

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXI.—No. 48

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1911

PRICE TWOPENCE

I would as soon murder a man for his estate as prosecute him for his religious and speculative errors.

—LORD CHESTERFIELD.

“Blasphemy” and Free Speech.

MR. JUSTICE HORRIDGE, charging the Grand Jury at the West Riding Assizes at Leeds on Monday morning (November 20), expressed his “extreme regret at the number of cases in which wounds had been inflicted with knives and razors.” He also regretted that “the calendar was heavier in numbers than when he was there in the early part of the year; moreover, the cases they would have to consider were, he was sorry to say, serious in character.”

It is evident from his lordship's remarks that the district police have been very busy lately; and it is obvious that they would be much busier still if they laid themselves out to bring *all* the local criminals to justice.

The Leeds police, however, appear to be of a contrary opinion. They seem to think that they have plenty of leisure and could do with a great deal more occupation. They have, at any rate, undertaken a quite gratuitous task—the prosecution of Messrs. Gott and Stewart for what is now the comic-opera crime of “Blasphemy.”

Mr. Gott is indicted for publishing an insignificant penny pamphlet called *Rib-Tickers*. It is not calculated to do Freethought much good or Christianity much harm. Some of its paragraphs are gathered from other sources; some are to all appearance supplied by Mr. Gott himself. A portion are passable—few are elegant; and the wit seldom atones for the crudity of the language. But to prosecute such a production at all is an absurdity, and to prosecute it under the Blasphemy Laws is an outrage.

Mr. Stewart is prosecuted for spoken “blasphemy” in an open-air lecture. We have not seen the language complained of, but we have heard that it was indiscreet. Mr. Stewart is generally reported to us as not a careful speaker. But we have also been told that his expressions are never such as can legitimately be described as “lewd,” “indecent,” or “obscene.” These words are used by Christians in a most reckless and bigoted manner. When you get to the bottom of what they mean by them you always find that they are annoyed at some “infidel” speaker who has not shown sufficient consideration for their “feelings.” Simply this, and nothing more.

To take an historical instance. When the *Freethinker* was prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws in 1883, and Judge North savagely sentenced us to twelve months' imprisonment, we were brought up again to answer another indictment before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in the (then) Court of

Queen's Bench. So freely had the word “indecent” been flung about by professional Christians and hiring journalists that we felt obliged to warn the jury against the prejudice that such a word was calculated to arouse. There was no allusion to “indecent” in the indictment. If we were blasphemous it was clean blasphemy. We begged the jury—as honest men to remember this. Lord Coleridge also begged them to remember it. He reminded them that while we might be blasphemous we certainly were not licentious, and we had not pandered to the bad passions of mankind. Those were his lordship's very words. Yet some time subsequently Sir William Harcourt in the House of Commons, in reply to a question put to him respecting our continued imprisonment after the presentation of a strikingly influential memorial for our release, had the audacity to declare that we had been guilty of “an *obscene* libel.”

Sir William Harcourt was rebuked by several newspapers, but he could afford to smile. He enjoyed a well-paid public post. What did he care about the honor of a poor soldier of progress?

We say then that when “indecent” and “obscene” are applied by Christians to the language of Freethinkers, they should never be accepted without a scrutiny leading to justification.

“Vulgar” language is quite another thing. But vulgar language is not a crime. It is used by all sorts and conditions of men—even by legislators in the House of Commons. To imprison every person guilty of “vulgar” language would be to make one half the population maintain the other. And we fail to see why “vulgar” language in the mouth of a Freethinker is any worse than “vulgar” language in the mouth of a Christian. Nothing but religious bigotry could make it so.

It is curious that all “Blasphemy” prosecutions occur under Liberal governments. Mr. McKenna's answer to Mr. Lansbury's questions on the Boulter case were characteristic. The police can do no wrong, neither can magistrates—especially to “infidels.” Whatever opinion may be held as to Mr. Boulter's speech, the action of the police is utterly indefensible. The methods of Bow-street were positively Russian. Mr. W. T. Stead, in writing to me, calls the whole proceeding “monstrous,” and justly says that on this precedent any public speaker can be silenced if a number of rowdies declare their intention to injure him if he opens his mouth.

Mr. Stead asks what can be done. I do not see that anything can be done. Least of all would I see Mr. Boulter's imprisonment shortened by his giving sureties for his good behavior. That would be a shameful, cowardly climax. And those who aided and abetted him would deserve the severest moral condemnation—besides forfeiting their money, as they would be sure to do.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Holy War.

[This article first appeared in the *Freethinker* several years ago. It is likely to interest present-day readers in view of the war between Italy and Turkey. And it forms a natural sequence to the article on "The Bible and the Koran."]

I.

NOW that the "Eastern Question" is once more burning, and all sorts of charges are made against the Turk—not only as a Turk, but also as a *Mohammedan*—it will be as well, at least for Freethinkers, to get a clear view of the *facts* of the case; since it is only the *facts* that are of any importance whatever to men of judgment who think for themselves.

The Christians in the south-east of Europe are represented as ethnologically and morally superior to the Mohammedans. They are thus represented, that is, by their partisans in the pulpit and the press. But they are not thus represented by travellers. It is almost the universal testimony of those who have visited that part of the world that the Mohammedans are, on the whole, superior to the Christians in chastity, temperance, self-control, veracity, and sincerity; in all the virtues that build up a clean, wholesome, and dignified manhood.

One single fact speaks volumes. During the late war between Greece and Turkey—if it can be called a war, seeing how the Greeks were so occupied in retreating—it was noted by the English correspondents that the wounded Turks in hospital did amazingly well; their flesh, torn by bullets, or cut by surgical operations, healed with astonishing rapidity. This was owing to the purity of their blood and the soundness of their constitution; which, in turn, were signs of the general sobriety and sanity of their lives. Call them "animals," if your bigotry prompts you; at least you must admit that they were *clean* animals. The facts are too strong against the contrary assertion.

The superiority of the Mohammedans in the fundamental virtues of human life is a very old story. The testimony of the chroniclers of the Crusades on this point is very striking. It was a commonplace amongst Protestant preachers on salvation by faith, who were fond of declaring that if good works could save a man, Turks would go to heaven before Christians. John Wesley said the same thing in slightly altered words. Half a century later, Byron seized on this very point in that splendid battle scene in the eighth canto of *Don Juan*, where the old Turk, whose five sons have all fallen around him, still wields his blade, and refuses to surrender, in spite of the entreaties of the rough Russians who were touched by the only thing that could touch them—his serene bravery. Was the poet describing the son of Priam, or Peleus, or Jove?

"Neither—but a good, plain, old temperate man."

Byron saw with his own eyes and knew what he was talking about. A recent traveller observed that the honest business men in Salonica are mostly Turks: Byron noticed the same characteristic nearly a hundred years ago. In a note to the second canto of *Childe Harold* he said:—

"In all money transactions with the Moslems, I ever found the strictest honor, the highest disinterestedness. In transacting business with them, there are none of those dirty peculations, under the name of interest, difference of exchange, commission, etc., etc. uniformly found in applying to a Greek consul to cash bills, even on the first houses in Pera."

The same sincerity was apparent in their religious devotions. Renan was so impressed whenever he stood within a mosque that he could hardly help wishing himself a Mussulman. Byron wrote thus of the Mohammedans he had often beheld at their prayers:—

"On me the simple and entire sincerity of these men, and the spirit which appeared to be within and upon them, made a far greater impression than any general rite which was ever performed in places of worship, of which I have seen those of almost every persuasion under the sun."

Speaking of the Turks in general, Byron said with great energy:—

"If it is difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say what they are *not*: they are *not* treacherous, they are *not* cowardly, they do *not* burn heretics, they are *not* assassins, nor has an enemy advanced to their capital. They are faithful to their sultan till he becomes unfit to govern, and devout to their God without an inquisition. Were they driven from St. Sophia [Constantinople] to-morrow, and the French or Russians enthroned in their stead, it would become a question whether Europe would gain by the exchange. England would certainly be the loser."

Byron praises the toleration of the Turks in this passage. Strange as it may sound to orthodox Christian ears, Mohammedanism is not a persecuting religion; and, as a matter of fact, there is far more religious freedom in Turkey than in Russia—more, indeed, than has obtained until quite recently in progressive countries like England and France. Carry the comparison back a hundred, or even fifty years ago, and you will find that Turkey was in this respect the most enlightened and liberal country in Europe.

II.

Some plain truth on this matter was lately expressed by Professor Syed Ali Bilgrami, lecturer in the Marathi language at the University of Cambridge. This gentleman was interviewed by a representative of the *Daily News*; or rather, as we fancy, by someone who knew what nonsense men like the Archdeacon of London were talking about the Turk, and tried to correct it by getting this "interview" inserted in a journal of well-known Christian tendencies. One passage in the interviewer's report is well worth quoting:—

"Then you claim that Islam is tolerant?"

"It is the most tolerant faith of all. There has never been such absolute toleration under any other religion. In Turkey, if a subject pays his taxes and discharges his civil obligations, he is absolutely free as to faith. Missionaries of all religions are tolerated. Why, if I preached Islam here in Norwood you know I should be mobbed."

With regard to one important point—however much it may be considered as by the way—Professor Bilgrami made a statement which cannot be too often repeated. "I think," he said, "the Mohammedans suffer even more than the Christians for want of firm and equitable government." A number of testimonies to this effect are quoted by Professor T. W. Arnold in his able, and, in some respects noble, book, *The Preaching of Islam* (pp. 132, 133). Finlay, the great historian of Greece, remarked that "The central government of the Sultan has generally treated its Mussulman subjects with as much cruelty and injustice as the conquered Christians." Forsyth, writing as late as 1876, said that Turkish misgovernment falls with a heavy hand upon all alike. "In some parts of the kingdom," he added, "the poverty of the Mussulmans may be actually worse than the poverty of the Christians, and it is their condition which most excites the pity of the traveller." Bryce, writing still later of the north of Asia Minor, said: "All this oppression and misery falls upon the Mohammedan population equally with the Christian." The real truth is that the condition of the Christians in Turkey is not primarily a religious question at all, but a purely political one. Had this truth been steadily borne in mind, and firmly represented to the public opinion of the Western world, the "Eastern Question" might long ago have ceased to exist—that is, if the Western Powers had also been sincere in their expressions of desire for a reformation in the state of affairs in Turkey, instead of aiming at its dismemberment and spoliation. As the matter stands, however, the "Eastern Question" is invariably reopened in a blaze of religious fanaticism. The present trouble in Macedonia, which has been brewing for a considerable time, clearly originated from social and political causes. Nevertheless, it is a Christian feeling which the advocates of immediate interference on the part of England are working upon;

it is also Christian feeling which inspires the animosity towards the Turk of the masses of the Russian people; and, quite naturally, it is Moslem fanaticism to which the Sultan knows he must appeal to counterbalance the bigotry on the other side. Thus do the rulers and leaders of men, in all countries, trade upon their inherited prejudices, in order to employ their force for the ends of social and political ambition.

