

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXII.—No. 28

SUNDAY, JULY 14, 1912

PRICE TWOPENCE

*We must know all that matter can do, before we are warranted in asserting what it cannot do.*

—SIR T. C. MORGAN, M.D.

## Lightning Conversion.

CHRISTIAN missionaries make very slow progress in converting the heathen world. They go into all the world, and try to preach the gospel to every creature, but they get extremely few to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Those they do rope in generally belong to the lowest strata of the population, and the well-known expression "rice Christians" shows the common opinion as to the mercenary character of the converts who figure in missionary society statistics. No impression is made on the educated classes in any heathen nation in the world. The destitute and the outcast furnish the overwhelming majority of the "winnings for Christ." And the few who are won by the missionaries in this way are immensely outnumbered by what may be called the "losses for Christ" in Christian countries. Myriads of people become indifferentists every year. Thousands become Freethinkers. There are seven millions of "unbelievers" in France alone—which is more than all the heathen that ever were converted in Asia and Africa.

Now the men of God who are engaged in the soul-saving business abroad are in one important respect just like those engaged in the same business at home. They have all been ordained. They have received the Holy Ghost. And with "the Spirit" operating inside them they ought to gain converts as fast as a Yarmouth trawler hauls in herrings off the Dogger Bank in October.

Why is the process of conversion so slow nowadays? Has the saving virtue of the Holy Ghost been exhausted? Or have the soul-savers not really received the Holy Ghost, as they are said to have done in the prospectus? Were their ordinations like unsuccessful vaccinations? Did the "imparting" operation fail to "take"? Some sort of answer should be given to these questions.

Nothing is more certain than that the Holy Ghost used to be a splendid missionary; at least, when he (or it) commenced operations in this world—an event which is celebrated every Whit-Sunday throughout Christendom.

The Jewish day of Pentecost comes fifty days after the Passover, and on the first day of Pentecost after the Passover on which Christ was crucified the twelve apostles (including Matthias, who had taken the place of Judas) were "all with one accord in one place." It is not very precise, but it will do. They were sitting together in some room of an unspecified house. Suddenly there was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of the captains of the first Salvation Army. That the tongues were cloven is a most interesting feature of the occurrence. A cloven tongue is the symbol of lying, and this is an art in which Christian advocates have always been remarkably expert. But that is by the way. The narrative goes on to state that the apostles were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," and that they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit

gave them utterance." A moment before they were all Jews, who spoke nothing but Hebrew, or whatever bastard dialect was common at that time—the Yiddish of A.D. 38. Now they are speaking fresh lingoos, and must be wondering what the deuce they are talking about. But the spectators and auditors who had flocked to the spot, attracted by the rumor of the windy noise and the cloven fiery tongues, are wondering still more, and for an excellent reason. They belonged to "every nation under heaven," and they heard the apostles talking in all their different languages. They were "amazed" and they "marvelled"—and no wonder. It was as if a Salvation Army company, in a London back street, suddenly gave up talking bad English and spoke good French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese. This is the clear meaning of the text in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. But the apostle Paul, or whoever wrote the epistles bearing his name, had an opinion of his own about those same "tongues," and sneered at them as a more or less inarticulate species of insanity. Nor will the readers of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* ever forget his graphic account of the "tongues" he heard at Edward Irving's house, and the foolish "lal-lal-lals" of the excited female disciples in the next room.

There is even a discrepancy in the story itself, for some who heard the apostles talking under the influence of the Holy Ghost said that they were "full of new wine," which they could hardly have said if they heard the many-tongued preachers holding forth distinctly and intelligibly. And it must be admitted that Peter's answer to the taunt was, to say the least of it, rather singular. He replied that he was not drunk—it was only nine o'clock in the morning; as though the accusation might have been fairly reasonable had it been nine o'clock in the evening.

That observation of Peter's was the introduction to a vigorous sermon, which is reported verbatim, and which made a powerful impression upon his audience. And the result was highly gratifying; no less than three thousand converts were made that very day.

