

# THE Freethinker

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*I know few Christians so convinced of the splendor of the rooms in their Father's house, as to be happier when their friends are called to those mansions, than they would have been if the Queen had sent for them to live at Court: nor has the Church's most ardent "desire to depart, and be with Christ," ever cured it of the singular habit of putting on mourning for every person summoned to such departure.—JOHN RUSKIN.*

## Religion.

THE other day I received a request that I would deliver a lecture under the title "The Religion of Freethought." I replied that so far as I knew there was no religion connected with Freethought, and that if there were I should do my best to get rid of it. My correspondent clearly saw nothing out of the way in the suggestion, and probably failed to appreciate my reply. And it must be confessed that in his use of the word "religion" he was not peculiar. Whereby hangs certain very pertinent reflections. To begin with, there is the necessity that so many people feel for a name of some kind. They probably feel that to be without a name under which their opinions may be ranged is equal to being without opinions altogether. And having a name seems to ease some persons of a feeling of responsibility. So long as a title has not been adopted, one is kept on the alert; but when a name has been chosen it seems to relieve one of care, and one's responsibility is, so to speak, handed over to the party name that has been selected.

There is also something consolingly respectable in having a name in which to wrap up one's mental furniture. In an enlightening piece of autobiography Professor Huxley told the world how he came to invent the word "Agnostic." All his associates, he said, were of one sort or another; all the other foxes had tails—he alone was destitute of a caudal appendage. And so he took thought and invented "Agnostic" as being descriptive of his position. Of course, there was another word—one that had seen much service—ready to hand. "Atheist" would have been quite as descriptive of Professor Huxley's position. But while it was not respectable to be without a name, it was quite as disreputable to have the name of Atheist; hence the invention of a new name which, while meaning the same thing in relation to Theism, was more respectable because unused, and because it appeared to separate the Agnostic from the much-hated Atheist.

And of all the blessed words with which people adorn themselves there is none so old and so eminently respectable as "religion." Everybody, or nearly everybody, claims a religion of some kind. To be without a religion seems to mark one off as something quite distinct from the rest of the human species, to snap at once the bonds that unite one to his fellows. No one likes to feel such a severance, even in name. When Mr. Birrell said that children would rather be wicked than singular, he used a generalisation that is almost as true of adults as it is of children. There is not an unconquerable aversion to having a religion that is different to that professed by many, because the religions of the

world are already of a very varied character, and there is companionship in isolation. But to be without a religion altogether! That involves a degree of isolation that few can, apparently, stand. The result is that, although people may leave the service, they show a curious attachment to the uniform. Although they have given up everything that is really and essentially religious, they yet feel they must lay claim to a religion of some kind. So it happens that we have a religion of Socialism, a religion of Ethics, a religion of Freethought, a religion of Secularism, and I should not be surprised if someone came forward with a religion of Atheism—if that has not been done already.

Now all this, in my opinion, is a mistake, and a very serious mistake. It is quite wrong to think that the really religious world is taken in by such tactics. The Freethinker, or Socialist, or Ethicist who calls his theory of life a religion is not causing the religionist to think more highly of him; he is only causing him to place a higher value on his own opinions. Imitation is taken, not as flattery, but as confirmation. The religious man is not induced to look more favorably upon Freethought opinions because they are labelled religious; all that happens is a strengthening of his own conviction of the supreme value of religion. If Freethinkers are to command the respect of the religious world they will have to show, not only that they can get along without religion, but they can dispense with the name also. If strength does not command respect, weakness will certainly fail to secure it. Most people have at least a sneaking regard for frank speech and fearless action. Moreover, those of us who are genuinely anxious that the world should be done with false ideas and mischievous frames of mind ought at least to take care that our own thought and speech are as free from ambiguity as is possible.

But there is another and deeper aspect of the matter. Language not only expresses thought, it also, in a very peculiar sense, governs and directs thought. As Locke says, "It is impossible that men should ever truly seek, or certainly discover, the agreement or disagreement of ideas themselves whilst their thoughts flutter about, or stick only in sounds of doubtful and uncertain significance." Quite a number of theological and metaphysical conundrums would lose their apparent importance if it were only realised that the words used are not only of doubtful and of uncertain significance, but often of no possible significance whatever. They are like counterfeit coins, which retain their currency only so long as they are not tested by a proper standard. The evil of these verbal counterfeits is that they deceive both those who use and those who receive them. Even though slovenliness of speech be not always the product of slovenly thinking, it tends in the long run to produce it; and those who realise the power of words in coercing thought need to be specially on their guard against using words which can only further confuse an already sufficiently confused public opinion, and strengthen superstitions that are already strong enough without our clandestine assistance. Of the evil of an incautious use of current words we have a striking example in the case of Darwin. Neither his expressions of regret at having "trucked to public opinion" by using the



term "Creator," nor his explicit declaration that the word was only a synonym for ignorance, have prevented religious apologists from crediting him with Theistic views on the strength of his unfortunate use of the word.

What useful purpose is served by retaining the word "Religion"? If we define religion in accordance with the meaning given it by recognised religious systems, and in the light of its historic significance, we are bound to exclude all those who speak of the religion of Ethics, the religion of Humanity, the religion of Socialism, etc. For they are lacking that which the world has hitherto looked upon as consisting the very essence of religion. And if we enlarge the meaning of the word so as to include all these—that is, so as to include everybody—we rob the word of all value. The chief function of a word is not inclusion, but exclusion. The main purpose of language is defeated when it is stretched so as to lose all precision of meaning. A definition to be of value must exclude something. Thus, to say that a thing exists, tells us very little. To say that it lives, tells us more, because it excludes all non-living objects. To say that it is a mammal, is still more important, because it excludes large numbers of animals. And to say that it is a human, is of more value still, because our information has become more precise and exact. Consequently, if we are to define religion so as to include everybody, we rob the word of all value. A definition that covers everything might as usefully cover nothing at all. Everybody being religious, so far as discussion or investigation is concerned, everyone might just as well be non-religious.

So far as one can see, it is nothing but sheer conservatism that leads to people hanging on to the name of religion; often they have rejected all that the word properly implies. Paine was to some extent unwarranted in speaking of his religion, since he retained an attenuated form of supernaturalism—in the shape of Deism. But in his saying "To do good is my religion," we are thrown back for an explanation upon the fact of religion having for so long dominated men's minds that it had become confused with a supreme rule of life. Of course, this is justifiable so long as we believe morality to be based on religion. But when we no longer believe this, why talk of the religion of morality when all we mean is morality alone? If we believe in the supremacy of ethics, why not say so? The statement is then clear and complete. But nothing is gained by tacking religion on to it—unless we count an appearance of conformity a gain. There is no more justification for speaking of the religion of Ethics than there is for speaking of the religion of boot-making. We might as reasonably speak of the religion of Anarchism as of the religion of Socialism. We are simply using the same word for things that have nothing in common. And on this, John Stuart Mill properly said:—

"A name not unfrequently.....passes from one object to another, until it becomes applied to things that have nothing in common with the first things to which the name was given.....so that it denotes a confused bundle of objects, having nothing whatever in common, and connotes nothing, not even a vague general resemblance. When a word has fallen into this state.....it has become unfit for the purpose either of thought or of the communication of thought."

An attempted justification is found in the plea that religion, having for so long stood for man's highest and best aspirations, by retaining the word we gain all the benefit of its associations. I must confess that I am very little impressed by this argument. In the first place, it is not quite clear that religion has always connoted man's highest and best aspirations. The associations have usually been of a very mixed character. They have included some of the worst as well as some of the best of human characteristics, and I am unaware of any psychological principle that would warrant us in counting on only the one class of associations being recalled. And even though the association of the word were of

the best, no Freethinker can believe that these associations belong to the essence of religion. Let it be granted that some of the best associations—home, family, loyalty to truth, to friend—cluster round the name of religion. This only makes it more imperative that we should be on our guard against its use. For if Freethought stands for anything it is for naturalism as opposed to supernaturalism. Our position is that in social and family life the power of religion is only a mistaken interpretation of normal social forces. Our chief work, nay our whole work, is to make this plain, for when this is done the neck of religion is broken. And how can we do this effectively while we continue the use of a word that, right through human history, has implied the very opposite? While we do this, we are keeping alive the very association we seek to destroy. If we really believe that human life is independent of religion, we can best convince the world of our sincerity by not only excluding the thing from our lives, but also by banishing the word from our vocabulary.

(To be concluded.)

C. COHEN.

### Misrepresentations.

BY implication a Secularist is an Atheist, and cannot reasonably be anything else. It is inconceivable that a believer in God could adopt and be satisfied with the doctrines of Secularism. He who believes in another world, and regards himself as having relations with it, would simply play the fool were he to confine his attention and care to this world. Holyoake was clearly mistaken in holding that Secularism did not imply Atheism, while Bradlaugh was perfectly right in the contention that "the consequence of Secularism is Atheism." Of course, *in practice*, the majority of Christians are Secularists, which is equivalent to saying that New Testament Christians are few and far between, if any exist at all. Let it be distinctly understood, then, that Secularism is practical Atheism, or a philosophy of life in which the supernatural is treated as non-existent, and morality as purely an affair of social life. Naturally, no theologian can be expected to look with favor upon such a system; and, naturally, too, such a man is incapable of resisting the temptation to misrepresent it. He seems to be under the necessity of telling lies about it. He charges its adherents with being "hopelessly satisfied with their box-of-bricks Universe." This is an exceedingly vague accusation, and as false as it is vague. To no Secularist is the Universe a mere "box of bricks." Let any divine peruse "The Woods of Westermain," or "A Reading of Earth" by George Meredith, and then repeat, if he dare, that Secularists are "satisfied with a box-of-bricks Universe." It is easy enough to sneer at "the members of rationalist and ethicist societies," by attributing views to them which they do not hold; but it is a shockingly mean and cowardly action, of which no true man can ever be guilty. As a matter of fact, for all we know of the Universe we are exclusively indebted, not to theology, but to science; and it is because they follow the latter and turn their backs upon the former that Secularists are said to reduce Nature to a box of bricks.