III.

But to return to our special subject. We have already alluded to a false statement of the Arch-deacon of London; it was that, "The propagation of his faith by the sword is part of the religion of the Turk." This is devoutly believed by the vast majority of Christians. But, like a good many other things they devoutly believe, it rests upon a very flimsy foundation. Professor Bilgrami denied it most emphatically:—

"Propagation of religion by the sword? That is entirely an exploded view. No Mohammedan ever thinks that religion is to be propagated by the sword."

Professor Bilgrami took the opportunity to add something that will astonish the Christians who read it. They have been taught that Mohammedans call them "infidels"—which, by the way, is their own favorite term for those who differ from them. But this, Professor Bilgrami said, is wholly incorrect:—

"The 'infidels' referred to in the Koran were the cruel idolatrous pagans of Arabia. The Christians are called 'the people of the Book,' and we believe in the sinless life and prophetic mission of Christ, though not in his Divinity."

The statement that it is a part of the Turk's religion to propagate his faith by the sword is a very old calumny. Its justification has always been that it served the turn. That it was a lie was a matter of little importance. When our English Pocock visited the great Christian apologist Grotius, in the seventeenth century, and asked him his authority for the story that Mohammed kept a tame pigeon to pick peas out of his ear, and pretended that it whispered him messages from God, Grotius admitted that he had no authority for it at all. Yet the lie lived on for another two hundred years.

If we go back to Lord Bacon we shall find him giving classic expression to this old charge against the Turk of conquest in the name of religion. In the Essay "Of Kingdoms and Estates" his lordship says: "The Turk hath at hand, for cause of war, the propagation of his law or sect, a quarrel that he may always command." In the Essay "Of Unity in Religion" he amplifies this statement:—

"There be two swords amongst Christians, the spiritual and the temporal; and both have their due office in the maintenance of religion. But we may not take up the third sword, which is Mahomet's sword, or like unto it: that is, to propagate religion by wars, or by sanguinary persecutions to force consciences; except it be in cases of overt scandal, blasphemy, or intermixture of practice against the state."

It is common for the advocates of Christianity against other religions to display craftiness, and Lord Bacon was no exception to the rule. Courage, indeed, as well as cunning, was necessary to write such a passage as this while Christendom was being torn to pieces with religious wars. There is even a positively atrocious subtlety in the idea that, while it is wrong to declare war against another country for the purpose of propagating your own religion, it is quite right to carry on a war, for the same object, against your fellow citizens.

Lord Bacon deals with this subject again, from a political point of view, in his tractate on "War with Spain":—

"In deliberation of war against the Turk it hath been often, with great judgment, maintained that Christian princes and states have always a sufficient ground of invasive war against the enemy; not for cause of religion, but upon a just fear; forasmuch as it is a fundamental law in the Turkish empire that they may, without any further provocation, make war upon Chris-

tendom for the propagation of their law; so that there lieth upon Christians a perpetual fear of war, hanging over their heads, from them; and therefore they may at all times, as they think good, be upon the preventive."

What a detestable doctrine—built upon what a foundation of falsehood! Whenever you feel disposed to cut the Turk's throat, however long he may have been living at peace with you, all you have to do is to recollect that if he were logical he would be trying to cut *your* throat, and then you may logically proceed to cut his throat in self-defence.

Dr. Johnson was just the man to repeat this doctrine, although the lapse of a hundred and fifty years compelled him to be more cautious in his expressions. In a note on Shakespeare's *Henry IV.*, he says:—

"If it be a part of the religion of the Mohammedans to extirpate by the sword all other religions, it is, by the laws of self-defence, lawful for men of every other religion, and for Christians among others, to make war upon Mohammedans, simply as Mohammedans, as men obliged by their own principles to make war upon Christians, and only lying in wait till opportunity shall promise them success."

The "if" in this passage destroys the force of all that follows. But a truer knowledge of Mohammedanism was beginning to prevail, and Johnson had to be more circumspect than his great predecessor.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Hydra-Headed Religion.

If you consult the Lexicons you will find that scarcely a word is used in so many different and often irreconcilable senses as the word "religion." Perhaps for most people it means the acts and forms by which they indicate their recognition of, dependence upon, and duties towards, a god or gods. It designates those feelings and attitudes which relate to God in contradistinction to those which relate to society. Popularly speaking, the idea is that religion consists in acts of private and public devotion, that is, in saying prayers night and morning, in reading the Bible, in going to church and participating socially in divine worship. As thus interpreted, religion is to be distinguished from both theology and morality. As a well-known divine puts it, "religion expresses the outer form and embodiment which the inward spirit of a true or a false devotion assumes." Another divine, equally famous, assures us that, on the contrary, "religion is neither cultus, creed, nor conduct, but fellowship with the Unseen." Professor Peake justly ridicules Matthew Arnold's assertion that "religion is morality touched by emotion" by observing that it would be as true to say of many religions that they are "immorality touched by emotion." As "fellowship with the Unseen" religion, it is contended, may exist and even flourish apart from its rites and ceremonies, which are only its outward signs. This is essentially the position defended by "J. B.," in his article on "Religion as Inwardness," which appears in the *Christian World* for November 16. To this liberal-minded Christian it matters not whether a man is a Christian, a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist, if he possesses the true inwardness, or is in a proper frame of mind. But with all due deference, we venture to affirm that in making such a statement "J. B." shows that he is not a Christian in any historic sense.

Of course, everything turns on what "J. B." understands by "inwardness." Sometimes he seems to identify it with character, or the essential attributes of manhood. He says:—

"When we want to ascertain the growth or decay of religion in the world we must turn at once from the external to the internal; we must find out whether the inner temper of the people is moving upwards or downwards."

Further on he describes religion as a spirit and temper, or as conduct issuing from a sense of brother-

hood, and refers to the wonderful progress which religion, as thus defined, has made in recent years. He instances, in particular, the breaking down of international barriers as a proof of the growth of religion. De Quincey said that he "could sooner live with lunatics or wild animals" than with the Chinese, while well-informed writers of to-day characterize them as a great and noble nation, fully equal, if not in some respects superior, to ourselves. This advance towards social unity is undeniable, but it by no means entitles "J. B." to exclaim, "And to have gained this new brotherhood, is not that a prime factor in religion?" because religion has never been a synonym for humanitarianism. In all ages and countries religion has always signified some form of divine worship, and between many religions and morality there was never the slightest connection. In spite of this incontrovertible fact "J. B." defines religion as being merely the possession and exercise of "a love, a tenderness, a sympathy whose accent we know at once." Then he observes:—

"If religion is intrinsically an inward thing, what of our own inwardness? What is our personal progress in love, in patience, in thankfulness, in hope, in the instinct of service? The judgment on you and me is not in our attitude towards the Athanasian Creed or the Thirty-nine Articles, but in our attitude towards our brother."

But the strange thing is that "J. B.," having adopted that definition of religion as an affair of the spirit and disposition, has the temerity to assert that whoever is in a right frame of mind and heart towards his neighbor is "full interiorly of those very things which Jesus spoke of as religion." In the first place, the Gospel Jesus never spoke of religion at all. So far as the record goes, the word was never on his lips. In the second place, the Gospel Jesus was an ardent theologian, who talked continually about God in his relation to man, and about man in his relation to God; and, according to him, man's chief end was to approach God through him and get saved, in order to secure a happy hereafter. Even the much praised but practically neglected Sermon on the Mount is saturated with theology, whilst, apart from its theology, much of what it inculcates is impossible and absurd.

We must admit that the term "religion" does not *etymologically* bear any supernatural connotations; but it is equally incontestable that *historically* it has but rarely carried any other. Whenever the word is mentioned in Christendom it instantly suggests the thought of God, of Christ, of immortality, and of the way of salvation by faith. It would take centuries to free the word from its supernatural associations, and it is doubtful whether it would be worth while to make the attempt. Innumerable are the forms which it has from time to time assumed; but in all of them supernaturalism has been the controlling factor. Have not all the ministers of religion ever marched under the supernatural banner? It is often asked how God can have permitted so much evil to be rampant in the world; but if the teaching of Christianity be true God has not only allowed, for some inscrutable purposes of his own, many forms and degrees of wickedness to prevail, but has himself been the direct instigator of the darkest crimes on record. How many millions of people have been imprisoned, tortured, and slain in God's "holy" name? "J. B." is as ready as any Secularist to grant that the history of religion is not a thing to glory in, and he affects a withering scorn for all theological controversies and penalizations; and yet he remains a theologian and calls himself a Christian. Admirable are the attributes of character which he enumerates and delineates; but it is impossible to see how he can explain the shocking lack of them in human life, on the assumption that a God of love is the ruler of the world. He believes and exults in such a God, and to that extent he is a theologian, though sufficiently *humane* not to wish to burn either orthodox divines or avowed Atheists. Humaneness, however, is by no means a supernatural product, but an inward state that pertains and is

creditable to man. It is very significant that social progress did not really begin until supernatural religion was already considerably on the wane.

"J. B." concludes his article by affirming that "religion means one thing—the systematic, thorough, and complete education of the soul." This definition, however, is a pure mystification. What is the soul? Is it anything more than breath or air? We all know that practically breath means life. "Thou takest away their breath," says the Psalmist, "they die, and return to their dust." Is "J. B." aware of the existence in man of any other soul, or was he simply indulging in metaphysical speculation when he introduced the term? The Old Theology believes that man's soul is a conscious entity subjected to much humiliation and corruption by reason of its temporary imprisonment in his vile material body, and to talk of educating it in such circumstances is surely a little silly. But the Platonic conception of the soul, borrowed by late Judaism, and taken over by Christianity, is nothing but a hypothesis insusceptible of verification; and the spiritual world into which it is said to take its flight at death is merely what Shakespeare, by a mighty stroke of genius, calls "the *undiscovered* country from whose bourne no traveller returns." Science has never found a single trace of such a soul, nor the least suggestion of its *post-mortem* existence. All we know is that man is the highest specimen of living things on our planet. His psychical superiority is simply the product of a process of evolution extending over countless millions of years. Man differs from the animals below him only in degrees, not at all in nature. From man downwards we can travel as far as we like; but from man upwards there is yet no path. We do not, and possibly never shall, understand the connection between the mechanism of the brain and the wonderful ideas, feelings, and aspirations to which it gives birth; but we do know that the character of such products is determined by the size and quality of the brain. Now, it is an ascertained fact that many animals below man can be trained to observe certain rules and to perform certain deeds; and from these man differs only in that he is capable of being taught to observe more and subtler rules and to perform more complicated and far-reaching deeds. The truth is that we are only just a little higher up the scale than the monkeys and the apes, and as social agents not much in advance of ants and bees. We are slowly fighting our way upwards, gradually learning the art of social life. The only education we need, therefore, is to be fitted to discharge our social duties in such a way as to make for the welfare of all concerned.