Well, now, our point is this. If the Holy Ghost, speaking through one missionary's mouth, could convert three thousand unbelievers in a single day, how is it that Christian missionaries, who generally profess to have received the Holy Ghost, are not more successful? Thousands of them are at work, and they ought to make several millions of converts every week. In a few years all the heathen in the world should be brought within the Christian fold. Yet there are far more of them outside it now than there were a hundred years ago.

What is the matter? Are the missionaries only impostors? Have they never received the Holy Ghost? Or is the Holy Ghost himself (or itself) dead? Or is he (or it) in the last stages of decrepitude? Anyhow, the days of lightning conversion are over. Evan Roberts himself went into the doctor's hands, and the great Welsh Revival dropped from fresh "fizz" to stale "swipes." Nothing can stir up Wales now but coal strikes and Disestablishment; and all the Churches in the pious Principality are bewailing their loss of members.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A Very Superior Person.

THE "superior" man is nearly always an impertinent man. Indeed, the conviction of his superiority originates in his impertinence. The man who fears to mix freely with his fellows because he is afraid of bringing himself to their level is showing himself to be a little lower than those he shuns. His is a false superiority, the sense of which is kept active by a steady course of self-adulation. Such people are only really successful with those who cannot distinguish the genuine article from an imitation, and whose praise is, therefore, the reverse of complimentary. Above all, this class values the reputation of superiority, not because they are in love with the thing itself, but because they regard it as an important social asset. Under different conditions, the same people would regard the capacity for swilling beer as the most enviable of accomplishments.

In intellectual matters the superior person is even more objectionable. He is so cocksure he is right when he is so obviously wrong. His ability to put his case strongly is generally due to inability to grasp any other point of view than his own. He airs his opinions with a condescending kindness that is out of all proportion to their value. Generally speaking, it is a compliment to call them opinions; they are mostly prejudices. To argue with him is next to an impossibility, for all argument implies some sort of an equality—if only of understanding. And you never can get upon a level with him. He will be above you, or below you, or at some tremendous distance from you; but he is never on the same easy level with you. He would be uneasy with you if he were; and you would not be likely to gain much from close contact.

In the *Eye-Witness* for June 27 there is an article "On Atheism," signed by "H. B." These may be the initials of a well-known writer, or they may not. For the well-known writer's sake, let us hope they are not. The essay is written in a kind of thousand-mile-behind imitation of Bacon's essay on the same subject, but without Bacon's wit and *minus* his wisdom. This is not wholly condemnatory, for a man might be a long way behind Bacon in wit and wisdom, and yet, as the world goes, write a passable essay. But "H. B." is not quite that man. No one would be more surprised than himself at the statement; but its truth remains. Bacon would never have made the essence of Atheism consist in lax behavior or injustice, and argue that a man or a State was Atheistic when it ignored the claims of justice and morality. Bacon saw that, whether Atheism was right or wrong, it was a matter of the intellect, not—to adopt a popular classification—of the heart. And he was brave enough to say that "Atheism leaves a man to sense; to philosophy; to natural piety; to laws; to reputation; all of which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not."

"The Atheist is he that has forgotten God." This is "H. B.'s" starting point. It does not mean disproving the idea of God; that is a mere game of logic. And what is meant by forgetting God? We are not long left in doubt. It is, in short, our old friend "Practical Atheism"; by which is meant Atheism in practice; by which is meant that every time a man is a rascal, every time he cheats, or does wrong, he is forgetting God; he is a practical Atheist. It is the old, old story. So very old, and so very contemptible, that a paper which aims at being a high-class journal, and which certainly charges the price of a high-class journal, might discover something more presentable, and so give its readers better value for money. The game is a simple one. Whenever one does wrong, no matter what profession of faith he may make, he is by his actions turning his back on God. He is forgetting God. Therefore, he is an Atheist; therefore, Atheism stands condemned. But when one does right, again, no matter what his profession of faith may be, he is

a believer in God. He may deny having any such belief, but his life proves that he is unconsciously honoring God. A most admirable theory! It divides by the simple plan of handing all that is unpleasant to the other fellow and keeping the rest yourself. It is simplicity itself.