Another charge brought against Secularists is that they "stand so perplexed before all cases of moral failure." To be sure, "cases of moral failure" are not pleasant objects of contemplation; but the curious thing is that the theologian fails to perceive that, if theology is true, such cases are wholly inexplicable. If there is a God, the existence of evil is the damnation of his character. If the divine does not stand perplexed and confounded before cases of moral failure he ought to be thoroughly ashamed of himself. Why are there such cases? Would they not be impossible anomalies in a Universe governed by a just and good God? How can their existence be reconciled with the belief in omnipotent Love in



and behind all? The truth is that only Secularism is competent to explain and account for moral wreckages, and that it alone understands the art of dealing with them. Harold Begbie has written several books in which he records many wonderful spiritual miracles which the Salvation Army is said to have been instrumental in performing, by which cases of moral failure became notable cases of moral success. Harold Begbie is a notorious romancer, and his *Broken Earthenware* and *In the Hands of the Potter* are but readable romances woven by a man holding a brief for the Salvation Army. It is well known that the "conversions" which occur at the meetings of that strange organisation are usually of a frightfully sensational character. It is the delight of these converts to be ostentatiously paraded as samples of the mighty works done by the Army of Blood and Thunder. Prior to the time the Salvationists got hold of them they were all the very worst people on earth, but now, praise the Lord, they are rendered white in the blood of the Lamb, and as happy as the day is long. Does the theologian seriously believe that God moves in such outlandish way his wonders to perform? Does he really think that, because Secularists do not accept such "wonderful spiritual miracles" as genuine, he is justified in describing them as "proud and impossible people"? Would they not be fully as justified in applying the same language to him? At any rate, he is very much deluded if he imagines that Christianity is equal to the task of making them gradually conscious of "the spiritual infinities" in which they do not believe.

It is not to be inferred from the foregoing remarks that nobody is ever morally reformed under the influence of the Salvation Army, or any other religious body. We are quite prepared to admit that men and women may be and sometimes are transformed in character as the result of their association with Christian Churches; but we are bound to express the conviction that the reformation is always due to the operation of entirely natural forces. As one popular divine observes, "the conversion of such people is not at all miraculous"; and it is pertinent to add that there is nothing in the least mysterious about it. Character is always modifiable by means of social influences; and it is very significant that the miracles of Divine grace boasted of by Christians are invariably performed under the pressure of a perfectly natural environment. Apart from this natural environment, or independently of human agency, God has never been known to do a single thing. His activity, as well as his existence, is a gratuitous assumption; and this is the reason why Secularists do not believe in either.

What do the divines mean by "spiritual infinities," "spiritual realities," and "spiritual powers"? Where do such things exist, and how do they become known? When a man says, "I am conscious of possessing and exerting spiritual power," what does the language signify? We are all conscious of a power to think and feel and act; but is there any other power resident within us of which we ever become conscious? We trow not. The only spirit known to us is breath, and the only spiritual faculty of which we have knowledge is the faculty of automatic breathing. In any other sense, spirits, spiritual infinities, spiritual realities, and spiritual powers are theological inventions, the belief in which is dwindling with the advance of natural knowledge. Indeed, Mr. R. J. Campbell is sorrowfully obliged to confess that "the old-time confidence in the Unseen" is now almost wholly lost. "The whole spirit of the age is against it," he exclaims. That is true; but Mr. Campbell falls into obvious error when he adds:—

"Our very ideals suffer for the lack of it; the very hopes we entertain for the improvement of conditions on earth are darkened and impoverished by the fact that they have so little spiritual background.....It is plainly to be seen that the social movement, as we call it, is absolutely irresistible; it is coming in like a flood everywhere throughout civilisation; whether we like it or

not, we may as well make up our minds to the fact that it is going to transform the existing order from top to bottom. But what is the purpose in the minds and hearts of those who have the shaping of it? What are they consciously aiming at? What do they want, and by what means do they hope to get it?.....I have had some opportunity now of coming into contact with typical representatives of the movement in all its phases, and I notice in very many of them, as well as in the rank and file, an almost contemptuous impatience of spiritual considerations as such. If you ask them whether they have any interest in the question of man's eternal destiny you are not likely to get much satisfaction."

We are in full agreement with the reverend gentleman in the statement that the social movement is absolutely irresistible, and, as a movement, has nothing but contempt for spiritual religion. It was inaugurated in spite of a vigorous protest on the part of the Christian Church, and its progress has been simultaneous with the decay of supernatural belief. Naturally, Mr. Campbell deplors this incontrovertible fact. The social movement is a child of Secularism, and it has been conducted on Secularist lines. Robert Owen was a convinced Secularist, although when he first launched his plans for the cure of pauperism and misery that fact was not known. The plans, as such, were received everywhere with great favor, and Owen himself was most popular; but as soon as the public learned that he rejected the Christian religion, the original approval of his theories suddenly changed into suspicion and opposition; and ever since the movement has been essentially Atheistic in its character. That is the main fault Mr. Campbell has to find with it, and that is the only reason why he prophesies ill of it. Concerning those who are at the head of it, he says that "practically all their attention is concentrated upon the purely material aspect of their problem, and it hardly seems to occur to them to ask whether that problem could be illumined and simplified by widening the area within which it operates." A grosser misrepresentation of Secularism is impossible. The Secularist does not "neglect entirely, as though it possessed no value, the question of the development of his spiritual nature and relationship to the Divine," the truth being that he does not believe in a spiritual nature or in the Divine relationships, but is fully convinced that so-called spiritual religion is a discredited superstition. Mr. Campbell, like all his brethren, makes the mistake of taking it for granted that Secularists concentrate their attention on material interests, and neglect the cultivation of their higher and nobler faculties. Even if he had the slightest acquaintance with such a journal as the *New Age*, he would see how utterly wrong his view is. Does he not know that Shelley was an avowed Atheist, and yet is in the front rank of poetic geniuses? And is he not aware that Shelley was also a genuine philanthropist, who had a passion for reorganising society? Secularists are ardent admirers of imaginative literature, of poetry, of art, and of the beauty and charm of Nature. Their only objection to supernaturalism is that it is false, and exerts a deleterious influence upon character; and, according to Mr. Campbell himself, "the whole spirit of the age" is with them.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Ferrer's Property — Decree of Restitution to His Heirs.

ON October 13, 1909, Francisco Ferrer was shot in the trenches of Montjuich by virtue of a sentence of the court-martial, dated October 9, 1909, which condemned him, "as author and as chief of the rebellion" at Barcelona, to the punishment of death, and it was ordered that all compensation for damages caused by the burnings, sackings, and deterioration of property happening thereby should be met and discharged out of the property of Ferrer seized by the authorities.



From the outset, an influential body of opinion in Europe was formed in favor of the view that Ferrer was an innocent man unjustly done to death, and that view found expression in imposing demonstrations in most of the large cities throughout the civilised world and in an active agitation in the press. From the moment when the firing party had finished their fatal work, Ferrer became, for a vast number of people, a martyr and a hero who had perished for the cause of Rationalist education.

Ferrer's friends have never ceased to proclaim his innocence, and quite recently—on December 29, 1911—a remarkable judgment of the Supreme Tribunal of War and Marine at Madrid goes far towards endorsing and sanctioning that view. The judgment virtually amounts to a recognition that Ferrer was not in any way connected with the events of Barcelona; that none of the persons prosecuted in connection with the events acted under his orders, and that in none of the numerous trials (they were some 2,000 in number) that followed upon the insurrection has any trace been found either of the participation or of the instigation of Ferrer.

Before saying anything further on this startling revelation of what tragic mistakes a government can make under the influence of a jingo panic such as that which prevailed in Spain during 1909, let me at once point out that there is not the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of the decree which, in addition to these affirmations, has rejected the claims for compensation made against Ferrer's estate, and ordained the restitution to Ferrer's heirs of the property of the condemned man. Monsieur Georges Lorand, the Belgian Député, who, moreover, is the acting testamentary executor under Ferrer's will, has published a French translation of the full text of the judgment in *Le Ralliement* (Brussels, January 27). That translation is made from a copy of the original Spanish decree which M. Lorand received in advance of publication by the courtesy of one of the most eminent ministerial members of the Spanish Cortes. That original text, as received by M. Lorand, is before me, and, after minute comparison of the texts, I can confirm the accuracy of M. Lorand's translation. I may also add that the Spanish papers reported the debate of January 29 on the decree, which was initiated in the Senate by the Conservatives and Clericals, who, by the way, are not too pleased at the unexpected turn of the tide in Ferrer's case. They have angrily asked the Government to produce the full *dossier* of the case.

The decree is a long and complicated legal document, full of forbidding technicalities and recondite references to Spanish codes of law. In the present article, however, I do not propose to set forth a full translation of the decree, as a brief summary of its salient features will better serve the purpose of making its meaning clear. There is first of all the *Preamble*:—

Section 1 recites that "all the cases judged or pending before the ordinary jurisdiction and before that of War" had been brought under the purview of the tribunal.

Section 2 recites "that it does not appear from any of the aforesaid numerous trials that Ferrer had been concerned therein, nor, consequently, declared responsible."

In reference to this, it will be remembered that in the sentence of death upon Ferrer the Auditor-General declared that he considered the civil responsibility of Ferrer as "subsidiary." Inasmuch as Article 242 of the Military Code sets forth that "subsidiary responsibility" can only be exacted of "chiefs of rebellion under whose immediate orders the rebels were found who were guilty of common crime," it follows (though, of course, the decree does not expressly say so) that from the above recital in Section 1 Ferrer's guilt becomes extremely shadowy, even from the bare legal point of view. Ferrer's innocence, if not definitely stated in the decree, is therefore implied in it, for it makes the emphatic declaration that not the least trace can be found of

any species of participation on Ferrer's part in the events which called for compensation against his estate; and surely—as M. Lorand aptly points out—you cannot imagine an insurrectionary chief who takes no part in the insurrection and who issues no orders to the insurrectionaries.

Section 4 recites the decision of the judicial authority that in its opinion "the embargo placed on Ferrer's goods should be removed, because Ferrer was not a principal in any other case save that in which judgment was given for his execution."

Section 5 recites that "the public minister [the Fiscal] of this Supreme Council having, on December 26, 1911, declared his opinion favorable to the view of the judicial authority"—i.e., favorable to the restitution to Ferrer's heirs—a claim for compensation was suddenly sprung upon Ferrer's estate by Don Mariano Forondo, styling himself the Managing Director of the Barcelona Tramways Society [a Belgian capitalist concern controlled by clericalists]. The claim was for 229,435 pesetas for destruction to property and compensation for the damages to tram lines and rolling stock.

After the foregoing recitals of the Preamble ("Resultando") the decree proceeds to enumerate its separate and distinct findings which serve as the basis of its judgment; and these, though not expressly touching the capital sentence pronounced upon Ferrer, practically imply that the court-martial sentenced an innocent man to death. In the subjoined recitals reference will be made to these findings ("Considerando") under the respective numbers in which they are enumerated in the decree.