The secret of social development is discontent, dissatisfaction with existing conditions, and a dogged determination to get out of them and into better. We claim that the following sentiment expressed by "J. B." is fundamentally immoral:—

"Have you not learned yet that to be content with what you have, as God's present will towards you; that to rejoice in his will, as containing all that is good, is a far better thing, a greater achievement, than all your athletic powers of former days?"

Just fancy telling a man, with a wife and seven children, to be content with sixteen or seventeen shillings a week, as God's present will towards him. Why, such a man would be an unforgivable culprit did he not avail himself of every legitimate means to secure a rise in his weekly income. The rich may encounter no severer temptation than to regard poverty as a blessing to the poor; but the poor would be deluded fools if they were satisfied with the Gospel which enjoins quiet resignation here under promise of a glorious reversal of fortune hereafter. God's imaginary will has been the Church's most real asset. It has made cowardly slaves of the majority of mankind in all ages; and their emancipation is proceeding but sluggishly. Religion—the cruel tyranny of the supernatural—is thus seen to have always been a curse to man. No form of it has ever befriended the weak, the poor, and the needy; and no form of it has ever brought the

strong and rich to a sense of their moral obligations. What we see all along the line of history is human life—

“A cowering thing without the strength to rise,
Held down by fell religion's heavy weight—
Religion scowling downward from the skies.”

But now, at last, the day of salvation is at the dawn, and the fair, bright promise of the ancient Græco-Roman world is beginning to be fulfilled.

J. T. LLOYD.

Professor Thomson on Science & Religion.

AN *Introduction to Science*, by Professor J. A. Thomson, forms one of the volumes just added to the popular and useful—two things not by any means synonymous—“Home University Library.” Generally, the volume is well conceived, and is calculated to do good service to those who are in need of a treatise expressing the spirit of sane scientific investigation. But in one respect—and that one of interest to readers of this journal—Professor Thomson exhibits a sitting-on-the-fence attitude not unusual with him in this connection. One of the chapters in this little volume is on “Science and Religion,” and its peculiarity is that it contains little science and less religion. It appears to have been written with a complete neglect of the canons of scientific guidance previously laid down, and with the obvious desire to safeguard religion from scientific criticism. And Professor Thomson does this by shutting out religion from the world of science and assuming that he has preserved religion by the familiar device of allotting it a region of its own to which science is denied the right of residence.

As an illustration of what has been said, take the following passage at the opening of the chapter, and which, I am sure, has no legitimate place in a treatise on scientific method:—

“We would remind ourselves and our readers that the whole subject should be treated with reverence and sympathy, for it is hardly possible to exaggerate the august rôle of religion in human life. Whatever be our views, we must recognise that just as the great mathematicians and metaphysicians represent the aristocracy of human intellect, so the great religious geniuses represent the aristocracy of human emotion. And in this connection it is probably useful to bear in mind that in all our discussions about religious ideas and feelings we should ourselves be in an exalted mood, and yet ‘with a compelling sense of our own limitations,’ and of the vastness and mysteriousness of the world.”

If Professor Thomson had written a special chapter “On frames of mind fatal to scientific investigation,” he could not have opened with a better illustration. For one may safely say that it would be little short of miraculous if anyone who started investigating religion in this spirit, and maintained it throughout his investigation, were to reach a scientific conclusion. I do not seriously object to “sympathy” when one is studying a subject—although even that is more in place when dealing with a person—but why “reverence”? If we are to reverence anything or anyone, it should follow, not precede, investigation. Reverence is a composite emotion, and carries with it respect and affection. But suppose there are some who do not think religion, as such, worthy of respect, and so feel towards it no affection. Are they to be declared unfit to pursue the investigation? Or are they to be called upon to respect that which they consider unworthy of respect as the condition of their testimony being admitted? On this rule we either compel a man to sacrifice his own self-respect before we admit his right to be heard, or we pack the jury with persons who confess to an overpowering bias before they hear the evidence.

It would really seem, from the expression that while examining religion we should be in “an exalted

mood,” that it is this last contingency which Professor Thomson has in view. For, by an exalted mood, I can only understand, in this instance, a religious mood. That is, we must believe in religion before we examine it; otherwise, our investigation is profanity. Well, it hardly needed a scientific teacher to tell us this. It is the burden of all the clergy of Christendom. It may be sound religion, but it is shocking science. Even the mere feeling of exaltation is out of place during a scientific investigation. A scientist may experience this in reaching a conclusion, as Kepler did when he discerned the law of planetary motion; or as Newton may have done when he embraced in one magnificent formula the fall of a stone and the revolutions of a planet. But there are few scientists who would advocate indulgence in this direction *during* investigation.

If it is replied that religion should receive serious treatment, the point is conceded. But religion already receives this, in a far greater measure than religious advocates mete it out to others. It deserves serious treatment exactly as any other subject of fact or of belief deserves serious treatment. And those who have attacked religion have never failed to treat it seriously. True, they have also pointed out the ludicrous nature of many religious beliefs, but the argument *ad absurdum* is a perfectly legitimate weapon. It is recognised and used in every other department, and it is used by religious people against beliefs for which they have no “reverence and sympathy.” The Freethinker *does* treat religion seriously. In the best sense of the word, he is the only one that does so. He shows how religion began in a *serious* attempt to understand phenomena. He shows how religion has undergone a continuous and natural development as a consequence of man's mental, moral, and social growth. And he predicts its ultimate disappearance through the same agencies that have destroyed many other beliefs. And this, I repeat, is a serious treatment. It is really a questionable seriousness that insists on approaching religion in an “exalted mood,” and stands before the object of its worship with the gravity of a savage contemplating his fetish.

We have had these exordiums to treat religion with reverence and sympathy, etc., etc., until we are tired of receiving them. It is about time that Professor Thomson and others directed their energies into other channels and advised religious people to favor non-religious opinions with a little of the treatment they demand for themselves. They need the advice. We can get along very well without it.

I will leave for the time Professor Thomson's statement concerning religious geniuses as the aristocrats of the emotional world. This may be properly considered under his argument for religion being reached through the emotions, and so avoid going over the same ground twice. But before proceeding with the Professor's treatment of religion a word or two may fitly be said on his dealings with the relations between science and philosophy, and which has a distinct bearing on the religious question. He quotes from Huxley the following well-known passage:—

“If the fundamental proposition of evolution is true, namely, that the entire world, animate and inanimate, is the result of the mutual interaction, according to definite laws, of forces possessed by the molecules which made up the primitive nebulousity of the universe; then it is no less certain that the actual world reposed potentially in the cosmic vapor, and that an intelligence, if great enough, could from his knowledge of the properties of the molecules of that vapor, have predicted the state of the fauna in Great Britain in 1888 with as much certainty as we may say what will happen to the vapor of our breath on a cold day in winter.”

Now, if the scientific doctrine of evolution is accepted, Huxley's statement appears to be self-evidently true. No intelligence may ever exist great enough for such a calculation, but its abstract possibility remains unaffected thereby. Professor Thomson rejects this statement, however, apparently on the grounds (1) that we have not yet succeeded in giving a physico-chemical account of certain vital

processes, and (2) that the physical account of things cannot cover biological phenomena, and the biological description cannot cover phenomenon in the moral and mental spheres.

The first objection is obviously only a criticism of existing knowledge, and does not touch Huxley's position. He would have replied that he did not say such a description was actually possible then or now, but that it remained a strictly scientific possibility given a complete knowledge of all the forces at work and of all their interactions and permutations. The second objection exhibits the common fallacy that the mechanistic interpretation of nature assumes of necessity that physical terms can fully express biological phenomenon, and that biological terms can fully express psychological phenomena. But this is not so. There is a story of a well-known professor of physiology who commenced a lecture on the stomach by telling his students that the stomach had been called this, that, and the other, but the one thing he wished them to bear in mind was that it was a stomach. In the same way, while Materialists believe that the force or energy throughout the whole of nature are one, they are never silly enough to deny that living things are alive, or that thinking beings think.

So that when Professor Thomson says that before life existed physico-chemical categories did not exhaust the reality of nature, and before mind existed the biological description was not exhaustive, every Materialist can agree with him, if he means that there were possible developments that could not be explained in terms of physics, nor, in a later stage, in terms of biology. Necessarily, each department—physics, chemistry, biology, physiology—demands a peculiar description of its own, because each department possesses phenomena that is peculiarly its own. What the Materialist urges is, not that you can fully express psychology in terms of biology, or biology in terms of physics, but that we can either find, or are justified in the belief that one day we shall find, the physico-chemical and biological equivalents of physiological and psychological phenomena. If Professor Thomson had borne this consideration in mind, he might have saved himself the trouble of writing some of the paragraphs he has written. He would also have refrained from charging Materialists with assuming that, because they believe mental phenomena to be the equivalents of nervous processes, they deny the reality of mental states. True, he does not make this statement in so many words, but it is a logical conclusion from his argument.

I am at a loss to know just what is meant by the statement, "We feel sure that organisms reveal a deeper reality than crystals do." It seems to me that one is just as "real" as the other. Life can only reveal a deeper reality than a crystal to those who are convinced that there is an intelligence behind the universe, before they even commence their investigations. To a sane science there are no degrees of reality. A thing is real or it is not real. Nor have we any scientific canon that will enable us to fix a crystal as less "real" than a cow. Professor Thomson's expression is simply an indication of how difficult it is to shake off traditional Theistic assumptions. Where his book deals with straightforward scientific issues, it is admirably done. When he departs from this, his groundwork is, not the world of scientific fact and theory, but that of pseudo-metaphysical speculation and theological assumption.

(To be continued.) C. COHEN.

"And papa," sobbed the unhappy wife, "he—he threw his slippers across the room and told me to go the devil."
"You did right, my dear child, by coming straight home to me."

The "Early Pair" is the only fruit to-day traceable to the Garden of Eden.

Correspondence.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE, WITCH-BURNER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Livingstone-Anderson misreads my letter to you in several instances; e.g., I do not attribute to Browne the knowledge and prepossessions of our day. I say that he was *au courant* with the best thought of his own and earlier times, and yet was himself in the matter under discussion in the lowest depths of contemporary thought. He certainly knew his *Hudibras*, in which his contemporary, Butler, poured satirical contempt on Hopkins, the infamous "witch-finder."

Now for an excerpt from Browne's evidence at the trial of the two poor old women, one of whom was, amongst other incredible things, charged with having caused fits in a girl by touching the girl's cloak. Browne stated in his "evidence" that "*the fits were natural, but were aggravated by the power of demons and the malice of witches.*"

The evidence was given several years after the inauguration of the Royal Society (of which, I believe, Browne was a member), which did much to stop the brutal murders of old women for impossible "crimes."