Neither the man who proves the existence of a God by reasoning, nor the one who rejects the belief in God because of its unreason, is acceptable to "H. B." The latter is summarily dismissed with a "This man has not read, or does not know sufficient to his purpose, or is not wide enough." This is one of the writer's thousand-mile-behind-Bacon passages. Bacon said, "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion"; and while this is not true, the statement was at least respectable. For what Bacon meant was that secondary causes, or, as we should now say, scientific studies, naturally led to Atheism; but that the search for primary causes—that metaphysical nightmare—brought men to religion. But in either case the intellect was equally involved. What "H. B." means is, apparently, that mere reasoning for or against God is of little value. It is how men live that brands them as either Theist or Atheist.

I ought to apologise for continually placing "H. B." and Bacon side by side; but it is, after all, only by means of the small that one appreciates the great. One may use the sun to discover a mud splash. And clearer thinkers enable one to realise that the essence of religion is the religious idea. You may, if you please, base a life upon the religious idea, but you cannot derive the religious idea from the character of a life. For there are no such things as religious feelings. There may be a feeling for religion, but that is quite a different thing. You may be angry about religion, but the anger is not religious. You may be charitable for the sake of religion, but charity is not a quality of religion. There is love and hate, charity and greed, intolerance and tolerance, awe and wonder, selfishness and unselfishness, all of which may be expressed in relation to religion, but that is all. None of these qualities are religious, because all exist and are expressed apart from religion. And, as a consequence, life itself is independent of religion. The plea that religion is a life, and that men are religious or non-religious in accordance with the life they lead is a modern plea. It is unsound and insincere. Those who urge it do not believe it. It is an instance of the mental and moral paralysis that comes over all religions in their dotage, and of the cant that flourishes when their defence is left to third-rate intellects.

The great religious thinkers did not make use of the cant that religion was a life. They said it *resulted* in a life, but that is a different statement. They took the religious *idea*, explained it, expounded it, and defended it. And their position was so far justifiable. They saw that religion properly begins in the ideas that men form of themselves and of nature. Once these ideas are in existence, they play their part in determining the course. Man, savage and civilised, is—other things equal—under the government of his ideas, and in early stages of culture religious ideas hold a commanding position. It is only when the growth of knowledge has sapped the foundations of the religious idea that its upholders begin to look round for other supports. And the means lies ready to hand. For by this time religion has become associated with a number of things that, while not at all religious, are in the popular mind identified with it. Theists cease to appeal directly to the intellect for their support, simply because they have wit enough to perceive that no such support will be forthcoming.

Consider the insolence of such an expression that men are Atheists—intellectually—because they do not read enough, or know enough, or think enough. The converse of this is that men are Theists because they do the requisite reading or thinking, and have acquired adequate knowledge. Could anything be

more glaring than the absurdity of announcing that men are believers in God from any such causes? Did ever want of thinking, or reading, or knowledge, prevent a man believing in God? Consider our army of preachers; are they examples of belief as a product of profound culture? Consider our criminal population, markedly religious. Let "H. B." dwell upon the fact—if I may presume to trouble him with such vulgar things as facts—that the inmates of our lunatic asylums are every one religious. And on the further fact that weak-minded people—pathologically weak minded, I mean—are invariably religious. It is no more than a simple statement of fact that, as things go, there is demonstrably a greater capacity for thinking in the average Atheist than in the average Theist. The Atheist may be wrong in his conclusions. That is an arguable proposition. But it is not arguable that to break away from a teaching enforced in early years, and supported by all sorts of adventitious agencies, requires greater strength and independence than to keep on in the old and well worn grooves.