Section 1 cites Article 18 of the ordinary penal code, which defines "that every person penally responsible for a crime or contravention of law is also civilly responsible." From this dictum it is fairly to be assumed that Ferrer having now been declared civilly irresponsible in respect of all the cases (2,000 in number) that came under the cognizance of the courts, his penal responsibility—in view of the widespread destruction during the insurrection—evaporates *per se*.

Section 3, I may add, reinforces the above conclusion when it recites that—

"the subsidiary civil responsibility as regards the principal leaders in rebellion or sedition in virtue of the Article 259 of the Penal Code is so intimately inherent in the fact of criminal responsibility that the one cannot be separated from the other."

With this section it is important to collate Section 3 of the Preamble, wherein it is recited that, in all the cases therein referred to, "the recognised civil responsibilities arising therewith did not in any way affect Ferrer." The same recital declares that the claims therein were rejected, and that the dossiers of the cases of all other claims against his estate were referred to the Supreme Tribunal, and indeed were brought within its purview in making the present decree.

Recurring now to the findings (as apart from the Preamble) we come to the crucial Section 6. This had better be set forth at length:—

"6.—Considering that Ferrer, not having been condemned in any of the judgments given independently of that for which he was executed, and not having, in consequence, been declared criminally and civilly responsible for the crimes to which Article 242 of the Military Code relates, the embargo placed on his property cannot be maintained, neither on account of his trial for criminal rebellion (wherein he was not condemned to pay to the State the considerable losses it had suffered nor the losses incurred by the victims of the rebellion) nor on account of the other trials in view whereof the embargo had been continued, and in which trials he was not condemned either as directly or indirectly responsible."

After other formal recitals, the Tribunal proceeds to put on record its decision, as follows:—

"The embargo placed on the goods and property of F. Ferrer Guardia is removed, and these will be placed at the disposition of the person or persons who legally represent the succession to his estate, except so far as any obstacle may be made thereto by any judicial decision other than that made against Ferrer on account of military rebellion."



The net result of the decision must not, however, be exaggerated. It does not revise the sentence of execution; it does not expressly absolve Ferrer from guilt as "leader and chief of the rebellion." Such a finding, indeed, would have been beyond the purview of the Court in connection with the questions under its immediate cognizance. The decision was, in fact, an adjudication upon a claim or claims for civil damages against an estate confiscated, *ad hoc*, for the purpose of meeting these claims. Astounding to relate, the heirs of Ferrer now recover this confiscated property, and the fact that, as we have seen, no claim can be, or has been, substantiated against the estate of the reported prime mover and chief of the devastating insurrection of July, 1909, disposes logically, if not legally, of the figment of Ferrer's guilt. At the same time, it renders the revision of the sentence an imperative necessity, in order to rehabilitate the honor and good name of Spain.

Monsieur Lorand, in whose favor as testamentary executor this decree is issued, has now returned to Barcelona in order to receive formal possession of some of Ferrer's property at the hands of the Civil Governor, a fresh decree of the Tribunal having ordained that the books of the Escuela Moderna (a stock estimated to contain 115,000 volumes) shall be handed over to the heirs. As the alleged subversive character of the Escuela Moderna publications—in his latter days the ruling passion of Ferrer's life—were relied upon by the court-martial as aggravating proofs of Ferrer's guilt, this new decree adds fresh reasons for the revision of the trial.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### The Title "Reverend" Again.

It is some considerable time since, in these columns, I took the opportunity of pointing out the absurdity of the application of the title "Reverend" to a particular section of men. I now see that the *Rev.* Professor David Smith, D.D., has recently been answering an inquirer in the *British Weekly* who wished to know something about this title. The learned divine frankly confesses that he knows nothing about its origin, though he argues for its retention. It is, in his view, a very suitable description of a man who holds a direct commission from the Lord to look after his weak and erring fellow-beings. Incidentally, he mentions that Richard Baxter believed in the appropriateness of the title as applied to the preaching fraternity; and, evidently, what a man like Baxter advocated only a person with diabolical opinions would oppose.

But then, even in the ranks of pulpit thumpers themselves, and even on such a point as this, there is not absolute agreement. The Reverend Professor must know, unless he is too much engrossed in the works of ancient theologians, and, therefore, unaware of some important facts in contemporary history, that certain well-known preachers—almost, if not quite, as well known as the Reverend Professor himself—have in recent times condemned the use of the title and even the use of the distinctive clerical garb. Conspicuous among these men, who denounced what the Reverend Professor commends, was the late C. H. Spurgeon, who was a truly orthodox exponent of the fundamentals of Christianity, and who could preach hell-fire with the best of them. Why does the Reverend Professor ignore such an outstanding champion of the case against him regarding this title?

The Reverend Professor admits, moreover, that there is no mention of the title "Reverend" in Scripture; but then he in effect says a thing is scriptural if it is in accordance with the spirit of Scripture. Though the perplexing thing to the lay mind is, What is the spirit of Scripture? To-day we have a score of authorities answering this question in a score of different ways. It is another Babel on earth, and it is very doubtful if one sect

could understand the language of another sect, even if it would listen.

The historical fact is, that the title arose from priestly dictation and arrogance. When the Churches attained great power because Christianity became the chosen faith of the mighty ones of the earth, the priest waxed fat and kicked. Obsequious to the monarch and noble, he bullied and patronised the common herd. He dined and wined and jested with the wealthy, but groaned over and denounced the sins of the poor. This priestly spirit is not dead, but happily is now subjected to more restraints than formerly.

Names, titles, badges, and special forms of dress are no proof or guarantee of a particular kind of character or personality. In point of fact, the clerical costume has sometimes proved to be a difficulty to the criminal authorities, as it has on more than one occasion been adopted by clever rascals, some of whom have been detected and some of whom have escaped. Fortunately, the police are sufficiently secularised to be on their guard, and, as one of our national institutions, they are not readily deceived or hounded by clerical titles or dress. The press, too, with a healthy disregard of religious assumptions, are now, with as healthy indifference, dubbing the person who enters Parliament or other public sphere of secular work, as plain Mister.

But it has come to a sorry pass when the clerics find it necessary to cling so tenaciously to these petty, formal symbols of office. The substance of their power and influence is going, but they grasp frenziedly at the shadow. It is like a drowning man clutching at a straw. Even parsons are coming to recognise that a man to earn the respect and honor of his fellows must do something really useful for humanity instead of being a mere director of a talking and singing shop and an organiser of choir and Sunday-school picnics and mothers' meetings.

SIMPLE SANDY.

### Tales of Our Times.

BY A CYNIC.

I.

An English politician, travelling over the world with a view to studying the political institutions of other countries, and setting them right where necessary, arrived in a land where there were apparently no political institutions worth studying. He found that the government of the country was being carried on in accordance with a few simple sociological principles which no one thought of disputing, for they appeared to be regarded as absolutely axiomatic. Hence the machinery of government worked with perfect smoothness and silence, differences of opinion on political subjects were unknown, and the idea of "political parties" opposed to each other on questions of government was quite incomprehensible to the inhabitants of this favored land.

But while political controversy was thus unknown, the politician was astonished to find that controversies on the most elementary principles of mathematics were being carried on with great activity, and even heat, both in the daily press and on public platforms. He had known the *Thunderer*—the leading daily paper of the country—devote a three column editorial to a masterly defence of the opinion that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third; while the *Daily Noose*—so named from its dexterity in entangling its opponents in the meshes of argument—would next day have an equally weighty article maintaining that the truth of the *Thunderer's* contention depended entirely on the relative length of the sides, and that hence two sides might sometimes be equal to the third, and sometimes even less.

Similar discussions appeared in all the other papers, and the numerous public meetings at which such questions were debated also aroused much interest. One great meeting which the politician attended was held to pass a resolution that: "The square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is greater than the sum of the squares on the two other sides." Though the majority of the meeting seemed to be in favor of this view, there were many dissentients who interrupted the speaker and created much disturbance while maintaining that the said square was less, not greater, than the other two; and the stewards had the greatest difficulty in keeping order. In a rash moment the politician



shouted, "The square in question, gentlemen, is neither greater nor less than the other two; it is equal to them." This caused a terrific uproar; the whole audience turned on the politician like wild beasts, and the police barely succeeded in getting him out of the hall alive.

When he had recovered from his injuries and was able to get about again he happened to have a conversation with a very intelligent inhabitant of the country on the subject of their manners, customs, and ideas, with special reference to the extraordinary diversity of opinion prevailing among them on the elementary truths of geometry.

"It seems inconceivable to me," said the politician, "how a highly intelligent people like yourselves should be disputing with each other, and be holding opposite opinions on subjects which in our land no one thinks of arguing about. These truths are to our minds absolutely indisputable, for they are seen to be dependent on certain axioms to which the intellect spontaneously assents. I should really like to take you back with me to England, and to show you how any intelligent schoolboy there could give you the clearest and most convincing demonstrations on these questions which your ablest men are wrangling over."

But the politician quite failed to convince the inhabitant of the folly of his countrymen, though the invitation to visit England was readily accepted. "I shall esteem it a high privilege to visit your wonderful country, and observe the marvellous intelligence of its people," said the inhabitant.

They arrived in England on the eve of a General Election. Members of Parliament were rushing wildly about the country, pouring forth torrents of eloquence on hundreds of platforms. Fervid arguments for and against Free Trade, Tariff Reform, the House of Lords, Home Rule, Cowper-Templeism, and all the other sacred causes on which the voters of the United Kingdom are periodically called upon to adjudicate, rent the air. And a free and enlightened press daily scattered over the land diametrically opposite arguments and opinions on all these subjects.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the stranger who had accompanied the politician. "There seems to be some differences of opinion in your country, too. What on earth is it all about?"

"These are *political* controversies," explained the politician. "In politics there always are and always must be differences of opinion."

"Why?" asked the stranger. "Are the principles of truth and reason different in political science to what they are in other sciences? In my country political science affords no ground for controversy, and I cannot understand how an intelligent people like yourselves can possibly hold antagonistic opinions on such subjects. Political truths are to our minds absolutely indisputable, for they are seen to be dependent on certain fundamental axioms of sociology which the intellect accepts without question."

"Then do you mean to imply that politics can be founded on fundamental axioms which are beyond dispute, just as geometry is?" asked the politician.

"Certainly," said the stranger. "All science must be ultimately based on some truths which cannot be doubted; otherwise, it is not science. The fundamental axioms of geometry have, I own, not yet been grasped by us, just as those of politics have evidently not yet been grasped by you. We might, therefore, do well by trying to learn from each other."