Browne, therefore, was in a mentally degraded condition compared with the majority of the Royal Society members on this subject. Further, during Browne's life, half the judges were inimical to judicially murdering the poor creatures brought before them charged with witchcraft, and by their instructions and addresses to the jury on the nature of evidence, and on the vagueness of the charges, generally obtained a verdict of acquittal, or, when unable to do that, passed mild or nominal sentences; so that half the judges who administered the law were setting Browne an example of which it is hardly possible to suppose him ignorant. At this very time, too, even the North American Indians were expressing their horror at the burning of white women by the New England Puritans and other religious bodies, and comparing this inhuman conduct with that of the enlightened French in their neighboring colonies, where burning to death for witchcraft was unknown. Here, again, Browne is below the intellectual level of so-called "savages."

I need not, I think, pursue the matter further, but may add that, as a Greek scholar, Browne knew quite well that such revolting barbarity was unknown to the Greeks of Socrates' time, or even to any nation professing the Mahometan or any Eastern religion, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, or Confucian.

I believe an examination of the nature of human knowledge from Mr. Livingstone-Anderson's pen would, at least, show one thing—which I have, indeed, been solely intent on maintaining—viz., that Browne could have had no knowledge of either witchcraft, or witches, or demons; and that, if he knew anything at all on the subject, it was just this—that he knew nothing whatever.

Perhaps Mr. Livingstone-Anderson will give us his views on the limits of human knowledge. Your readers may then judge whether or no I have stigmatised Browne's shocking act in sending—as his evidence did—those two old women to a horrible death for an impossible crime in terms too severe.

A man who, like Browne, had the hardihood to write a book on *Vulgar Errors*, and was at the same time sunk to the most abject depths in one of the vilest errors of his time, is perhaps a case for the pathologist rather than for one who cares more for literature and the credit of its best exponents than for the investigation of mental disease.

A word on Marlowe, and I close. The author of the deathless lines on Helen, whose beauty "launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium," was certainly charged with, though never tried, for Atheism. Written evidence, I believe, exists of an attempt to implicate Marlowe and a number of other distinguished scholars—Sir Walter Raleigh being one, if I do not err—in a charge of Atheism, but no records exist of his having been either a drunkard or a desolate reprobate. On the contrary, his character as a man was, with his fellow men of letters, of the noblest.

The record stands against Browne, and we need not go beyond it to arrive at warrantable conclusions concerning his actions and beliefs. That they were such as a man at once learned and sane could not hold I think it impossible to doubt, unless we charge him with something far worse, i.e., wilful false witness and brutal callousness as to the fate of two helpless and hapless fellow-creatures.

ATHEIST.

P.S.—I had almost forgotten Tertullian and Augustine. On their theory that they believed in Christianity because it was impossible, they ought not to have been Christians unless they believed Christianity to be the most absurd of

all religions, and, therefore, giving the highest scope for belief. Yet they sought to persuade their contemporaries that Christianity was more reasonable than any other religion; and, therefore, on their own theory—*credo quia impossibile est*—less impossible than the very religions they were trying to support, and so less worthy of belief. These two Absurdists did not recognise the logical outcome of their own teaching: that the most absurd religion is that which most tests the powers of a man's belief—or credulity.—A.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Bonar Law, the new Conservative leader, delivered his first speech in that capacity at Leeds, and he flew the flag of Religion as well as Toryism. The *Observer* calls attention to the fact that one pious sentence "profoundly hushed and moved his hearers." Visitors to Hyde Park, he said,

"will find many orators, all with good voices, advocating many causes; but you will find always that the advocate who has the largest audience is he who proclaims that there is no God."

This was said by Mr. Bonar Law—who doubtless speaks from personal experience—in proof of the "growing materialism of the age." And how is this dreadful disease to be fought? By maintaining the established Churches in the kingdom—and their endowments! Which is very much like fighting the edge of a knife with a piece of rope.

Colonel Thomas Myles Sandys, the gentleman who gave up his seat for Bootle in favor of Mr. Bonar Law, died a few months after and left £741,300. His will shuts out any beneficiary who is a Roman Catholic or marries a Roman Catholic. Colonel Sandys was a Protestant. How they love each other!

Mrs. Winston Churchill launched and "christened" the *Centurion* at Devonport. This is one of our newest battleships and is intended to help in smashing up the enemy's battleships when, like good Christians, we go to war with another Christian country. There is always a religious ceremony on these occasions, but owing to the weather and the rough water it had to be shortened in this instance. No doubt it would be just as efficacious if it were shortened still further—even to the point of disappearance. "Providence" is always—yes, always—on the side of the biggest, best equipped, and best manoeuvred battleships.

Mr. Hillaire Belloc was certainly very candid in his address to the University of London Catholic Students' Society, if he has been correctly reported by the *Catholic Times*. One statement he made was: "If those outside the Church knew more about her, they would probably hate her still more." We agree.

The Bishop of Hull has found a field of usefulness for miracles. He does not say that they are of use at home, but he thinks there is a good market for them abroad—amongst uncivilised people. Indeed, he does not believe that a non-miraculous Christianity is of any use whatever. We are inclined to agree with him. And the logic of the situation is simple. The heathen in his blindness is not attracted by the moral or industrial or commercial influence of Christianity. But if he is sufficiently uncivilised to be impressed by miracles, then, if the missionary comes along with a more startling list of miracles than his own deities can claim, there is some hope for his conversion. Still, a religion that developed a healthy self-respect might, one would think, stop people palming off on savages things that are rejected as impostures or delusions by educated people at home.

Mr. Harold Begbie, who plays the part of fugleman to the Salvation Army, has been writing a book on Foreign Missions. He comes to the conclusion—from information supplied by the Army, we presume—that the Salvation Army is the only religious body doing any good in India. We remember, a few years ago, a Presbyterian clergyman challenging the Army to produce a single convert that had not been stolen from other missions, and who also pointed out the fraudulent manner in which the Army prepared its Indian statistics. Mr. Begbie says of missions in general that "among the educated and upper classes of India, Christianity can claim but few triumphs. There are no conversions worth speaking about except among the lowest and most depressed classes." The *British Weekly*, in taking exception to Mr. Begbie's attitude, does not contradict the

statement, but sanctimoniously snivels out a text about God choosing the "base things of the world, and things which are despised." But the omniscient Nicoll must know that this is quite beside the point. The fact that only among the lower and poorer classes in India are any converts made is not pointed out because the converts are not fashionable, but because they are really "rice Christians." They are not so much persuaded of the truth of Christianity as they are bribed into professing allegiance. The educated and the better off possess two very effective bars against the blandishments of the Christian missionary.

Some of the "unco guid" have been writing to the Rev. David Smith, of the *British Weekly*, to find out whether it is right to use the Glasgow tram service to go to church on Sunday. The difficulty arises with the people living in the suburbs. If they don't go to the churches in the city, these houses of God suffer from their non-attendance. If they do go, and use the trams, are they breaking the "Sawbath"? Here, now, is a first-rate religious difficulty. But the Rev. David is equal to it. After an argument of a column in length, he solemnly decides that a Sunday car service is "a work of necessity," since it carries people to church, and their going is "a work of mercy," since their presence supports the minister. So after this piece of solemn humbug the "unco guid" may take their penny's-worth of tram ride with a clear conscience. But the idea of grown-up men, with whiskers—as Dan Leno used to say—solemnly discussing such a topic would make one laugh if it were not so sad, and would make one grieve if it were not so confoundedly ridiculous.

We have received a copy of the *Irish Independent* of October 31, with a marked passage, which we reproduce in full:—

"Following up their campaign against the English Sunday Press, a large crowd, headed by a band and the Rev. Father O'Connor, Adm., and the Rev. Father Devane, C.C., assembled at the Limerick Railway station on Sunday at noon.

"The parcel of English newspapers, which came by the Rosslare train, was obtained by a boy, who immediately handed them over to the Vigilance Committee. A procession was then formed, and, with a band playing, the crowd marched to the People's Park, where the newspapers were publicly burned.

"Addresses were delivered by Father O'Connor and Father Devane, and the former expressed the hope that the movement would spread to all parts of Ireland. Father Devane said that the blaze reminded him of the fire lighted by St. Patrick upon Tara Hill, and he hoped that Limerick's example would have widespread results.

"The crowd also seized a parcel of English newspapers consigned to the garrison troops, two of whom were conveying the parcel to the barracks from the railway station."

Father This and Father That, at the head of a mob, burning banned newspapers, show us what the Catholic Church would still do if it could. From burning newspapers to burning heretics is only a step. It is the same principle of action in both cases. What surprises us is that soldiers should let their newspapers be taken away from them. Soldiers of that sort ought never to be near the front in time of war. They should be at the rear—minding the baggage.

Rev. A. J. Waldron has been explaining the uses of pain. He seems as fond of it as God (or Nature) is. The human race would be namby-pamby nothings without it. Very well, then. We hope the reverend gentleman will get a good share of it. This is a generous, not an unkind, wish, as he will quite understand. We also hope it will not be a curable pain, such as the reverend gentleman talks so fluently about, but something that sticks. Cancer, for instance.

Mr. C. S. Dixon, of Ivydene, Rutland-road, Walthamstow, secretary of the Oxford Slate Club, writes to the *Star* (Nov. 18) that Slate Clubs should have their money properly invested. "Do not trust parsons and publicans," he says. He knows them.

Quite a pretty little discussion has been going on concerning the Rev. R. J. Campbell's reconciliation with the Rev. Dr. Forsyth. One clergyman writes and "blows the gaff" by asserting that the whole thing was a theatrical display. It had all been carefully arranged beforehand, and the writer thinks that in religion make-believe can always be dispensed with. This, however, seems like straining a good thing to breaking point. If make-believe were dispensed with, there would be very little of current religion left to bother about. Other contributors to the correspondence are concerned with Mr. Campbell's statement that his opinions have undergone no change since he propounded the

"New Theology." Some of them assert that this is not so. They say that Mr. Campbell's ideas are constantly changing, even though he is not aware of it. Others mildly hint that he is at the mercy of every wave of sentiment that affects him. We think the last is not very wide of the truth. A *thinker* Mr. Campbell never was and never can be, although in this respect his critics do not appear to be more fortunately endowed. Mr. Campbell, like many others, is fortunate that his field of labor is theology. It is the one sphere in which positive mediocrity of intellect, provided it be accompanied by energy, a power of speech, and a vein of sentimentalism, stands a first-rate chance of attaining a high position. Any handful of the leading clergymen of any denomination will prove the truth of this statement. In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king. And with theology as the mental dissipation of undeveloped or un-instructed minds, glib mediocrities easily gain positions of eminence.

