so ruthless a fashion? Surely this God cannot be he who is extolled for his infinite love and mercy? But to punish the innocent for the guilty was the ordinary practice of this loving Father of all flesh. In 2 Sam. xxiv., as also in 1 Chron. xxi., we read that David—who, murderer as he was, was a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. xiii. 14)—numbered the people, and in doing so displeased God; but that God, instead of punishing David for the sin he had committed, sent upon Israel a pestilence which destroyed no less than seventy thousand men—and sent it, too, at David's request. This is not a solitary instance of the innocent having been punished for the guilty, as every reader of the Bible can easily verify for himself.

God always delighted in blood. Did he not? Well, here are some instances in proof of my assertion. God not only permitted Elijah to mock the prophets of Baal, who were in number four hundred and fifty, but also to murder every one of them at the brook Kishon (1 Kings xviii. 19-40). And at Bethel, when Elisha, in the name of the Lord, cursed the children who mocked him, the Lord sent out of the wood two

she-bears which tore to pieces forty-two of these little innocents (2 Kings ii. 23, 24). According to the Bible, these were actual occurrences, and not mere "figurative expressions." And commentators have treated them as such. Poole, in his synopsis, says that the Hebrew word which is translated "little children" means grown-up persons as well. What an elastic language Hebrew must be; but it was the proper language in which to write the Bible, because it may be made to mean whatever its various translators wish. As Huxley sarcastically says: "A person who is not a Hebrew scholar can only stand aside and admire the marvellous flexibility of a language which can admit of such diverse interpretations." Poole also says that

"to curse in the name of the Lord, is to declare a curse which he has determined to inflict, and which he has authorized the prophet to denounce. So that, in cursing these children, Elisha acted as a minister of the Supreme Governor of the world, and by his order, and in his name, he foretold the punishment that was about to be inflicted on these idolaters."

After determining to destroy all flesh by drowning—is it not strange that he did not also determine to destroy all fishes?—the Lord instructed Noah to make a huge wooden structure that would float in water, in the which Noah and his family, and the animals, and birds, and creeping things that were to be preserved with him, might take refuge, and so escape destruction. I call it a "wooden structure" because the Hebrew noun which is translated "Ark" simply means "something that is closed up"—"a chest or coffer to keep things sure or secret" (Cruden). It is the same Hebrew noun which describes the "ark of bulrushes" in which Moses was deposited, and then left to his fate by the river's bank. What the actual shape of this "wooden structure" was, or how it was made, no one knoweth. But this is not to be wondered at, seeing that this most wonderful story was written from hearsay many hundreds of years after the events which it records are supposed to have occurred. To my mind the wonder is that the inspired penman did not write thus: "And God said, Let there be an ark, and an ark was." What he wrote that the Lord said to Noah was as follows:—

"Make thee an ark of gopher-wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it. The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make in the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark thou shalt set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third storeys shalt thou make it" (Gen. vi. 14-16).

This was a very tall order, with a specification that was no specification at all; the writer evidently knew nothing about marine architecture. Nevertheless, Noah completed the order in a most satisfactory manner; for we are told: "Thus did Noah"—of course, entirely by himself—"according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. vi. 22).

So meagre, and yet so interesting, is the description of this wonderful Ark, that one is tempted to make the fullest inquiries respecting it. As to the material of which the ark was principally composed, there can be no doubt that it was wood. "Make thee an ark of gopher-wood," was the command. Now gopher-wood is supposed to have been the cypress-tree, which grew in abundance, it is said, in the plains of the country where Noah was. "Gopher" is the Hebrew word, without any attempt to translate it; but in the Greek translation the phrase is rendered "Make thee an ark of square boards." This, however, does not help us to square the circle.

One would certainly like to know the true form of the ark, but here the veil which enshrouds it cannot be lifted. According to Calmet it was a "floating house"; but this description does not help us much, for it might be a counterpart of the wooden box in which Gulliver was brought from the land of Brobdignag by a monstrous bird called the roc, and dropped into the sea. That it was not a ship, in our

sense of the word, we may take for granted; for it had no keel or rudder, and, of course, no masts or sails. Apart from Noah, there is no legend of any such vessel as the Ark. It was unique; there never was one like it, and there never will be. That it was more like a house than a ship is certain, for it was entered by a door at the side; and Calmet's statement regarding it is, therefore, as likely to be true as is the story itself. As for the word translated "window," Dr. Geddes says that the translation should be "a sloping deck." In his opinion the Ark was gradually contracted at the top, and culminated like the roof of a house. The Greek translation makes no mention of a window, and this, to some extent, countenances Dr. Geddes's interpretation.