"With pleasure," said the politician. "But I wish I had met you earlier. I am afraid there will hardly be time to get the fundamental axioms of politics into the heads of the British electors before this General Election comes on. And I must confess that we seem at present to be in as much of a muddle over the elements of democratic government as you are over the elements of euclid."

## II.

A Nonconformist minister, drawing a modest salary of four or five hundred a year, one day received the following telegram from across the Atlantic: "Will you accept pastorship United Free Particular Methodist Church 769th-street New York? Salary fifteen hundred a year. Cable reply immediate."

"This is distinctly gratifying, my dear," said the minister, handing the telegram to his wife. "God is very good to us, and I think we need have no hesitation in accepting this proof of his loving kindness."

"Splendid, my dearest," said his wife, beaming over the telegram. "I do love New York and the dear Americans. And we might even be able to keep a motor-car. Of course, you must accept."

So the minister telegraphed back the same afternoon: "Offer accepted. When wanted take up post?"

Next Sunday, at the close of his sermon, the minister thus delivered himself from the pulpit: "My dearly beloved friends, I have now an announcement of some importance to make to you—one which gives me some pain to make, and which I venture to think may be received by some of you

with similar feelings. I have been offered the pastorship of a well-known Particular Methodist Church in New York, and after much prayerful communion with our Divine Master, I feel that this is a call from heaven to a sphere of extended usefulness in God's service which it is my plain duty to accept. To our frail natures, my brethren, the call of duty is oftentimes exceeding hard to obey, and so it has been with me in this case; for to sever my connection with a flock I have grown to love, and who I fain would hope have learned to love their pastor, will indeed be a sore trial. But in God's holy cause, to which our lives should be devoted, personal considerations are, of course, as nothing, and even the promptings of human affection must be set aside."

At the conclusion of the service many members of the congregation approached the reverend gentleman and shook hands feelingly with him, expressing their mingled and somewhat vague emotions in broken tones; and some ladies even found it necessary to apply their handkerchiefs to their moistening eyes, so sadly yet so sweetly did their pastor address them.

But while looking over the telegram once again in his study the minister was suddenly assailed by a horrible misgiving. He at once despatched another cable message across the Atlantic to the following effect: "Is statement salary pastorship Particular Methodist Church in sterling or dollars?" The reply came back in one single word, but that word was as a piercing arrow barbed with the bitterness of blasted hope. It was "dollars."

"My dear," said the minister, handing the telegram to his wife, "this is most disconcerting. I really wish that first message had been more explicit, and that I had not been quite so hasty. It is really quite impossible to accept this, you know."

"Absolutely," said the good lady with decision, glancing at the telegram with a severe frown. "I'm astonished at their Committee offering you anything of the kind. You must cancel your acceptance at once."

So the minister sent yet a third message across the Atlantic, namely: "Acceptance withdrawn, Regret cannot arrange to relinquish present pastorate."

But there still remained the delicate task of making things right in the eyes of his congregation, and this cost the reverend gentleman some anxious thought. However, he proved fairly equal to the occasion when, at the conclusion of next Sunday's sermon, he thus addressed his flock:—

"Dear friends, since announcing to you from this pulpit last Sunday the offer I had received of a pastorate in New York, I have been the recipient of what I can only describe as a direct manifestation of God's intimate presence and guidance. Soon after I had spoken to you and received your touching expressions of love and friendship, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of deep sorrow and melancholy. Strange misgivings beset me, and doubts as to whether I was really acting for the best. Perhaps my new opportunities for usefulness in God's service might not be as great as I expected. I had a disturbing presentiment that I might be throwing away the rich rewards of grace and blessing I enjoy here, and be going to a poorer field of work where the harvest may be neither so ample nor so certain. Unable to rid myself of these fears, I communicated with the authorities of the New York Church, and the doubts which had been so strangely suggested to me were amply confirmed. I then sought divine guidance in this harassing uncertainty, and my doubts instantly vanished. I felt convinced that my duty lay *here*—here, where for so many years I have reaped the rewards of your love and esteem, of your sympathy and appreciation. Thus, as Abraham of old was called upon to make a supreme sacrifice, and was informed at the final moment that the sacrifice would not be required of him, so have I been dealt with, and I thank God that my poor and trembling faith has stood the test. I shall, therefore, my dear friends, continue to minister to you in this church as long as my humble efforts meet with the generous response you have always given them."

This was followed by more fervid hand-shakings and many expressions of satisfaction and gratitude that the reverend pastor's ministrations were, after all, not to be lost to his faithful flock. Indeed, this incident greatly added to the veneration and esteem with which the reverend gentleman was regarded by the congregation. It was felt that a man whom God had thought fit to subject to a trial of faith similar to that of Abraham must be far above the average of Nonconformist ministers.

## HOW IT BEGAN.

When Adam was evicted from his earthly paradise,  
Just because he ate the apple, unforgiving,  
He grumbled at the woman, though she paid the greater  
And blamed her for the higher cost of living. [price,



## Acid Drops.

"Joseph Cook, of Boston," was once famous. He lectured and wrote on what are facetiously called Christian Evidences—a subject that has never commanded the talent of a first-rate writer since Paley. Not that Paley and Cook were really mentionable in the same breath. Cook was a noisy mediocrity,—one of a species that are produced in *excess* by the United States of America. Bryan himself is just another Cook with a wider field of operations. Talmage and Torrey are lesser lights of the same fraternity. But let us come to our point. Joseph Cook answered Matthew Arnold's scepticism in his crude Yankee way by declaring that our great critic, and by no means minor poet, was flat on the top of the head where the bump of veneration ought to be. That was the explanation of how Arnold came to differ from Cook; and Cook offered it to the world with a perfectly serious face; he was not in the least acting or pretending,—he really believed it. He was confident that he had disposed of *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* by one stroke of his own brilliant genius. Arnold was flat-headed. That explained everything. There was a *per contra*, of course, but the Boston oracle did not see it. Cook was fat-headed. Which also explained a good deal.

Joseph Cook offered similar explanations of the scepticism of other great writers. George Eliot, for instance. And that pious "boulder" Talmage followed suit. He was checked, however, by Ingersoll, who delivered what has turned out to be the world's verdict on that woman of genius. Cook has gone to the grocers'—Talmage has gone to the greengrocers'—and George Eliot is still on the shelves of all respectable libraries. Her books are a part of the atmosphere of humanity in every portion of the English-speaking world.

One would think it impossible to plagiarise so widely-read an author as George Eliot without instant detection. Her very style should stand out against that of the mob of ladies and gentlemen who are simply "something in the press" and merely write for the hour and the day and address themselves only to the readers of the hour and the day. What was our surprise, then, at seeing one of George Eliot's most characteristic passages attributed to a mere chatty superficial writer like Mr. G. W. E. Russell. That gentleman has written another book, which was reviewed flatteringly (of course) in the *Daily Chronicle* by Mr. A. E. Fletcher, who remarks that "Mr. Russell says finely:—

'The growing good of the world is mainly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.'

"This passage might be set to music," Mr. Fletcher observes. Very likely. But however did he fancy that it was written by Mr. Russell? In a whole thousand years of effort and practice Mr. Russell could never come within measurable distance of it. That "finely said" passage of Mr. Russell's, which ought to be "set to music," is lifted bodily from the last paragraph, and indeed the last sentence, of *Middlemarch*,—and spoilt in the lifting; for George Eliot did not write "mainly dependent"—which is false, and is contradicted in the final clause,—but "partly dependent," which is profoundly and vitally true.

It is curious how little real knowledge even of English literature exists amongst journalists. There may be some explanation, though there cannot be an adequate one, of Mr. Russell's performance. Perhaps the printer has left out some inverted commas. But what excuse can be offered for Mr. Fletcher's performance? To mistake George Eliot for George Russell is—well, we will let every reader fill in the epithet for himself.

What amuses us is that writers of this calibre look down on the bold, bad, half-educated editor of the *Freethinker*—who is now correcting them, as he might often do if he condescended to the task. There was another writer who did not look down upon us, because he understood us better; but he was a man of genius—and his name was George Meredith.

We dropped a brief note of some eight or ten lines to the *Daily Chronicle*, affording it an opportunity of correcting this Russell-Fletcher blunder; but our contemporary prefers inaccuracy to being corrected by an Atheist. George Eliot, of course, counts for nothing in the matter.

"The thinkers of the East, while receptive of our civilisation, are becoming critical of our religion." This is from a leading article in the *Methodist Times*, and it is only saying what we have ourselves said scores of times. The editor goes on to ask what will be the outcome of this, and predicts that if we only export Materialism and import neo-Heathenism, "we shall destroy the fairer prospects of the East, and shall have our own morals poisoned at the heart." And in a delightfully stupid passage he reminds his readers of the example of Rome. "Rome," he says, "conquered the near East, but its own simple and virile pieties were destroyed by the ceaseless inflow of Eastern superstition." Quite so; but the truth is only half expressed. The whole truth is that Christianity—or the materials out of which Christianity was formed—was a part of this inflow of Eastern superstition, and helped in no small measure to destroy the "simple and virile pieties" of Rome. The best thinkers of Rome saw this, and fought against it. But for Christianity, Roman civilisation was not so far gone that it might not have recovered. With Christianity added, the balance was decisively turned in the wrong direction. Result—nearly a thousand years of stagnation and degradation.

The Rev. Harry Bisseker has discovered a very real danger to Christian missions in the East. He points out that there are a large number of intelligent Hindoos and other Easterns who come to England for educational purposes. At home, the missionaries tell them of the truth, the greatness, and the purifying power of Christianity. Once here, they are brought face to face with unbelief. They find that "the truth which is so confidently proclaimed by the missionary abroad is as confidently denied by many of his own fellow-countrymen at home." In addition, they see and visit our slums. The result is that they return home without being convinced of either the value or the truth of Christianity. More; he rounds on the missionary, and tells him that he has no wish for Christianity in India after what he has seen in England. What is the missionary to do? The way out seems to us simple. Let him explain to the Hindoos that all those who doubt Christianity are people of loose lives, who reject Christianity because of their wickedness. He can explain also that the slums and the vice of our English civilisation are all the products of Atheism, and were it not for Christianity things would be ten thousand times worse. There are plenty of ways in which the situation may be met by a real missionary, and those who are not equal to the occasion—they would be very few—ought to be recalled at once.