Neither Mr. R. J. Campbell nor Dr. Forsyth will, we venture to think, be grateful to Mr. Hugh C. Wallace for his letter to the *British Weekly* revealing the stage arrangements of the public "reconciliation" which occurred recently at the Congregational Union meeting. But Mr. Wallace expects too much when he says that "make-believe can always be dispensed with, but when it enters the sphere of religion it is surely something to be condemned, and that without stint." Mr. Wallace overlooks the fact that to do away with "make-believe" in the Christian pulpit would lead to the downfall of the Christian Church. And then what would become of the poor ministers?

The Church Missionary Society has at last discovered that they "must have missionaries who are equipped with a scientific as well as a dogmatic reason for the faith that is in them." Dogma won't do in India, China, or Japan. The inhabitants of those countries ask for "reliable data." The Church Missionary Society thinks that these can be supplied. We don't. The only certain thing about Christianity is that it has no "reliable data."

The following may be taken as illustrative of what has been said. In the current issue of the *Christian Commonwealth* there appears a sermon by Mr. Campbell, dealing with Determinism. While professing inability to combat, by argument, the Determinist position, he says:—

"Argument or no argument, we feel—indeed, we know—that we have at least some power of self-direction and self-control, however limited the area in which it can take effect, and no one could convince us to the contrary. All that we praise or blame in one another, honor or despise in one another; all that raises or lowers us in our own self-respect, all that we regard as admirable or the reverse in human conduct, is immediately dependent upon our consciousness that we could do otherwise than we have done, that we are not mere automata."

Now, it is true that every one of the misunderstandings on the subject could be found in other writers. Mr. Campbell's distinctive peculiarity is that he has brought them all into one paragraph, and so exhibits his hopelessly confused mind on the subject. (1) If no argument is conclusive against Determinism, what is the value of his own argument from consciousness? (2) Scientific Determinism does not, and never did, deny that man possessed a power of self-direction. The self-direction consists in the undisputed fact that one's actions are the expression of one's nature. (3) Praise and blame, etc., are *not* dependent upon our consciousness that we could do differently to what we do, but upon our agreement or disagreement, our sympathy or lack of sympathy, with what is done. (4) Consciousness never does, and is, indeed quite unable to, tell us authoritatively what we can do or could have done. It can only tell us what we have done, or what we should like to do. Our ability to do it is quite another question. (5) The term "automaton" is quite out of place when applied to man. Man is not something that is moved wholly from without, but from within. External forces are the stimuli that call into activity internal forces and capacities. This list does not completely exhaust Mr. Campbell's confusions, but it will be admitted that a man who can get so many into so brief a space deserves some notice—which we have given him.

Simple Bible teaching, says the *Christian World*, in the course of an argument for a new Education Bill, is fair to all Christian denominations. This may be true; but whether it is or not, it does not touch the vital issue. What the State should do is to act fairly by all parties, including Christian denominations. What these latter quietly assume is that it is only Christian bodies that call for serious consideration. And so long as this temper is maintained a lasting settlement of the Education question is an impossibility. If Christians could only curb their egotism and recognise that

non-Christians are also deserving of consideration, and if Nonconformists could recall what used to be a cardinal principle of Nonconformity, and act with some regard to decency and justice, the Education question could be quickly and easily settled. It is Christian egotism and Christian injustice that really keeps the question alive.

The Grand Jury at the Leeds Assizes returned a True Bill against Thomas William Stewart for "blasphemy" and against John William Gott for "misdemeanor." Defendants were allowed out on bail, as before, until called to answer their indictments. Their methods of advocacy are not ours, but to prosecute them under the old Blasphemy Laws is a scandal to English jurisprudence. Lawyers, judges, policemen, and "authorities" generally would soon have us back into the Dark Ages if we would let them.

The "murder" of an English missionary, the Rev. A. G. Douglas, at Kango, on the Portuguese side of Lake Nyasa, is explained by the Portuguese authorities as the result of his interference in political affairs. He was at the head of what the Portuguese officer in charge of the military post regarded as "fresh native incursion." The officer called upon the party to stop; the challenge was ignored, the officer fired, and Missionary Douglas fell dead. According to his own teaching, he is perfectly happy—and happier than that—in heaven; so it is difficult to see what his friends have to complain about.

The newspapers, always on the lookout for the sensational, are making a lot of the recovery of the "poor Gillingham girl," Edith Ballard, from functional paralysis of five years' standing. Because she prayed to get better her recovery is treated as an instance of the efficacy of prayer. There are many such cases on record, in which no such thing as prayer is included. One case in point is that of the late Eugene Lee Hamilton, the poet, who was hopelessly paralysed for some fifteen years (we believe) and recovered the use of his bodily powers after all that time. He walked about and lived like other men, married, and had a family. He was a Freethinker.

Senator Root suggests that on February 17, 1915, the 150,000,000 of English-speaking people throughout the world should cease all manner of work for five minutes and devote this time to the offering of silent prayer for the perpetual maintenance of peace between the nations. If that doesn't corner "Providence" what will?

The fond parent had given his son a new five-shilling piece and a threepenny-bit, telling him he could put which he chose in the plate that morning at church.

"Which coin did you give?" asked the fond parent when the boy returned.

"Well, father, the text was 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver,' and as I know I should feel very sorry if I parted with the new five-shilling piece, I acted up to the sermon and dropped in the threepenny."

The conversation had turned on the "Confidence Trick," and a wearied look went over the old man's face.

"Ever been at the confidence trick?" queried someone who had noticed the change of countenance.

"I was."

"Where?" asked the other breathlessly.

"St. George's, Hanover-square."

Solomon and David led very merry lives,
With very many concubines,
And many, many wives;
But when old age crept o'er them,
And conscience gave them qualms,
Solly wrote the Proverbs and David wrote the Psalms.

Vicar (to eligible young man on a visit to the vicarage):
"Most regrettable! The Bishop has unfrocked the inspecting clergyman of the village mixed choirs."

Eligible Young Man: "Very cold weather for such a punishment. Has he unfrocked the lady, too?"

"We can trace many of our sins to Adam," said the breakfast philosopher, "but there is one that we cannot."

"What may that be?" asked his fair *vis-à-vis*.

"Walking into a ball-room with our hands in our pockets."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

- Sunday, November 26, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: at 7.30, "The Dying God."
- December 3, Stratford Town Hall; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.
- January 7, Shoreditch Town Hall; 9, London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner; 14, Shoreditch Town Hall; 21, Glasgow.
- March 24, Leicester.
- April 15, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 26, Stratford Town Hall. December 10, Fulham Ethical Society; 31, Harringay.
- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £318 1s. 8d. Received since:—H. Jessop, £5 5s.
- W. T. NEWMAN.—Why should we (or you) worry over your friend's beliefs? What he believes is of no importance. The only important thing is what he knows. Not what he *says* he knows, but what he *does* know. If he wishes you to believe in "a spirit world" he should give you the evidence. We don't undertake to prove negatives.
- W. M.—Solomon is *not* the author of the expression "spare the rod and spoil the child"—which does not occur in the Bible. Your tutor, therefore, is all abroad in saying that "the words are as true now as when Solomon uttered them." You ask what civilised nations do not allow the flogging of school children. Here are three for a start: France, Germany, and Japan. We don't understand what is meant by the "alternative." What is the alternative to dishonesty? Why, honesty, of course. And the alternative to beating a child is to appeal to his reason and good feeling. Anybody can beat a child; it takes brains and patience to pursue the better course. Thanks for the rest of your letter. We are glad to know that we have "let the sunshine in" upon you.
- H. JESSOP, sending cheque for the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I am pleased to see you have got over the £300— which I think is a small sum for speaking hard, solid truth when you could have have earned many times £300 if you had preached lies for Christ's sake. But truth and honor never go: paid in cash."
- F. O. RITZ.—Shortly.
- R. NORTH.—Probably next week. Thanks.
- A. G. EASLEY writes: "I received a letter from my wife a few mornings ago, relating an incident which will probably interest you. Noticing that the children were very quiet, she went to see what mischief was afoot, and found that our daughter (aged seven) was reading aloud from your *Darwin on God*, the audience consisting of her brother, who is two or three years her junior. The mites appeared to be intensely interested in their occupation, and you will probably admit that they might have been much less worthily employed. I am sure you will also agree that it is a gratifying sign of the times when the rising generation evince, at so early an age, such a correct taste in literature."
- JOHN HAYES.—No doubt it would serve your turn well enough.
- G. T. TURNER.—Shall be sent as requested. Glad to have your thanks for "mental freedom"—and to know that your wife enjoys the same boon.
- J. MATSON.—Should have to see it before we could answer.
- FRANCIS PREWETT.—Thanks for your trouble in the matter, but there are many translations of that famous fine passage in the great poem of Lucretius. There never was any doubt, by the way, that Lucretius disbelieved the doctrine of a future life. Mrs. Browning well said, from her point of view, that he "denied divinely the divine."
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- H. R. Y.—Thanks. You will see it has been useful.
- SYDNEY A. GIMSON.—Glad that Mr. Lloyd had a large audience at Leicester in spite of the rain.
- F. ROWLAND was "struck by the excellence of the articles" on reading a copy of the *Freethinker* lent him by a friend, and has become a regular subscriber. A hint for other friends to go and do likewise. This correspondent is advised that there is no N. S. S. Branch in his locality.
- E. ROBERTSHAW.—Pleased to hear from such an old subscriber. Your suggestions shall be considered. Rest attended to.
- J. B. (Birmingham).—Mr. Gould has opinions of his own, and is perfectly entitled to hold them. We agree with you that "something in the place of Christianity" is absurd. But moral culture and moral discipline are *not* absurd; and at bottom this is what our old friend is after. There is no need to be angry at his dreams by the way. We believe he is very far from wishing to interfere with our special work; which, by the way, is our best possible answer to those who may think it superfluous. We will, however, think over your suggestion of a special article from our pen on the subject.
- W. J. LEWIS.—Some of the "facts" are the product of a pious imagination. To call them "undeniable" is absurd. We have dealt with the actual facts in "Acid Drops."

- J. COHEN.—See "Acid Drops." We have given the matter all the attention it deserves.
- E. HARVEY.—A good many would agree with you. See what we have written.
- PERCY KNIGHT.—We also are glad that the *Freethinker* has "rolled away the mist of superstition" from your eyes while you are young.
- BERTHA WORRELL.—Pleased to hear that you and your son were so delighted with your first Freethought lecture at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening; also that you have found our writings so mentally helpful. We note your suggestion *re* the *Macbeth* announcement.
- J. W. R.—Received.
- WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- 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.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- 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 had a very good audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening—particularly so considering the abominable weather. Mr. F. A. Davies occupied the chair. Prior to the lecture Mr. Foote made a statement respecting the Boulter case, the substance of which appears over his signature in another part of this week's *Freethinker*. The lecture on "The Crescent and the Cross" was followed with deep attention and much applauded. A good many questions were asked and answered afterwards.