That the Ark was of enormous size goes without saying, but what its actual dimensions were it is impossible to calculate—impossible, because, as its shape is unknown, its cubical capacity cannot be gauged; impossible, because, although the outside measurements are given in cubits, we are not told which cubit it was that Noah used.

According to Cruden, the Jewish cubit was of three kinds—the common cubit, the sacred cubit, and the geometrical cubit. The common cubit was formerly supposed to be equal to eighteen of our inches; but now the length of it is said to have been 21.888in. The sacred cubit was double the common cubit; whilst the geometrical cubit, which some persons have supposed was the cubit employed by Noah, was six times its length. The ark, therefore, may have been, leaving out decimals, 547ft. long, 91ft. broad, and 54ft. high; or 1,094ft. long, 182ft. broad, and 108ft. high; or 3,282ft. long, 546ft. broad, and 324ft. high.

Now, according to commentators in general, the outside dimensions of the Ark were those I have first given; and Bishop Wilkins, in the eighteenth century, gravely taught that such an Ark was amply sufficient for the purpose for which it was first intended. He, however, spoke with the assurance that is born of ignorance. Nowadays it is known, as a fact that cannot be denied, that a "floating house" many times larger than the Ark would not accommodate representatives of the fauna of the whole earth, let alone storage capacity for the food which they would require for sustenance during a period of more than a year. There are now known to be at least sixteen hundred species of mammalia, twelve thousand five hundred of birds, six hundred of reptiles, and of insects and other such creatures at least one million.

As for the internal arrangement of the Ark, we know only that it was divided into three storeys, and that in these Noah made rooms as God had commanded him. But how it was lighted, how ventilated, and what were its sanitary arrangements, we do not know. We could each of us, I am sure, ask a thousand questions respecting this "floating house"; but it would be useless to do so, for to each one of them echo would simply answer, "Really, I don't know!" This silence, however, is not tantalising, because it is well known that writers of fables always deal in generalities, and never condescend to particulars.

We now come to the tragical part of the story—to the record of a tragedy which, for fiendish malignity and ferocity, is unparalleled in the history of barbarity. Here is a scriptural cold-blooded version of this horrible event:—

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Go thou and all thy house into the Ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him (Gen. vii. 1-5). And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year

of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened (10, 11). And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted above the earth (17). And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both all fowl, and all cattle, and all beasts, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days" (19-24).

Here is not a word of pity for the millions of babes, of children, and other innocents who were necessarily destroyed; let alone the beasts, and the cattle, and the birds, and the creeping things, which could not possibly have been guilty of wickedness against God. And yet commentators like Archbishop Tillotson babble of the "patience of God." With craven words they make apologies for what they term the "divine vengeance"; but they are silent, absolutely silent, as to God's justice in these and kindred matters.

J. W. DE CAUX.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence

SIR THOMAS BROWNE AND WITCHCRAFT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The letter of "Atheist" raises a new issue in the discussion concerning Sir Thomas Browne, which I think deserves consideration. It would have greater value did it evince more of that admirable faculty which you recently ascribed to Charles Bradlaugh: the power of detached judgment. He credits the old-time writer with all the knowledge and prepossessions of this age. "Atheist" may know there are no witches, yet Sir Thomas Browne knew from the same data as his that witches abounded, and their evil influences were to be felt. I do not wish here to enter into a philosophical disquisition into the nature of knowledge, mainly because I may not take all the readers of the *Freethinker* with me, and the measure of my failure to do so would be the measure of my non-success in the argument I desire to advance. All, probably, will agree that the best basis of knowledge is empirical experience; and if this premiss be granted, it is probable a better case could be made out for knowledge that witches did exist in the case of Sir Thomas Browne, than the negative in "Atheist's" case. "Atheist" can only say he does not know of any witches, and has not heard any evidence justifying a belief in their existence. This is very limited. It leaves open the existence of witches everywhere outside his personal and hearsay knowledge. "Atheist's" case is strengthened by a prepossession in favor of the idea that witches cannot exist. But the strength of Sir Thomas's case is almost impregnable. His prepossession, and that of nearly everyone of his era, was that witchcraft was normal. It did not excite wonder or questioning comment. It explained a good deal of phenomena otherwise inexplicable—readers must remember that although he was a scientist he was entirely ignorant of a vast mass of scientific information that is now general property. Contagion and infection then, as now, ruled in the propagation of malignant disease. Then, as now, a person or animal may be the source of the infection without having the obvious symptoms of the malady. In his career as a medical man, he may easily, and probably did, have many instances of illness occurring after contact with an alleged witch, or her cat, or whatever animal was her "familiar." The knowledge of his time said "witches," and he thought he had in each case another proof. The long arm of coincidence would also arrange many other proofs of witchcraft to the mind susceptible to the suggestion. Fishermen, hunters, frequenters of racecourses, and others whose methods of livelihood are more than ordinarily hazardous, are fervent believers in luck and witchcraft, and each one will enumerate instance after instance of the action of one or the other. "Atheist" and I will diagnose this in the word "coincidence," but to those persons it is empirical experience of the prevalence of witchcraft.