That insufferable person, the Rev. A. J. Waldron, was for some time advertised as having at one time been an Atheist. Now we see, from an interview published in the *Christian Commonwealth*, the statement is modified to one that he "for years studied to become an Atheist." This revised version is as funny as the original one was false. How on earth anyone could study to become an Atheist we haven't the slightest idea. Of the nature of the process we have no conception whatever. And we are certain that such a notion could never cross the mind of anyone—except those of the type of a Waldron; and it would never receive publicity anywhere but in the columns of a religious newspaper. We wonder what on earth the man thinks Atheism is? Or how does he think people become Atheists? "Studying for Atheism" is an expression that expresses the very genius of imbecility. And the *Christian Commonwealth* assures its readers that Mr. Waldron is a force in the religious life of South London. His labors are in the only field for which they are suited. So much is very evident.

The Berlin correspondent of the *Christian World* does not mince matters in connection with the recent Socialist victories in Germany. He has secured the views of all sorts of persons, and he says there is "a wonderful unanimity" in the opinions expressed by every Christian worker in every part of the Empire. He also quotes one authority as saying:—

"I do not believe that a single believing Christian gave his vote to a Socialist at the last election. The four and a quarter million men who voted red at the elections were out of all sympathy with religion; were, in the vast majority of cases, actually hostile to the Churches and their teachers. Not only is the tremendous increase in the Socialist vote an indication of growing political dissatisfaction and growing political unrest; it is also an infallible indication of hostility to all that the Churches stand for.....Roughly speaking, we may say that the 110 deputies in the Reichstag are a body of Atheists, and that the four and a quarter million voters at their backs are practically the same."

The correspondent admits that this four and a quarter million Atheists comprises men whom "it is safe to regard as among the finest elements of the nation," but he thinks



it well that the British Christians should ponder the Socialist victories before they declare their sympathies with them. Quite so; and we believe they have pondered. But what are they to do? They are preaching Socialism of a kind at home, and they could hardly remain silent in the face of Socialist victories in Berlin. So they adopted the good old hypocritical British plan of praising them as illustrations of the growth of true Christianity. That organ of the New Theology Conscience, the *Christian Commonwealth*, for instance, would never inform its readers of the truth pointed out by the more honest *Christian World* writer. They would prefer to ascribe the victories to the influences of "Liberal Christianity." And when the Christians have done pondering, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. Keir Hardie, and others might take a turn. They might ask themselves how much they really benefit their cause by coquetting with the churches and chapels, and, when they do so, making themselves ridiculous to really thoughtful people of all classes. Straightforwardness might, after all, pay as well in England as in Germany, if it were only given a fair chance.

Mr. Arthur C. Benson, writing on Shelley in the *Church Family Newspaper*, says that he "came very near indeed to the highest Christian conceptions of life." Poor Shelley! When he was alive the Christians damned him to the lowest hell; now they try to smuggle him into their wretched heaven. He despised both.

Fixing up lists of the Fifty Greatest Men is only a pastime, but Mr. W. T. Stead—who is a very clever journalist—has induced several more or less distinguished persons to engage in it. One thing is noticeable; whoever else they exclude, they all include Shakespeare. That's a settled point now all over the world. Shakespeare was the greatest of the sons of men. If there be a God, and any revelation, it must be through the supreme genius who "filled Avon and the world with light." And that supreme genius was a Free-thinker. Of course.

Sir Hiram Maxim's list seems to astonish Mr. Stead. It includes "Thomas Paine, liberator of man's mind," and "Colonel Ingersoll, killed the Devil and abolished Hell." "Sir Hiram," Mr. Stead says, "is one of our few public men who are vehemently opposed to religions of all kinds." In a letter to Mr. Stead he asserts that "neither Moses nor St. Paul ever existed." Mr. Stead prints this with a note of exclamation. Yet it is probably true.

We are sorry to see Mr. Stead repeating in the *Review of Reviews* what he said at the South-place Institute meeting of protest against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws; namely, that "Christ was crucified on a charge of blasphemy." He was arrested and charged with blasphemy, but the charge had to be altered to one of sedition when he was taken before Pilate. He was crucified for setting himself up as King of the Jews. Mr. Stead has surely not forgotten the inscription on the cross.

The President of the Baptist World Alliance has received a surprise. A preacher, it appears, inquired what a certain business man thought about Christ. He replied that he never did think about Christ. And the President marvels that a man could date his letters A.D., etc., and yet does not think of Christ. The moral is not very obvious, unless it be that people don't bother about Christ as much as people imagine. But we must confess that a business man who dates his letters A.D. is rather a curiosity. Such exactitude is very unusual. Of course, we should be cautious; and on a bill dated, say, 1900, but on which the A.D. had been carelessly omitted, it would serve anyone right if they were charged interest for 1900 B.C. But in the end we are left wondering why anyone should think of Christ when they date a letter. How many think of the great Augustus when they write August, or of Julius Cæsar when they write July? And what does the Calendar owe to Jesus, anyway? Perhaps Mr. Macarthur will say.

Mr. Macarthur is convinced that Jesus Christ was not a man. Why, we have been saying that for years. We are pleased at finding a President of the Baptist World Alliance a convert to our teachings.

The Convocation of Canterbury has just been discussing the "obey" clause of the Church of England marriage service. Some said this and some said that—as if it really mattered at this time of day what any of them said. But a special line must be given to the Dean of Canterbury. This gentleman unconsciously added to the gaiety of the occasion. "The New Testament," he said, "must be their

standard and law, otherwise they would have no guide but their reason." Fancy the terrible fate of people left to the guidance of reason! The very thought of it makes one shudder.

This same Dean of Canterbury, however, applied his human reason to the matter of the imprecatory psalms. He objected to this verse in particular: "That thy feet may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies and the tongue of the dogs may be red through the same." He told Convocation that he thought this would be better omitted. Thus the Dean of Canterbury himself has to fall back on reason in the last extremity.

Another matter talked about at the Convocation was the threatened coal strike. The Bishop of Birmingham signalled himself in this palaver. He declared that the Labor leaders looked to the Church to pray over these matters, but the intervention of the Church "would probably to-day be considered an anachronism." That's true. It would look like Noah's Ark in the midst of a fleet of ocean liners.

Dean Inge, who has been christened "gloomy" by more facile preachers, has just been saying that the population question must not be shirked. Evidently some progress has been made since Charles Bradlaugh was sentenced (though he didn't serve it) to six months' imprisonment for publishing a pamphlet on that subject.

The *Review of Reviews* asks, "When a Man Dies What Happens?" Generally a funeral.

Mr. Winston Churchill (the American one) is a novelist, and he seems unable to forget his profession when writing on other topics. In an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* on modern government and Christianity he says that people cry now, not for parties, but for "a good man." "And what is a good man," he asks, "but a Christian?" How romantic!

Mr. F. H. M. Parker, writing in the *English Historical Review* for last month, suggests that William Rufus was not killed accidentally in the New Forest, but was done to death by the Church party, who covered their crime with the old story that he died by the judgment of God. Mr. Parker says:—

"Beyond doubt William Rufus possessed many enemies, and had made himself specially obnoxious to the Church. Possibly through mistrust of the clergy, he was a Freethinker; and it cannot be denied that in his spoken opinions on religion he was tactless and brutal in a way that put a weapon into their hands. And there are many signs which go to indicate, not merely that William Rufus was slain of malice, but that there existed a powerful and elaborately organised conspiracy to compass his death. The decisive action Henry took suggests that he knew his part and was ready to play it. The conduct of the ecclesiastics, in burying William without the rites or even the decencies of Christian burial, seems needlessly offensive unless they had their cue."

Hume noted the fact that William Rufus had "offended the churchmen" who naturally gave him a bad character, according to a professional practice of theirs; but, while accepting most of it, Hume recognised his "courage and vigor." It is worth remembering that he built the Tower, Westminster Hall, and London Bridge.

The Bishop of Oxford has been delivering four lectures in his own city on "The Reconstruction of Belief"—which is a very strange subject after nearly two thousand years of the only true religion. On the question of miracles his lordship said that they were instances of God using nature for a moral purpose. Will he kindly tell us what was the moral purpose of the Gadarene swine miracle, and whether the moral was intended for the pigs or the devils? We beg to assure his lordship that we are not joking. We are seeking information.

Your hear much of conversion nowadays: but people always seem to think that they have got to be made wretched by conversion,—to be converted to long faces. No, friends, you have got to be converted to short ones; you have to repent into childhood, to repent into delight, and delightomeness. You can't go into a conventicle but you'll hear plenty of talk of backsliding. Backsliding, indeed! I can tell you, on the ways most of us go, the faster we slide back the better. Slide back into the cradle, if going on is into the grave: back, I tell you; back—out of your long faces and into your long clothes.—*John Ruskin.*



### Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, February 25, Birmingham Town Hall; at 3, "Maeterlinck on Death"; at 7, "Atheism and Morality."

March 3, Liverpool; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall; 24, Leicester.

April 14, Glasgow.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 25, Glasgow. March 3, Queen's Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 25, Queen's Hall. March 3, West Ham; 10, Manchester; 31, Queen's Hall. April 21, West Ham.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £77 11s. 10d. Received since:—A. Clarke, 10s.; Henry Lupton, 10s.

MISS H. PANKHURST is the new secretary of the West Ham Branch. Her address is 128 Humberstone-road, Plaistow, Essex.

P. W. BRAUNE.—You read our paragraph carelessly or perversely. "Percival" would not have received a moment's attention from us if his rubbish had not appeared in a journal which is severe on "blasphemers" and has refused to insert an advertisement of the *Freethinker*. We are far from wishing, however, to deprive you of the enjoyment of his "piffle"—as you call it yourself. We have no objection to anyone's reading being "varied." Donkeys eat thistles for a change—and perhaps as an aid to digestion. With regard to the other matter, we do not agree with you that modern Christian "apologetic literature raises new questions." All it raises is new verbiage. Those who think otherwise are ignorant of the history of what is often very oddly called philosophy. Ingersoll's lectures and writings, which you appear to consider too antiquated to be advertised in our pages, will retain their interest and value long after you are able to read them.

A. W. HURRY.—You surely did not expect any real reply from the Bishop of Newcastle. Your intention was generous, anyhow.

J. CHISWORTH.—Sorry we cannot answer such questions by letter. The Anglican Church is entirely founded on and controlled by Acts of Parliament. It is the creature of the State in every way. Its very Prayer Book was drawn up by a State Commission and imposed by the State upon the people. Every civilised country holds the properties of Established Churches as State properties. Revenues of "livings" (a good word!) accrue to the separate incumbents during life, and Parliament could enact that no new incumbents should be appointed. All the funds administered by the Ecclesiastic Commissioners are clearly public funds. Tithes also are obviously public funds. On the moral side, the Clergy Discipline Act, passed by Gladstone, only applies to the Church of England. It alone is the State Church.