Mr. Foote occupies the Queen's Hall platform again this evening (November 26), his subject being "The Dying God," with special reference to Professor Fraser's new volume in the elaborated edition of his great and famous work, the *Golden Bough*. Prior to the lecture Mr. Foote will perform the interesting ceremony of "naming" a baby.

Mr. F. A. Davies pays Birmingham his first lecturing visit to-day (November 26). He lectures in the King's Hall, Corporation-street, at 7, on "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil." Local "saints" should hear him and bring friends along too.

The new South Shields experiment opened well on Sunday evening at the Victoria Buildings. Miss Cook and Miss Millett supplied the musical program and Mr. Bryce delivered an interesting lecture. This evening (Nov. 26) Mr. J. Charters, of Newcastle, will call attention to the Rationalism in Scott's fiction.

The Bradlaugh Fellowship holds its seventh Annual Meeting at the Shoreditch Radical Club, 43 New North-road, on Wednesday evening, November 29, at 8.30. After the meeting a "social" will be held. All Freethinkers are welcome. There is nothing to pay, and no tickets are required.

Mr. Lloyd takes the fourth of the Stratford Town Hall lectures this evening (Nov. 26), and the local "saints" should do their utmost to give him a first-rate audience and a hearty reception. The final (extra) lecture will be delivered by Mr. Foote on the following Sunday evening (Dec. 3).

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's lecture at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, December 3, will be on "The Fourth Century of Servetus: Heretic, Scientist, and Martyr."

The Kingsland Branch sends us through its honorary secretary, Mr. W. Gregory, a brief account of its past year's work; and it is a very creditable and encouraging document. Large outdoor audiences have listened to good lecturers, and although the collections are naturally not large in such a neighborhood the Branch ends up with £2 3s. in hand to start its next year's work with. Members' subscriptions are represented in the balance-sheet by the respectable item of £7 4s. 2d. Another item is a grant of

£2 2s. from the Central Executive—which is well-earned by such a hard-working Branch.

We are asked to announce that the Rationalist Peace Society holds a meeting at South-place Institute on Wednesday, November 29, at 8 p.m., with Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., in the chair; the speakers being Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. H. Snell, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., and Mr. G. H. Perris. Admission Free. The speeches are to be on "Foreign Policy and International Peace." We imagine, however, that the speakers will not commit the R. P. S. beyond its official manifesto.

Mr. Halley Stewart, the Chairman of the Secular Education League, in succession to Lord Weardale, is an extremely well-known Nonconformist of the old school of Dale, Richards, and Illingworth, and is opposed to every kind of connection or association between Church and State. He was a familiar figure in the House of Commons for many years; he lost his seat not long ago in the ups and downs of political strife. We hope he will regain it, or win another, before very long. Meanwhile we note that his article on "The Policy of Secular Education" in the April number of the *Nineteenth Century and After* has never elicited even a whispered reply. Mum's the word with all the leaders of "religious education in the public schools." A definite challenge was thrown out to the Rev. Dr. Inge (Churchman), and the Rev. Drs. Sadler and Shakespeare (Nonconformists), but they studiously decline to take it up. Two-sided controversy doesn't suit these gentlemen. They like it to be one-sided—their sided. Their silence in presence of a challenge from a man like Mr. Halley Stewart is a disgraceful display of cowardice or hypocrisy—or both. Probably both.

The editor of the *Nineteenth* has allowed the Secular Education League to reprint Mr. Halley Stewart's article in pamphlet form. This has been done and copies of the pamphlet are available for general circulation. Copies for free distribution can be obtained at the N. S. S. office, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., or of Mr. Harry Snell, the League's secretary, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C. We should like to see this pamphlet placed in thousands of judiciously selected hands. It is bound to do a great deal of good to the cause of Secular Education.

The Conflict between Diabolism and Science.

ONE of the most heartrending of all historical studies is that which relates to the past treatment of the mentally diseased. Dark superstitions inherited by the Christian Church from aboriginal and semi-civilised races, were developed by that powerful spiritual organisation into an elaborate supernaturalistic system, which regarded all forms of insanity as evidences and examples of demoniacal possession.

Both in ancient Rome and in classic Greece, thoughtful and humanitarian men had approached the problems of mental pathology from the standpoint of physiological science. Five hundred years before the alleged birth of Christ, Hippocrates proclaimed the great truth that all morbid mental manifestations are the outcome of brain disease. During later periods, Aretæus, Soranus, and Galen developed this fruitful discovery. In the third century of our era, Celsus Aurelianus taught not only that mental derangement is caused by brain disease, but that its treatment must be mild and gentle. Alexander of Tralles subsequently arrived at still more fruitful conclusions and taught men how to alleviate the sufferings of the victims of melancholia. But this noble band of humanitarians ended with Paul of Aegina, who was enabled, through the protection of the Moslem Caliph, Omar, to teach that lunacy must ever be treated as a malady amenable to mild and considerate treatment alone.

But the pale Galilean had triumphed, and the world grew cruel at his breath. The early Church steadily opposed itself to all sane treatment of the mentally afflicted. The Christian Scriptures were quoted as proving that all forms of madness were mainly, if not entirely, due to the possession of the lunatic by Satan or his satellites. And when we remember that Christ and his apostles all shared this savage superstition, the attitude of the Church

calls for no astonishment. From this point of view, Christians were quite reasonable when they instanced the power of their priests in casting out devils as a positive proof of the divine origin of their faith. So universal was this delusion that the ablest churchmen bowed down before it. Pope Saint Gregory the Great was unquestionably a great man when compared with the pigmies by whom he was surrounded. Yet he quite seriously relates how a nun, having eaten lettuce without making the sign of the cross, inadvertently gulped down a devil, and that when the priest commanded the devil to come forth, the spirit answered: "How am I to blame? I was sitting on the lettuce, and this woman not having made the sign of the cross, ate me along with it."

Against this stream of superstition protests were urged from time to time by a few comparatively enlightened men. But all in vain; the hallowed traditions of the Church, when coupled with undeniable texts of the Scriptures, reduced protesting reasoners to silence. As the Dark Ages grew darker, the spirit of superstition extended its tentacles. Michael Psellus, one of the metaphysical giants of the twelfth century, enriched the world's literature with a treatise on *The Work of Demons*. He contended that as the natural habitat of devils is that of fire and brimstone, they feel very chilly on earth and quite naturally seek a warmer dwelling place within the bodies of animals and men. Such fantasies as this were greedily accepted by the community, and despite the survival of the scientific spirit among the Arabian physicians and the Jewish doctors of the medical school of Salerno, long and cruel centuries were destined to pass away before any permanent return to sanity and humanity became possible. As a philosophical historian has said: "To deny Satan was Atheism; and possibly nothing did so much to fasten the epithet 'Atheist' upon the medical profession as the suspicion that it really did not fully acknowledge diabolical interference in medical disease."

Here and there amidst the general cruelty, merciful provision was sometimes made for the most abject of mankind. But the only genuine improvement made by Christians was stimulated by infidel example. In the fifteenth century, Arabian and Turkish care for the insane was vastly superior to that of the true believers. And Moslem example thus led to the establishment of asylums in Spain and Italy. But even in these, superstition drove out science; the asylums degenerated into mad-houses, in which demons were exorcised by means more frequently foul than fair.

Through many centuries the agency of Satan in causing insanity was part of the Church's doctrine. Evil spirits were supposed to enter the bodies of animals, and the "dumb creation" were constantly exorcised, tried, tortured, and put to death. A kindred superstition—at one period almost universally entertained—was that a human creature could be transformed into one of the lower animals. The wolves, which had been steadily driven into the more inaccessible woods and wilds by the encroachments of man, emerged from their retreats in winter, destroyed the flocks and herds, and sometimes carried off the village children. In such an atmosphere, weak-brained men and women were apt to dream of their bodily transformation into wolves or other animals. Thousands of these poor creatures were executed as lunatics, and countless sane people were convicted of the same imaginary crime and driven amid universal execration to the stake. Scarcely a parish in Europe was exempt from these judicial crimes.

Apart from the sceptical and scholarly Erasmus, the leading actors of the Reformation were as fully obsessed with the vagary of diabolical possession as the prelates of the elder Church. Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, Beza all championed it. It is related of Luther that he once advised the killing of an idiot child which he regarded as the direct offspring of Satan. For over a thousand years incalculable misery was inflicted upon those most urgently

entitled to our consideration and care. And when the light of science once more dawned upon man's understanding, the thunders of the Church were at once directed against all who dared to hint a doubt concerning Satan's responsibility for the diseases of the mind.

The sceptical, chatty, and versatile philosopher, Michel Montaigne, dealt a heavy blow at this baleful delusion. The genial scepticism which breathes through his essays generated a spirit of doubt in the minds of the French people. But even in his brighter day all outward appearances seemed to assure the permanence of theological barbarity. At this period a Protestant divine of Holland, the broad-minded Bekkar, wrote with studied moderation against the worst forms of the theory of demoniacal possession. But his fellow-preachers deprived him of his pulpit, and he barely escaped an ignominious death. Although the spirit of doubt and mercy was abroad, the severities of Church and State in the seventeenth century were more savage than ever. All efforts to infuse a more rational and humane doctrine were in Sweden, Italy, and particularly in Germany, most rigorously repressed. Even so, men and women whose supposed crimes would in earlier days have ended at the gibbet or the stake, were now occasionally sent by their judges to the madhouse. The frantic efforts of all the pulpits in Christendom were ineffectual in stamping out the growing heresy. Jurists and men of letters arose from time to time—notably in France—who followed in the footsteps of Montaigne. Malebranche penned an indictment of the delusion, Séguier persuaded the French courts to annul several enactments against sorcerers, D'Aguesseau informed the Parliament of Paris that in order to scotch sorcery they must cease cackling about it; he said that sorcerers were more sinned against than sinning. The Catholic theologian, Bossuet, however, led a powerful reaction, and all that humanism had thus far gained seemed irrevocably engulfed in the waves of sacerdotal obscurantism.

But science soon resumed her onward march, and in 1672 was witnessed the significant fact that although in that year the Parliament of Rouen ordered the burning of fourteen sorcerers, their execution was postponed for two years. Shortly afterwards the secular statesman Colbert checked these prosecutions, and ordered that such as were condemned must be treated as lunatics. In 1725 a French physician was daring enough to publish a book in which it was more than hinted that "possession by demons" was really insanity. Montesquieu and Voltaire did yeoman's service in the rapidly advancing cause of rationalism, but to this day the old superstition of demoniacal possession lingers among the more benighted peasantry of France.

In England the same warfare went on. John Locke was on the side of reason, but the clergy continued to control public sentiment. A very powerful reactionary appeared in the person of John Wesley. He was no more disposed to yield on this question than he was to abandon his belief in the reality of witchcraft. But the victory of reason was only delayed, and an Act of Parliament in 1735 banished the crime of witchcraft from the statute law of England.