I hope I have made it clear that Sir Thomas Browne had much justification for his action. I regret that a tolerant man, who could plead, not only for legal, but social, toleration of what he conceived to be an idolatrous sect, the Roman Church, was led astray by the opinions of his age, but I can see nothing censurable. May I deprecate the criticism levelled against the doctor on another ground that will appeal with peculiar force to Freethinkers? Humanity has been fortunate in that, in every age, great men have arisen with a message to it. The message has been of inestimable value, but of the messenger much that is derogatory has been said. The idea that has been preached is good, and gains ground; the forces of reaction always try to stay its progress by deriding the man who brought it into being. Had the criticised been in the same circumstances as the critics, the criticisms would have force. If we accuse Sir Thomas Browne of being a cruel, revengeful hypocrite in giving evidence in a duly constituted court of law, we cannot demur when Marlow is banned as a drunken, desolate reprobate. All Freethinkers have suffered from calumny. The cunning of the invention is manifest by the fact that the charge is generally based on innocent action distorted.

It is now axiomatic that when a very clever man says what is apparently an extremely stupid thing, wisdom is found enclosed therein by the diligent searcher. "I believe because it is impossible" was used emphatically by Tertullian and Sir Thomas Browne, and "Atheist" says by Augustine also. Here we have three eminent Christians saying what at first sight appears to be an absurdity. Should this not cause us to reflect a little, and try to fathom their meaning rather than simply smile? This exercise is unlikely to make "Atheist" less atheistical than he is, and yet will open up to him new areas of humanity.

W. J. LIVINGSTONE-ANDERSON.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCT. 26.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Baker, Barry, Bradford, Cohen, Davey, Davies, Heaford, Miss Kough, Messrs. Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Miss Stanley, Messrs. Thurlow, and Wood.

New members were accepted for the Islington Branch and the Parent Society.

The Secretary reported that two grants amounting to £15 had been received from the Secular Society, Ltd.

The Birmingham resolution *re* a program of courses of study in Freethought was again discussed, and it was resolved to ask the Editor of the *Freethinker* to publish the list of books already suggested in his paper, and invite further suggestions from readers.

Mr. Heaford was formally elected to represent the N. S. S. at the unveiling of the Ferrer Memorial Statue on November 5 at Brussels, and also as delegate to the meeting in connection with the International Congress Federation to follow. The sum of £5 was contributed towards his expenses.

The report of the sub-Committee appointed to consider the Liverpool resolution *re* Organising Lecturers was discussed and finally adopted. It was resolved that a circular be drafted for friends of the movement, and the carrying out of the suggestion of the Committee be left in the hands of the President and Secretary.

Mr. Moss made a suggestion as to the possible use of cinematograph apparatus for the purposes of propaganda, and was asked to prepare a sketch for further discussion.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

Said Stella, to our greatest dean,
"What reason can be given
Since marriage is a holy thing
That there are none in heaven?"

"There are no women": thus Swift said
But she returned the jest—
"Women there are, but I'm afraid
They cannot find a priest."

A really most amusing tale
Is that of Jonah and the whale;
A merry one the time to pass
Is that of Balaam and his ass;
Another that is somewhat odd
Is Mary giving birth to God;
While for a neatly rounded fib
There's mother Eve from Adam's rib.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "The Silence of God."

STRAFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Kingdom of Man."

OUTDOOR

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.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, Miss K. B. Kough, "What is Belief?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, Peter Grant, "Heinrich Heine: Poet, Wit, Iconoclast."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, G. W. Foote, "The Crescent and the Cross."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 6.30, E. Egerton Stafford, "Evolution and Theism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, John Scott, "How to Become Quick at Figures, and Britain's Absurd Weights and Measures."

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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.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

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President: G. W. FOOTE.

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

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

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