F. C. HOLDEN.—Thanks. It is interesting. But we suppose it is a reproduction, not an original.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for weekly batch of cuttings.

LESLIE ANDERTON (Failsworth).—Sorry to say impossible. April dates have been booked for Queen's Hall some time, though not included in public list.

C. H. DOOLEY.—Passed over to shop manager, to whom business orders and remittances should be sent direct.

H. HEAD.—The reference was to the 72nd Canon of the Church of England.

B. CLOWES.—Yes, everything relating to the purely business side of the *Freethinker*, including names and addresses for six consecutive weekly free copies, should be sent to the shop manager. Thanks.

A. FREEMAN.—Tuesday morning is too late for letters. If you cannot deal yourselves with a little clique of half-a-dozen rowdy lads on Streatham Common you should consider the advisability of retiring. We know, as well as you do, how the police should act; but it is foolish to expect them to do it. Facts have to be reckoned with, however disagreeable.

LUCIFER.—No doubt the many copies of the *Freethinker* you have judiciously circulated has helped our circulation in that locality. It is difficult to say "lo here" or "lo there," but some seed is bound to fructify. We note your view that "there must be an unlimited amount of brains behind the *Freethinker* as it gets more interesting with each number." Envious people call it vanity on our part to note such things. But it is very far from that. It is a large part of our reward that our work tells if it doesn't pay.

V. WHITTY.—Will answer you next week.

H. SMALLWOOD.—You will see they have been useful. Thanks.

J. KING.—Bruno pleaded that freedom of thought and speech should be allowed to philosophers without their being charged with heresy to the Church's dogmas. This attitude was taken up by the late Professor St. George Mivart, but he got excommunicated as Bruno got burnt.

A. GRIFFIN.—You will find the matter referred to in our *Darwin on God*.

C. D.—Surely one may show even contempt for one whose preaching and practice are such poles asunder. With regard

to "laws of nature" we may think it a very mischievous expression without being able to kill it or banish it. It has passed too strongly into vogue for that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had good meetings at Manchester on Sunday, in spite of many counter-attractions, and his lectures were very warmly applauded. Some old friends—such as Richard Johnson—were missing in consequence of the late variable and treacherous weather. We wish them all a speedy return of health.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (Feb. 25), afternoon and evening, in the large and famous Town Hall at Birmingham. As this huge place will take some filling, and the amount available for advertising the meetings is limited, it is to be hoped that the district "saints" will do all they can to give them publicity among their friends and acquaintances. Mr. Foote's subjects are fresh and attractive. That is his side of the business. As for the local press, we suppose it will act as usual by boycotting the lectures,—saying nothing about Mr. Foote's visit by way of announcement and nothing afterwards by way of report. But he does not depend on the press for his audiences; and there is some consolation in knowing that what the press does not make the press cannot unmake.

Freethinkers travelling from a distance to hear Mr. Foote's lectures at Birmingham will find tea provided in one of the Town Hall anterooms at a moderate charge.

Mr. Cohen lectures at Glasgow to-day (Feb. 25) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, near the municipal law courts. We hope the weather will be favorable enough to let him have the large audiences he deserves. Mr. Lloyd lectures this evening at Queen's Hall.

Mr. Cohen's book on Determinism and Free Will is selling (relatively) well. Although published by the Walter Scott Company, and sold also by the Pioneer Press, it is issued by the Secular Society, Ltd. Similar volumes, dealing with the leading questions in controversy between Atheism and Christianity, are projected, and will be issued from time to time. Mr. J. T. Lloyd is writing one on the question of Immortality.

The Secular Education League holds his Annual Meeting at Caxton Hall (Room 18) on Wednesday evening, March 6. Mr. Halley Stewart, J.P., President of the League, will take the chair punctually at 8 o'clock. Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. George Roberts, M.P., Rev. Donald Holo, Sir Henry Cotton, Mr. G. W. Foote, and others will address the meeting. "Friends of Secular Education," the League's ticket advertisements says, "are asked to make a special effort to fill the Hall." We earnestly endorse that appeal. It should be added that the Annual Business Meeting for members is to be held in the same Hall at 7.15 prompt.

Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner has been informed that Mr. T. W. Stewart has been making use of her name in a most unwarrantable manner. She desires to make known that she has no acquaintance with Mr. Stewart, and that, except for a few sentences exchanged at the International Free-thought Congress, held in Brussels in August, 1910, so far as she is aware, she has never held any communication of any kind with him.



Last week's *Nation* contained an interesting article on Mr. Herbert Jenkins's *Life of George Borrow*. "Borrow's religion," the reviewer said, "is one of the problems of the conscientious biographer. Some have come to the conclusion that it was a robust plant of the ordinary kitchen-garden pliability and utility; others, again, who have plenty of warrant for their opinion, estimate that it did not extend much further than a superstition about touching as a protection against bad luck and the evil eye."

*La Raison*, one of our exchanges, is published twice a month at Paris, and is conducted by Victor Charbonnel, a stalwart Freethinker who was formerly a Catholic priest. The number for February 10 contains an article by Victor Dave on "Charles Bradlaugh and the Religious Situation in England." The article is full of discriminating praise, and shows ample knowledge of Bradlaugh's work from beginning to end. The writer says that Mr. Foote has worthily succeeded Bradlaugh in the Presidency of the National Secular Society.

### Death of Mrs. Gott.

WHEN I reached my hotel at Manchester on Saturday night I found a letter awaiting me from Mr. S. Gott, of Bradford, informing me of the sad news of the death of Mrs. Gott, his sister-in-law, and wife of Mr. J. W. Gott who was suffering imprisonment for the artificial crime of "blasphemy" in Armley Gaol, not many miles distant. She had a stroke on Friday morning and died, without regaining consciousness I understand, soon after the doctor's arrival.

This sad news very much upset me. As an old "prisoner for blasphemy" myself I was better able than most people to realise what this blow would mean to poor Mr. Gott. He was never to look upon his wife's face again except in death. I can hardly trust myself to say more.

I wrote a letter to the Home Secretary begging him to let the bereaved husband return to his desolate home at once. There was no need to post it, however, for a telegram from Miss Vance brought me the glad tidings that Mr. Gott had been liberated on Friday evening. For so much the Home Secretary must receive credit. But the credit is, after all, not great. He simply did what he knew public opinion would have condemned him for not doing. Mr. Gott was not a common criminal, and ordinary people wouldn't understand his being kept away from his wife's coffin.

Mr. McKenna acted badly up to the moment of Mr. Gott's release. He allowed it to be understood that he would do something if he were backed up by an outside agitation. There was a big and enthusiastic protest meeting, there was a petition with a lot of influential names; but in the end Mr. McKenna thought it prudent to do nothing. He acted as every Liberal Home Secretary has acted in such cases. He could not afford to offend the Government's bigoted Christian supporters. And what is the result? He hasn't killed the man, but he has killed the woman. I have good reasons for believing that Mrs. Gott fretted inwardly over her husband's imprisonment. They were devoted to each other. And it is once more a case of "the woman pays."

Mr. Gott sends me a long account of his wife's funeral, which took place at Scholemoor Cemetery, near Bradford, on Monday. I am sorry I could not find room for it on Tuesday. Many wreaths were sent, a long line of carriages followed the hearse, and many people walked behind. At the graveside Mr. John Grange "delivered a brief but beautiful oration."

In his letter to me Mr. Gott says he is "deeply touched by the kindly expressions of sympathy" in my letter to his brother, and thanks me for the "kindly expressions towards me contained in the *Freethinker* during my imprisonment." It is well they should have appeared; it is well they should be recognised; but all that is little enough beside the tragedy. "The tragic death of my good wife," he says, "is the greatest trouble I have ever experienced." Naturally. And he hasn't felt the worst of it yet. He will have to thank Christianity for more suffering before the end.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Inquisition.

[Reprinted by request from a portion of *Crimes of Christianity* published twenty-five years ago and soon afterwards out of print—until now.—G. W. FOOTE.]

THE career of the Inquisition is one of the vilest episodes in the history of Christianity. Like Attila or Tamerlane, and with more justice, it might be called the Scourge of God. Whoever writes a faithful record of its infamies must have nerves of steel, or be sustained by a stern purpose. How could a man of any sensibility drag these buried horrors to the light, unless he desired to save the future by a revelation of the past, and warn the world against the evil creed which opposed progress and outraged humanity in the dark hours of its triumph, and which would renew its ancient iniquities if it could gain a fresh ascendancy over science and civilisation?

From the persecutions of Constantine to the butcheries of Torquemada the way is long but straight. The same principle which justified the Christian emperor vindicates the Christian inquisitor. Our readers have already seen how Theodosius, at the end of the fourth century, and within fifty years after the Council of Nice, issued stringent decrees against heretics. The Manichæans were threatened by an edict with confiscation and death, and a Prefect was commissioned to appoint inquisitors and spies to discover those who concealed themselves from justice. This novel method, so repugnant to the spirit of the Pagan world, which regarded the informer as a reptile, was followed by the popes and bishops. The third Council of Toledo, in 589, associated the priests and the civil judges in the extirpation of idolatrous heresy. After the failure of the Crusades against the Saracens, the Church turned its attention to another Crusade against heretics. Many of these existed in Languedoc, the chief offenders being the Albigenses. The Pope excommunicated the whole of them, and offered earthly and heavenly rewards to the soldiers of the Cross who would invade their territory and put them to the sword. Terrible massacres ensued, but we shall not describe them here, as they must be reserved for our chapters on the crimes of the Church in France.

Under the fierce and bloody Simon de Montfort, the commander of Christ's Militia, obstinate heretics were treated as vermin; and Pope Innocent III. commissioned twelve monks to preach the Crusade and ferret out those who were sceptical as to the policy of converting heretics by force or exterminating them from the face of the earth. Llorente says that "this was the beginning of the Inquisition in 1208" (*History of the Inquisition in Spain*—English translation; p. 14; 1826) and he is supported by nearly every authority.

The Councils held in the early part of the thirteenth century made many provisions against heretics. The Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, decreed that:—

"All Archbishops, by themselves or their Archdeacons, or by some fit and honest persons, twice, or at least once a year, shall visit their own parishes, in which it is reported that any Heretics do dwell; and shall compel three or more men of good report, or if it seem expedient to them, the whole neighborhood, to swear that if any of them know of any Heretics there, or of any that keep secret Conventicles, or that differ in their lives or manners from the common conversation of the faithful, they will endeavor to acquaint the Bishop with them" (*Discourses Concerning the Laws against Heretics*, p. 58. London, 1723).