In continental Europe, as a whole, the clerical army was routed, but, unfortunately, not put to shame. Even in Puritan witch-baiting America considerable progress was made. To France, however, must be conceded the glory of leading in the practical application of a mild and merciful philosophy. French physicians had long protested against the harsh treatment of the insane in the Hôtel Dieu. On the eve of the great Revolution various influential men denounced this evil, and in 1791 a commission was appointed to bring it to an end. The Church had been reduced to impotence by the liberation of the revolutionary forces. It was, therefore, unable to frustrate the beneficent labors of the great physician Pinel, who ended the reign of diabolism in France.

Working independently, though animated by the same humanitarian ideals, William Take during the same period started a crusade against the inhumane treatment of immured lunatics. Although Take's noble work was carried out in the cathedral city of York, the archbishop and his clergy stood sullenly aloof. Even so enlightened an organ as the *Edinburgh Review* sneered at Take and Pinel, and attempted to kill their philanthropic labors with spiteful ridicule. Less than a century since, in 1815, a member of the British Parliament declared that the newly established asylums were a disgrace to the nation. There remains room for improvement in the treatment of the mentally afflicted even now. But the above sketch of the history of this all-important question goes to prove that science and humanity are eternal blessings to mankind, while, on the other hand, the dark and sinister spirit of theology has ever presented a sad stumbling-block to the mental and moral emancipation of the human race.

T. F. PALMER.

The Bible and the Spirit of Revenge.

A Lecture by W. W. COLLINS at Christchurch, New Zealand.

THERE are many things in the Bible that must sorely perplex even the most devout reader and give rise to qualms of conscience even in the unquestioning believer. To some of these things it is necessary just now to draw attention. No time could be more opportune. In the recent Bible Tercentenary we have witnessed an attempt—an attempt destined assuredly to failure—to revive and give a new lease of life to that Bibliolatry which was so characteristic of bygone days. In the agitation maintained by Anglican and Nonconformist ministers for the introduction of Bible lessons into our State schools, we see how tenacious the hold of Bibliolatry still is. In the refusal of the Government to listen to any appeal for mercy on behalf of the Maori lad of seventeen, who was hurriedly sent to the hangman as a prelude to the Coronation festivities, we had an example of the vindictiveness, retaliation, and revenge which Bibliolatry has done so much to perpetuate, thus imposing on an age which boasts its enlightenment and its humanity the bloodthirstiness which characterised our ignorant and savage ancestors. Facts such as these are sufficient to suggest that the obliquity of moral vision which afflicts not only vast numbers of the people, but their religious teachers and even their legislators, is by no means the least of the evils attributable to the Bibliolatry, or rather to that particular form of it that may, without any abuse of language, properly be termed Bible worship. Experience has taught us that there is usually a considerable amount of ignorance concerning objects of worship. A French phrase has it that "no one is a hero to his own valet," the very obvious implication being that a close acquaintance is apt to destroy the illusion. "Ye worship ye know not what," is as true to-day as it ever was, and is certainly applicable to those, who both speak and act as though the Bible were, from cover to cover, a well of water pure and undefiled, the source from which we have derived every moral sentiment and which is the only safe guide to right conduct. It is simply inconceivable how men and women who are supposed to have some knowledge of the Bible, and how ministers who are, or ought to be, thoroughly conversant with its contents, can regard it as in any sense fitting as a moral text-book; the claim that it is the only book adequate to such a purpose can surely be made by those only who are wilfully blind to its blemishes, or else who have some ulterior motive to serve, and so sacrifice morality itself on the altar of self-interest.

Even from the standpoint of mere Theism the Bible can hardly be regarded as other than eminently unsatisfactory. It presents a view of God's relationship to man, which itself does violence to the

enlightened moral conscience; for it is a view often repellant and sometimes revolting, and this to such an extent that quibbling and casuistry have been frequently resorted to in order to justify conduct which the moral conscience condemns as utterly beyond justification. There are methods peculiar to Bible worshipers, and fortunately almost confined to them—they do not meet the difficulties the Bible presents, they “dodge” them, and “dodging” a difficulty is a much less satisfactory task than meeting it fairly and squarely. If it be a passage directly at variance with the plainest teachings of science they shelter themselves behind the assertion that the Bible was not meant for a scientific text-book. Any objection to the miraculous elements in the Bible is set aside with the assumption that God is the author of Nature’s laws, and being so, may suspend or overcome them by bringing into operation some higher law, whenever he may choose to do so. But, as has frequently been pointed out, these are mere evasions of the difficulties, and though they are evasions with which many Bible worshipers seem satisfied, they leave the difficulties absolutely untouched. But there are some difficulties with which no extent of “dodging” will avail, which will obtrude themselves, and which only the blindest of Bibliolatry can fail to see. The Bible gives so many and such detailed accounts of ferocious brutalities and revolting immoralities, to say nothing of contemptible dishonesties and petty meannesses, that if these were found in the sacred writings associated with any other form of religion, no words would be strong enough to condemn them, no irony too severe, and no sarcasm too bitter to assail them as useless for religious edification, and worse than useless for purposes of moral instruction. But this is not all, nor the worst, for the Bible not only records these things, but, in many instances, it makes God to be the instigator of them and an abettor in them, thus holding up God himself as subverting the moral order and violating the most essential of ethical principles. The enlightened moral conscience insists that power and responsibility are, and ought to be, equal; the greater the power the greater the responsibility. Probably the worst feature of the Bible is that it represents God as an omnipotent but irresponsible ruler. A God who does just as he likes with the creatures he has created. A God who “forms light and creates darkness,” who “makes peace and creates evil,” and who does this because he is “the Lord of all things.” A God who looks upon mankind as so much clay in the hands of a potter, and who asks “shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it—What makest thou?” A God who has a chosen people and who loves and hates whom he will. Nowhere does the Bible recognise God’s responsibility. This is, of course, the consistent Theistic view, but it is a view utterly inconsistent with, and indeed fatal to, the sound axiom that power carries with it moral duties, and that these duties are proportionate to the power possessed. No wonder that with such a view of God the Bible should represent him as the instigator of acts, and often as the doer of them, against which the conscience rebels as being cruel, revengeful, and unjust; in other words, of conduct which in man we should unhesitatingly declare to be immoral and wicked. No evil can be more disastrous than the blunting of man’s sense of right and wrong, and this must happen when worship is accorded a deity with whom right and wrong bear no relationship to our conception of them. Conduct is adjudged by us to be good or bad according as it promotes human well-being or human ill-being; and as John Stuart Mill long ago demanded, unless we mean by goodness as applied to God exactly what we mean when we apply the same term to man, we ought to find some other word which will better express what we really do mean. And this is of the highest importance, as we shall see.

Conscience is not what theologians have again and again declared it to be—“the voice of God

speaking within us,” “a divine monitor prompting us to approve or disapprove our own actions.”

CONSCIENCE IS THE VOICE OF MAN.

It is a faculty born of man’s relation to his fellow-men. As Adam Smith long since insisted, “We approve of certain conduct in others, and are thus disposed to approve the same conduct in ourselves: what we praise as judges of our fellow-men we deem praiseworthy and aspire to realise in our own conduct.” And it is this “voice of man ingrained in our hearts” which makes its vehement protest against the barbarous, brutal, and bloody deeds committed in the past by God’s priests and justified by appeals to God’s Word. Which bids us beware of accepting as “God’s Word” a book that literally reeks of blood from cover to cover. Which whispers more or less audibly in the heart of every man, telling him that Humanity alone is sacred. That anything which tends to degrade man, to set man against man, to promote enmity amongst men, and to keep alive the miserable differences which destroy unity and make universal brotherhood impossible is—

TREASON AGAINST MAN.

To-day that voice has gathered such force as to make it perfectly clear that the picture of a God which represents him as demanding sacrifices of blood, as being appeased by burnt offerings, whose wrath is assuaged by the smell of burnt flesh, and whose anger is kindled so that he takes revenge upon tens of thousands for deeds neither immoral nor wicked, is a picture so repellant in its barbaric savagery that at best it should serve only to remind us of the vast change which evolution has produced in transforming man from a superstitious savage into a rational and moral being. And the Bible does present such a picture. It is what we should expect when we remember that the Bible is largely made up of the recorded traditional beliefs, laws, and religious ceremonies of a people but little removed from savagery. Whose God reflects their passions, prejudices and even their vices, only in a degree exaggerated to correspond with the greater powers attributed to him. That the Bible sometimes enjoins mercy, forbearance, and forgiveness may readily be admitted; but the instances in which it does this are overshadowed by examples of fury ungovernable and revengeful, by direct commands to slay without pity, and to show neither mercy nor compassion. It is impossible to believe that such commands were given by a God who either was or could be “merciful, gracious and long-suffering, and abundant in goodness.” The prophet Nahum declares “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries and He reserveth wrath for His enemies,” and the Psalmist tells us, “He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.” Listen to the meek man Moses in his song setting forth God’s mercy and vengeance:—

“See now that I, even I am He, and that there is no God with Me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hands.

“For I lift up My hand to heaven and say, I live for ever.

“If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment: I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and I will reward them that hate me.

“I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood and My sword shall devour flesh, and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

“Rejoice O ye nations with His people: for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries.”

In a similar strain the prophet Jeremiah delivers the words of the Lord which came to him:—

“For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance that He may avenge Him of His adversaries; and the sword shall devour, and it shall be made satiate and be made drunk with their blood: for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.”

Who can read such a Psalm as the 109th, without

being struck with horror at its frightful appeal to God for vengeance:—

"Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

"When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

"Let his days be few, and let another take his office.

"Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

"Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg, let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

"Let the extortioner catch all that he hath, and let strangers spoil his labor.

"Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children.

"Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out."

This imprecatory Psalm has been ascribed to David, whom the Bible declares was a man after God's own heart, and it is clear that so far as the spirit of revenge is concerned he may well have been so. Did he not put his captives under saws and harrows of iron, and make them pass through the brick kiln? And did he not die with vengeance in his heart and blood on his lips, bidding his son Solomon to slay Joab, and to bring down the hoary head of Shimei to the grave with blood. Surely it begins to be plain that the morality of the Bible is not, and ought not, to be our morality. That if vindictiveness and revenge are bad in man, they are not, and never can, have been good in God. How true is it that—

"The name of God
Has fenced about all crimes with holiness,
.....the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
Unarmed age, and youth and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honor of His name."

And how could it be otherwise? What Huxley called "the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters," was a mistake only so far as man was concerned; for every crime it committed, for every groan it extracted, for every drop of blood it shed, God's example could be appealed to for approval, and his commands cited for its authority. The Rationalist is at least free from the blasphemy of attributing to God the bigotry and the bloodthirstiness of man; he knows that superstition has so tainted and corrupted the mind of man, that only by the most Titanic struggle can he deliver himself from its influence. Above all he sees the necessity for maintaining an unceasing combat with every form of teaching which destroys, or even weakens, man's sense of responsibility to his fellow-man; that it is to his fellow-men to whom his first and last duty is due, and that this truth is not only the alpha and the omega of true morality, but the beginning and the end of true wisdom. Turn where we may we see the effect of Bible teachings in blunting man's sense of appreciation of this great truth; it dims the moral perception of childhood, and subverts the moral sense of manhood so that its evil effects may be traced in the indifference to morality of the schoolboy and the defiance to it of the legislator; it is responsible for every tyranny, every crime, every barbarity inflicted upon man in the name of duty to God. And it is still the most potent force making for disruption and division, for preventing co-operation and brotherhood. We still carry both mental and moral traits of our savage ancestors; as Emerson aptly said, "our ancestors are potted in us," a truth painfully obvious in the fact that the educational results of social evolution have not yet eliminated some of the baser characteristics of our early progenitors, characteristics which more than anything else suggest and confirm our lowly origin. But man has risen, and the height he has attained is marked by his growing sense of responsibility. Not by chance, not by God, nor by supernatural means, has man been endowed with that sense, by the slow and painful experiences which have taught him that each man is an integral part of the whole he has learned to call

Humanity, and that for weal or for woe his highest and best interests are inseparably bound up with the interests of that whole. Dimly perceived before the gods were, growing in strength as the powers of gods declined, the sense of responsibility will attain its fullest power and bear its richest and ripest fruits when service to God yields place to service to man.

—*The Examiner.* (To be continued.)

The Little White Ship of the Years.

WHAT is life but a tremulous web of tangled little things;
Of little, pitiful joys with a butterfly's gray-white wings
And little, pitiful sighs with wild bee stings?

The little moments flit away like glancing April showers,
A pool of weeds in their trail, and a rainbow of crimson flowers.

The silent hours lie panting on the cool, strong breast of the day,
Panting with gladness, panting with pain, and panting their life away.

And the day moves quickly onward with its bundle of smiles and tears,
Away to the great black sea that waits for the hungry years.

And the little white ship of the years sweeps out to the great black sea,
Bearing the heart of you, my friend, and the weary heart of me

To the phantom shore of the phantom land that is Death and Eternity.

THOMAS MOULT.

THE TOWN.

I wonder now does God look down
Upon the town,
And what's He's thinking when He sees
The people swarming there like bees;
The alleys and the dirty lanes,
The moidher of the trams and trains;
The stately carriages galore,
And then the poor,
Who traipis in the bitter sleet
With broken boots upon their feet.
I wonder what He thinks at night
When angels set the stars alight,
And in the town the lamps are bright.
Does He watch gaming rascals cheat,
Old drunken villyains curse and fight,
While girls, grown shameless, walk the street?

Always God hears the Cherubim
Sing praise to Him.
But where He's sitting on His throne
Can He hear starving women moan?
Above the harping of each saint
Are little childher's voices faint?
Can He in all the music hear
Them sob for fear?
On dirty pavements babies sprawl
With them to mind them scarce less small.
It's sure God hears the cries of these,
And all the oaths and blasphemies
Of them that's never on their knees.
He hears the drunkards shout and bawl
Above the angels' melodies—
I wonder what God thinks at all.

—*W. M. Letts, "Westminster Gazette."*

New arrival (cautiously): "Can I put my valuables in the safe?"

St. Peter (loftily): "No necessity for that up here. What are you thinking of?"

New arrival: "Well, I've had so much trouble with some of these impregnable institutions down below that I feel kind of nervous."

Little Girl: "Your papa has only got one leg, hasn't he!"

Veteran's Little Girl: "Yes."

Little Girl: "Where is his other one?"

Veteran's Little Girl: "Hush, dear; it's in heaven."

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, G. W. Foote, "The Dying God."
STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism: A Great Gain."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, a Lecture.
ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and Walter Bradford. Newington Green: 7.30, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture. Highbury Corner: Wednesday, at 8, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Hall, 70 Argyle-street): Saturday, Nov. 25, at 8, J. Arthur, a Lecture.
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, F. A. Davies, "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil."
GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, 12 noon, "Christianity and Humanity"; 6.30, "Paganism in Modern Christianity."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dennis Hird, M.A., "The Origin of Society."
LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 6.30, E. Egerton Stafford, "The Gospel Jesus."
MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): Ernest Evans, 3, "Leaves from a Naturalist's Notebook"; 6.30, "Recent Discoveries in Science and their Application to the Problems of Every-day Life." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, second floor, Fowler-street): 7, Jos. Chapman, Violin Solos; 7.15, M. J. Charter, "The Rationalism in Scott's Novels."

FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT

By G. W. FOOTE.

First Series, cloth 2s. 6d.
Second Series cloth 2s. 6d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

BUSINESS CARDS.

Short advertisements are inserted under this heading at the rate of 2s. per half inch and 3s. 6d. per inch. No advertisement under this heading can be less than 2s. or extend beyond one inch. Special terms for several continuous insertions.

THE CLARION OVERCOAT.—Made from the new fleecy Blanket Cloth, in greys, browns, and mixtures. Double-breasted, wide lapels, storm collar, strap back, and cuffs, leather buttons, smart and comfy. 35s.—HARRY BOULTER, 108 City-road. 10 to 8 at 108.

Freethinker, Work, Mechanical World, Amateur Gardening, Famous Crimes, Tit-Bits, Strand Magazine. Several volumes of each, unbound, for Sale, cheap.—SMITH, 16 Fifth-avenue, W.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA.

An Address delivered at Chicago by

M. M. MANGASARIAN.

Will be forwarded, post free, for

THREE HALFPENCE.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

Ralph Cricklewood,

A Twentieth Century Critical and Rational
Exposé of Christian Mythology.

(IN THE FORM OF A NOVEL.)

By STEPHEN FITZ-STEPHEN.

A Well-Wisher of the Human Family.

388 pages, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.

Post Free.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY

(LIMITED)

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office—2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President: G. W. FOOTE.

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

Principles and Objects.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

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.

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

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

"I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects."

Name.....
Address.....
Occupation.....
Dated this..... day of..... 190.....

This Declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

Immediate Practical Objects.

The Legitimation of Bequests to Secular or other Free-thought Societies, for the maintenance and propagation of heterodox opinions on matters of religion, on the same conditions as apply to Christian or Theistic churches or organisations.

The Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, in order that Religion may be canvassed as freely as other subjects, without fear of fine or imprisonment.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the State Churches in England, Scotland, and Wales.

The Abolition of all Religious Teaching and Bible Reading in Schools, or other educational establishments supported by the State.

The Opening of all endowed educational institutions to the children and youth of all classes alike.

The Abrogation of all laws interfering with the free use of Sunday for the purpose of culture and recreation; and the Sunday opening of State and Municipal Museums, Libraries, and Art Galleries.

A Reform of the Marriage Laws, especially to secure equal justice for husband and wife, and a reasonable liberty and facility of divorce.

The Equalisation of the legal status of men and women, so that all rights may be independent of sexual distinctions.

The Protection of children from all forms of violence, and from the greed of those who would make a profit out of their premature labor.

The Abolition of all hereditary distinctions and privileges, fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood.

The Improvement by all just and wise means of the conditions of daily life for the masses of the people, especially in towns and cities, where insanitary and incommensurate dwellings, and the want of open spaces, cause physical weakness and disease, and the deterioration of family life.

The Promotion of the right and duty of Labor to organise itself for its moral and economical advancement, and of its claim to legal protection in such combinations.

The Substitution of the idea of Reform for that of Punishment in the treatment of criminals, so that gaols may no longer be places of brutalisation, or even of mere detention, but places of physical, intellectual, and moral elevation for those who are afflicted with anti-social tendencies.

An Extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure them humane treatment and legal protection against cruelty.

The Promotion of Peace between nations, and the substitution of Arbitration for War in the settlement of international disputes.

America's Freethought Newspaper.

THE TRUTH SEEKER.

FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT, 1873.
CONTINUED BY E. M. MACDONALD, 1883-1909.

G. E. MACDONALD EDITOR.
L. K. WASHBURN EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscription in advance	\$3.00
Two new subscribers	5.00
One subscription two years in advance	5.00

To all foreign countries, except Mexico, 50 cents per annum extra
Subscriptions for any length of time under a year, at the rate of 25 cents per month, may be begun at any time.

Freethinkers everywhere are invited to send for specimen copies, which are free.

THE TRUTH SEEKER COMPANY,
Publishers, Dealers in Freethought Books,
62 VESRY STREET, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

PAMPHLETS by C. COHEN.

- An Outline of Evolutionary Ethics ... 6d.
Principles of ethics, based on the doctrine of Evolution.
- Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity.. 1d.
- Christianity and Social Ethics ... 1d.
- Pain and Providence 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon street, E.C.

**A NEW (THE THIRD) EDITION
OF**

FROM FICTION TO FACT.

By F. BONTE.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

REVISED AND ENLARGED.
SHOULD BE SCATTERED BROADCAST.

SIXTY-FOUR PAGES.
PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

Being a Three Hours' Address to the Jury before the Lord
Chief Justice of England, in answer to an Indictment
or Blasphemy, on April 24, 1883.

With Special Prefaces and many Footnotes

Price FOURPENCE. Post free FIVEPENCE.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

SUNDAY EVENING FREETHOUGHT LECTURES

AT

Queen's (Minor) Hall,
 LANGHAM PLACE, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.
 DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1911.

(Under the Auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd.)

NOVEMBER 26,

Mr. G. W. FOOTE, "The Dying God."

December 3, Mrs. BRADLAUGH BONNER; 10 & 17, Mr. G. W. FOOTE.
 MUSIC BEFORE EACH LECTURE.

Front Seats, 1s. Second Seats, 6d. A Few Free Seats at Back.
 Doors open at 7. Musical Program 7 to 7.30. Lecture at 7.30.

Sunday Evening Lectures

AT

STRATFORD TOWN HALL

(Under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Nov. 26.—Mr. J. T. LLOYD: "Secularism: A Great Gain."

Dec. 3.—Mr. G. W. FOOTE: "The Crescent the Cross."

Admission Free. Doors open at 7. Lecture at 7.30. Collection.

THE POPULAR EDITION

(Revised and Enlarged)

OF

"BIBLE ROMANCES"

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

With a Portrait of the Author

Reynolds's Newspaper says:—"Mr. G. W. Foote, chairman of the Secular Society, is well known as a man of exceptional ability. His *Bible Romances* have had a large sale the original edition. A popular, revised, and enlarged edition, at the price of 6d., has now been published by the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, for the Secular Society. Thus, within the reach of almost everyone, the ripest thought of the leaders of modern opinion is being placed from day to day."

144 Large Double-Column Pages, Good Print, Good Paper

SIXPENCE—NET

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.