The Council of Norbonne, in 1246, decreed that "the names of the accusers of heretics shall not be made public either by word or sign." This pernicious principle was always observed by the Inquisition. Other Councils decreed that heretics must be excommunicated every week, that the secular power must enforce ecclesiastical censures, that the property of heretics must be confiscated, and that the very house in which the heretic is found must be razed to the ground. This foolish clause only proves the fanaticism of the priests. It was no idle letter,



for Llorente casually mentions that the residence of a rich lady of Seville was razed to the ground for having sheltered Lutherans.

The duty of denouncing all who were suspected of any degree of heresy was repeatedly declared. The Church even urged children to denounce their parents. What could exceed the cold-blooded atrocity of the following decree, issued by Pope Honorius III. in 1234?

"The crime of treason against deity being greater than that of treason against kings, and as God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, to teach them to avoid their example, the children of heretics, unto the second generation, shall be incapable of filling any public office, or to enjoy any honor, *except those children who have denounced their fathers*" (Maurice Lachatre, *Histoire de l'Inquisition*, p. 4).

This principle was also adopted by the Inquisition. Families were divided by the arts of the confessor, and men found their foes in their own household.

It will thus be seen that Church Councils deliberately laid down the principles on which the Inquisition was afterwards conducted. How idle, then, is the contention of Joseph de Maistre (*Lettres à un Gentilhomme Russe sur l'Inquisition Espagnole*, p. 10) that the Inquisition was not an ecclesiastical tribunal because it acted in conjunction with the secular power, and left its decisions to be executed by the civil magistrates. Any Governor who permitted heretics to abide in his dominions was liable to excommunication, in which case his subjects were absolved from their allegiance and commanded to disobey him; while, according to the fifteenth canon of the Council of Narbonne, "whosoever, having temporal dominion, neglects to prosecute those who by the Church are denounced heretics, or to exterminate them out of his province or dominion, shall be deemed a grievous favorer of heretics" (*Laws against Heretics*, p. 65). In other words, the secular ruler who neglected to inflict on heretics the penalties pronounced by the Church was to suffer them himself. History affords many instances in which this occurred.

De Maistre is, however, right in saying that, in sentencing heretics to death, the Inquisition acted like other tribunals; and he justly observes that torture was employed in other courts. But he forgets that torture was *habitual* with the Inquisition, and he neglects to notice the hideous hypocrisy with which it was glossed over; while his statement that the establishment of the Inquisition was demanded by the princes of Europe, and not forced on them by the Church, is contradicted by the history of every state. De Maistre's defence of the Inquisition is a masterpiece of dialectics; he thrusts his fine rapier through the Protestants' armor-joints with consummate dexterity; he asks them why they complain of an institution whose methods they have imitated when it suited their convenience; and he shows that the Church of England, with its laws against blasphemy, heresy, and schism, has only followed with halting logic the Church of Rome. But when his skilful plea is heard at the grander bar of reason and humanity, it sounds like the excuse of a larcenous assassin. The spectres of a million victims point the finger of scorn, and the pleader's voice is drowned in the cries and groans of a thousand dungeons and a myriad stakes.

Let it be said, to the honor of humanity, that the people always resented the introduction of the Inquisition. "The hatred of the Spaniard," says Davie, "was at first so inveterate against them and all connected with the Holy Tribunal, that many of the officers were assassinated (Charles H. Davie, *History of the Inquisition*, second edition, p. 29). Llorente says that "It is an incontestable fact in the history of the Spanish Inquisition, that it was introduced entirely against the consent of the provinces, and only by the influence of the Dominican monks (p. 46). Naples, Sicily, and other states, revolted against its cruelties; and on the death of Pope Paul IV., the inhabitants of the Holy City itself went in crowds to the Inquisition, set all the pri-

soners at liberty, and burnt the archives. They were, with difficulty, prevented from burning the convent of the Dominicans, who conducted the affairs of the tribunal (Llorente, p. 218).

St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order, has also been called the founder of the Inquisition. This, however, is a mistake. Properly speaking, the Inquisition was not established until several years after his death. But he designed the model, and its operation was entrusted to the monks of his order (Mosheim, vol. ii., p. 614), who became the *Familiars* of the Holy Tribunal, and were commonly known as the *Militia of Christ* (Llorente, p. 14). St. Dominic was a native of Calarogo, in Spain. He was born in 1170, and he died in 1221. His fiery zeal, his cruelty to the Albigenses, and his keen scent for heretics, so endeared him to the Church, that Gregory IX. canonised him in 1234. As an inquisitor at large in the country of Toulouse, he announced that "it was his fixed purpose to call in the assistance of the secular arm, and to excite and compel the Catholic princes to take arms against heretics, that the very memory of them might be entirely destroyed" (Chandler's *History of Persecution*, edition 1736, p. 161). Tradition says that this monster's mother dreamed that she was with child of a whelp, carrying in his mouth a lighted torch. His followers interpret the dream to imply that he was to enlighten the world, but it seems rather a prognostic of the fire and faggot.

Gregory IX. and his immediate successors labored industriously to found the Inquisition throughout Europe, and in time it was extended to America, and even to India. According to Llorente, it was established in Italy as early as 1224, but the more probable date is 1231. The tribunal at Rome has left no archives, and its history is obscure. But it enjoys the distinction of having tortured and burnt Giordano Bruno, and of having forced Galileo on his knees to recant the dangerous heresy that the earth revolves round the sun. At the advanced age of seventy, the inventor of the telescope was subjected to the *rigorous examination*—a phrase which has been used to indicate the torture. He was compelled to sign an abjuration of his opinions, and to imprisonment during the pleasure of his judges. The *hernia* from which he afterwards suffered is said to have been a consequence of torture by the cord (Davie, p. 259). Not without reason, therefore, does Landor, in his fine Imaginary Conversation between Galileo and Milton, make the young poet shudder at the marks of torture on that venerable form.

The prisons of the Roman Inquisition were rebuilt in 1825, and the evidences of torture and murder found in them in 1849 conclusively prove that the Holy Tribunal was faithful to its ancient traditions. Human bones were discovered, and a trap-door.

"This led to excavations being made, and further discoveries of human bones. Digging very deep in one vault, a great number of human skeletons were found, some of them so close together, and so amalgamated with lime, that no bone could be moved without being broken. In the roof of another subterranean chamber, a large iron ring, supposed to be used for the infliction of the torture, was found. Along the whole length of the same chamber were found broad stone steps, fastened to the wall: these were probably for the prisoner to sit or recline upon. In another vault was found a quantity of very black rich earth, having mixed with it pieces of decayed animal matter, and human hair of such length as to lead to the belief that it had belonged to women rather than men. In this vault a trap-door opened from the examination-room above: its use can hardly be mistaken" (Davie, p. 426).

Some of the cells of the old prison appear to have been retained. In one of these Bruno himself may have languished before he was

"butchered to make a Roman holiday."

Inscriptions were found on the walls, some of them recent, and some dating centuries back. One poor wretch wrote, "Let us pray to God that the good people may have pity." Another, "Take away oppression, O God." Another, "Too long have I been confined here, at the caprice of calumniators."



Another, "Eight years have I been imprisoned here." Another, "How much have I suffered here." Beneath a death's head and crossbones was written "O, mori." Sooner or later that poor soul found death, and rest for ever from the malice of priests. In the English language was written "Is *this* the Christian faith?" Alas, Yes. The answer reverberates through eighteen centuries.

According to Davie, the chancery contained papers relating to current affairs, and from a thorough examination of these it appeared that "the Holy Office, strictly ecclesiastical in its constitution, had been used by government for temporal and political purposes; that the sacrament of confession had been most disgracefully abused, more especially as regarded women, and had been made subservient not only to political purposes, but to the most abominable licentiousness" (p. 428).

Venice was saddled with the Inquisition in 1249, but the Republic would not allow the ecclesiastics to take the sums arising from confiscations, and the papacy always found this a bitter grievance. The famous Lions' mouths of Venice were used for denunciations. Anonymous accusations could be flung into them by anyone, and the inquisitors held the keys. Heretics seemed to have been drowned instead of burnt:—

"At Venice the condemned heretic was carried, at dead of night, from his cell to a gondola, in which he was conveyed, with the attendance of none but the boatmen and a priest, beyond the two castles. There another boat was waiting. A plank having been placed between the two boats, the prisoner was laid on it with his body chained, and a heavy weight attached to his feet. On a given signal, the boats retired from each other, and he was precipitated into the deep" (Davie, p. 94).

Pope Nicholas IV. sent inquisitors into Parma and Novara in 1300, to put down the followers of Sagarelli, who called themselves Apostolics. They denied the supremacy of the Pope, foreswore all property, refused to take oaths, preferred celibacy to wedlock, and wore long beards. For these enormities they were all condemned. Sagarelli was burnt, but six thousand Apostolics under Dulcinus fled to the Alps, where they gained many adherents. Pope Clement V. ordered a crusade to be preached against them. An army gathered, fell suddenly on them, and scattered them like sheep. Many were slain, more died of want and exposure, and others were taken prisoners and burnt, among them being Dulcinus and his wife. The Church did not spare women; it considered all flesh good for roasting.

The Inquisition was introduced in Aragon in 1232, in Milan in 1252, in Geneva in 1255, in Castile and Leon in 1255, in Sardinia in 1285, in Palestine and Syria in 1290 (the Mohammedan infidels soon killed this bantling), in Servia in 1291, in Vienne and Albona in 1292, in France generally in 1255, and in Poland in 1327.

Until the martyrdom of Huss, in 1415, the Inquisition had been inactive in Bohemia, but afterwards the most frightful cruelties were inflicted on the people. Multitudes were cast into the mines. In one year (1420) 1,700 persons were cast into one mine at Guttensburg; 1,038 into another; and 1,334 into a third. A merchant of Prague, named Krasa, was tied to horses, dragged through the streets of Preslau, and then burnt. Twenty-four of the chief citizens of Litomericia were imprisoned in a high tower till almost dead of hunger and cold. They were then carried to the river, into which they were flung, those who struggled to the bank being thrust back with iron forks. A tailor, named Wenceslaus, was shut up in a tub and burnt at Prague. Martin Loans and Procopius Jednook, who held heretical opinions as to the sacrament, were tortured by fire till their bowels protruded, and, not recanting, they were burnt to ashes (Davie, pp. 25, 27).

The Spanish Inquisition overshadows all others. Prescott describes it as "an institution which has probably contributed more than any other cause to depress the lofty character of the ancient Spaniard"

(*History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, vol. i., p. 291). Pope Gregory IX., in 1232, addressed a letter to the Archbishop of Tarragona and his bishops, ordering them to oppose the progress of heresy by every means in their power. This led to the establishment of the first Spanish Inquisition in the diocese of the Bishop of Lerida. Before the end of the century the Holy Tribunal was also established in the dioceses of Tarragona, Barcelona, Urgel, and Girona. The Dominican friars multiplied in the peninsula, and in 1301 the chapter-general of the order decreed that it should be divided into two provinces: Spain, comprising Castile and Portugal; and Aragon, comprising Valencia, Catalonia, Majorca, Minorca, and other provinces. In 1302, Father Bernard was Inquisitor of Aragon, and many *autos-da-fé* were celebrated in that year. From that time until the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, when the various provinces of Spain were united into one kingdom, and the Holy Tribunal was organised into a gigantic octopus of persecution under Torquemada, the Old Inquisition continued to rob, torture, and burn heretics for the glory and honor of God and its own profit and pleasure.

(To be continued.)

### Heathen Questions.

IN her very interesting account of *Roughing it in Southern India*, Mrs. M. A. Handley, the widow of a Forest Officer in the Government service, tells us that she had in her employment an ayah, aged twenty-five. This Hindu woman was an honest, good-hearted, and shrewd person, who remained a "heathen," and whose heathenhood was very properly respected by her master and mistress. The ayah's name was Logan-Harri. Mrs. Handley writes:—

"One morning, I had a visit from a Salvation Army lass. Began she: 'Was my ayah a Christian?' So I summoned Logan-harri to answer for herself. She was equal to it, I knew.

"'No, Missie, I heathen.'

"'Would you like to be a Christian?'

"'Yes, Missie' (ever so humbly), 'if Missie please tell me what kind Christian.'

"'What kind of Christian?' rashly cried the Salvation Army lass. 'Why, to believe in Christ, the Savior of the world.'

"And she ran through the heads of the creed quickly, but solemnly and most earnestly, in her anxiety to secure a convert in this inquiring heathen.

"'Yes, Missie, I know, but very plenty kind Christians. What kind Missie want me to be? There's *you* Missie kind, the Salvation Army; and my Missus' kind, Pratestan Church; there's Roman Catholic, and Presbytran, and London Mission, and German Mission. Missie please, which I be?'

"And she looked up innocently, not without a glint of malice too, into the rather blank face of the lass, who attempted no answer to the pointed question, and said nothing more to the ayah about her conversion."

Mrs. Handley caustically adds the comment that the fact of the variety of Christian missions was as puzzling to the heathen mind as it was true.

F. J. GOULD.

### IN TERMS OF PRAYER.

"My dear," called a wife to her husband, who was in the next room, "what are you opening that can with?"

"Why," he said, "with a can-opener; what did you suppose I was doing it with?"

"Well," replied his wife, "I thought from your remarks you were opening it with prayer."

### NATURALLY.

Jones: "Where have you been, Brown?"

Brown: "To the cemetery."

Jones: "Anyone dead?"

Brown: "Everyone of them."



## Free Thoughts.

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

LIFE has not much to give to a man who has nothing to give to life.

A dog may follow a man, but that is no sign that the man is going where it is good for the dog to go.

The three stupidest books I ever tried to read are the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and *Science and Health*. If a man cannot get to sleep reading either one of the three his case is hopeless.

A book may be holy and be nasty, but a book cannot be nasty and be good. When, therefore, a man calls the Bible holy we have no objection to his adjective, but when he calls it good, we have. We maintain that a good book can be read before anybody without giving offence. The Bible cannot be read before a company of men and women without making the men mad and the women madder. And it is the nastiness in it that makes them angry.

Telling the truth about the Bible is not deriding it; neither is showing up the lies, which the Church has told about the Bible, disrespectful. The fact is that there is a great deal in the Bible that is false, foolish, and ridiculous, and it is the duty of somebody to say so, and show where it is. The man who does this is doing a good work, and should have the commendation of all lovers of what is right and true. Religion has protected humbug too long.

I once half believed that the time would come when the pulpit would be relieved of the terrible burden of the Bible, but I have abandoned all hope of such a glorious result. Not only does the Bible stand on the pulpit, but the pulpit stands on the Bible. No Bible, no Church. No! They must stand or fall together. No minister dares to tell the truth about the book which he calls the "Holy Bible." He would not dare call it the nasty Bible, the obscene Bible; and yet there is more evidence of its nastiness than of its holiness.

Probably a bigger set of literary scoundrels than the so-called "Church Fathers" never put pen to paper or ink to vellum. It is on the testimony of these forgers and liars that the book called the Bible has been foisted upon mankind as the "Word of God." Not one of these "Fathers" can be trusted, from that prince of liars, Eusebius, to the last and least among the crew. The Protestants have no other evidence of the divinity of the Bible than that which these "Church Fathers" forged and passed upon the world as genuine.

Is it true that the women in Christian Churches worship a God who sends unbaptised babies to hell? If so, is it not about time that these women found a better God to worship? Talk about a religion that makes women who join the Church believe that little, pure, innocent babies are in hell because they were not baptised by a priest! Why, that is the only place for such a religion, and for the priest who teaches it and gets his living out of it. I want to free women from Christianity, so as to free them from faith in the Christian God who sends unbaptised babies to hell.

What is the Roman Catholic party in the United States but a political conspiracy to get control of the Government for the purpose of destroying our public schools, and building up Romanism in the land? Roman Catholicism does not depend upon brains but upon babies. It is not interested in education so much as in population. The woman who has the most children is the person who is doing most for Romanism. It is the stork, not the eagle, that Roman Catholics are told to reverence.

Universalism has been teaching and preaching a painless religion for over a century and has added but few churches to its denominational wealth; while Roman Catholicism, Presbyterianism, and orthodoxy generally have been giving large doses of hell and damnation hereafter to their frightened and trembling audiences, and have built five churches a day for the past twenty years. It is shameful that a hard, cruel religion can prosper where a kind, humane religion dies like grass in the fall.

If I were a Christian preacher and could not preach Christianity so that intelligent men and women would accept it, I would quit the pulpit. I would not care to convert blockheads. If I were going to have a religion I would have one that morality would not be ashamed of. I would never preach "Believe and be saved," but behave and be saved. A knave or a coward can get into heaven by the atonement road. I would say, you must take the fate of your own actions. That is the only honest thing to do, or to be done.

It is more important to raise the living than to raise the dead.

Of course, there is something in the universe that keeps things going that is beneath all manifestations of mind and matter. This infinite energy in all nature may be called

God, but to call it so is to give the deathblow to the God of the Bible, the God of the Christian Church.

The freedom that the Freethinker is striving for is freedom for ecclesiasticism; the freedom of intellect from the errors of the schools; the freedom of conscience from the tyranny of the Church and the freedom of manhood from the dogmas of faith. The mind may be instructed by the past, but must not be fettered by it. What we demand to-day is respect for the free impression which the universe makes upon the minds of living men.

We most cheerfully admit that many, and probably most, Christian ministers are good moral men, good husbands and good citizens, but they are moral and religious cowards. They are afraid of the truth, and afraid to tell their congregation the truth about the Bible. But for the pulpit this book would have been outgrown hundreds of years ago. People look upon it as "holy" and as "divine" because ministers have not dared to honestly criticise it and to tell the truth about its authorship.

How different is Sandford, the leader of the "Holy Ghost and Us" people who claims to represent God on earth, from Pope Pius X., who claims to do the same thing? The Pope, it is true, inherits from a long line of impostors his authority, but it is no better established than is that of Sandford. Any person can assert that he is God's vicegerent, but he cannot produce his credentials. Too many impositions hide under the divine name. They should all be suppressed.

When a Christian asks me if I have faith in God, I generally say, I guess not; I have faith in the sun, in the rain, in the ground, and a little in men, but I am afraid I have none in God. But I never saw a Christian who acted as though he had any more than I have. As no one ever saw enough of God to tell how he looks, it seems presumptuous on the part of Christians to say much about him. I wish to say that the universe seems too big for such a small word to cover to-day.

The most fervent wish of good Christians is that all unbelievers were had. It is growing harder every year to condemn men, when all there is to condemn is their lack of faith. Christians think that infidels have no right to be decent, or kind, or just, or moral. They ought to be in gaol, to make good the boast of the Church that morality is founded upon the Christian faith. But the duty of all honest men is to show that one can live an upright life without believing the foolish superstition of Christianity.

In a recent conversation with a Christian neighbor, we put the question: "Do you believe the story of Jonah?" He replied: "A man would be a damned fool who believed that yarn." We did not dispute his statement. In fact, we quite agreed with it. But when we asked him if he accepted the story of Jesus he answered: "That's different. The Old Testament is a book of fables, but the New Testament is history." And yet there are Freethinkers who think the crusade against the character of the Bible should be called off. We are not writing to convert Freethinkers, but Christians.

—Truthseeker (New York).

It is a common trick for Japanese and Chinese to go through the process of conversion until they know enough English to get a place as a waiter or clerk in a store, when they drop it like a hot potato.—Douglas Sladen, "The Japs at Home."

## Obituary.

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Mr. Francis Frederick Deane, of Forest Gate, which occurred on Monday, February 12, in the eighty-seventh year of his age. Mr. Deane was a man of great nobility of character, respected and loved by all who knew him. For many years he was closely associated with Mr. Bradlaugh in the various departments of work carried on at the Hall of Science. He was a generous and cheerful contributor to all Freethought funds, and, as long as his strength permitted, attended all Freethought lectures and debates in London. He was an ardent admirer of Mr. G. W. Foose. He took a prominent part in the establishment of the National Sunday League, and was one of the earliest supporters of Reynolds's Democratic Fund. His interest in Freethought propaganda was unabated to the end; and he died in the faith for which he had so valiantly contended during his long life. The body was cremated at Forest Gate on Friday, Feb. 16, when a Secular Service was read in the presence of a large number of relations and friends. We tender our sincere condolence to the mourners, one of whom, Mr. Samuel Deane, is a zealous member of the West Ham Branch of the N. S. S.—J. T. LLOYD.



**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, W.): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Has Science Turned Religious?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "Immortality."

**OUTDOOR.**

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, J. Hecht, "Some Marvels of Modern Science and Bible Miracles Examined."

**COUNTRY.****INDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): G. W. Foote, 3, "Maeterlinck on Death"; 7, "Atheism and Morality." Tea in the Hall at 7.45.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen, 12 noon, "Man and His Soul"; 6.30, "The Doom of Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Women's Rights."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, E. Egerton Stafford, a Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Fred Morgan, Miscellaneous Dramatic Recital.

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

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