A commonwealth that has become Atheistic sees no merit in justice, but makes a game of law. In peril, as in battle or shipwreck, each man will save himself. The commonwealth grown Atheist lets the larger prey upon the less until all are eaten up. No commonwealth has long stood that which was Atheistic; yet many have been Atheist a little before they died. So continues the sapient and superior "H. B."; and the pompous idiocy of the phrasing is almost too charming to disturb by criticism. But, truth to tell, the world never has known a commonwealth that was Atheistic. In every society the overwhelming bulk of the people have been Theists. The people have been ruled in the name of God, plundered in the name of God, murdered in the name of God, and their own belief in God has been one of the conditions of their submission to ill-treatment. Bacon was of opinion Atheism never did perturb States. "H. B." is of opinion that States have died because they were Atheistic. Bacon also said that "no decaying merchant or inward beggar hath so many tricks to uphold the credit of their wealth, as these empty persons [whom he describes as 'seeming wise men'] have to maintain a credit of their sufficiency." It sounds like a prophetic character sketch of "H. B." C. COHEN.

### Buttressing the Miraculous.

IN certain religious circles it is now becoming the fashion to deify intellectualism, and to enthrone what is called instinct or intuition. The contention is that intellectualism has signally failed to furnish an adequate and satisfactory interpretation of the Universe. In an article entitled "A Plea for Miracle," which appears in the *Inquirer* for June 22, the Rev. J. M. Lloyd Thomas assures us that "the modern mind is profoundly uneasy about the scientific interpretation of the Universe." In that assertion there are two grave errors for which there is no excuse. In the first place, Mr. Thomas has no right to speak in the name of "the modern mind"; and, in the second place, we flatly contradict the statement he makes on its behalf. "The modern mind" is not "uneasy about the scientific interpretation of the Universe," because it is exceedingly well pleased with it, believing it to be an essentially true interpretation. If by "us" in the following extract is meant the writer himself, what is said may be true enough; but if it refers to scientists generally every sentence is grossly inaccurate:—

"Twenty years ago most of us hailed Natural Science as the new Light-Bringer. It gave us all a fine sense of superiority over our benighted fellows who were still groping about among the superstitions of religion. We were going to know everything and to do everything. We were also going to be everything, but

more especially we were going to be 'advanced.' Gradually we began to suspect that we were 'advancing' backwards into a *cul-de-sac*. To-day we realise we have been trapped by our intellectual pride into a rationalistic blind alley from which Bergson and others are busily trying to lead us out."

No scientist of repute has ever been so silly as to boast that he was "going to know everything, to do everything, and to be everything." The mid-Victorian scientists most frequently mentioned are Darwin, Tyndall, and Huxley; but nothing characterised them more than their constant confession of ignorance. To them the Universe teemed with mysteries. Even in his famous Belfast Address Tyndall made "no exclusive claim for science," nor attempted "to erect it into an idol"; and to-day all that science claims to have arrived at is "a systematic interpretation of the phenomena which we call 'Nature' as a vast and orderly mechanism, the working of which we can to a large extent perceive, foresee, and manipulate so as to bring about certain results and avoid others."

Is Mr. Lloyd Thomas prepared to pronounce the scientific interpretation of the Universe untrue? He asserts that there is "a salutary reaction" against it, but omits to supply particulars. We respectfully invite him to prove that Rationalism is "a blind alley" into which intellectualism has trapped us, and out of which Bergson is so busily leading us. The scientists themselves believe that they are advancing on the only true lines, and know nothing of any *cul-de-sac*. The biologists of the present are loyally building on the foundation laid by Darwin sixty years ago. Bergson admits that the mechanistic theory of the Universe cannot be scientifically refuted, and therefore when he attempts the feat he miserably fails to perform it. We shall give a single illustration of Bergson's reasoning. He declares that if precisely similar structures are produced on two divergent lines of evolution the scientific interpretation of the Universe breaks down. Well, he says, the eyes of Pecten and the eyes of vertebrates, when compared, are seen to be extremely alike, though molluscs and vertebrates represent two divergent lines of evolution. Therefore, the existence of such close similarity under such dissimilar conditions can only be accounted for on the assumption that a stream of life consciously impelled to the production of similar eyes in molluscs and vertebrates. This conscious stream of life is perpetually struggling against matter, laboriously pushing its way through it, and performing all sorts of miracles as it goes. Now, the eye has been made by a tiny rivulet from the main stream of life; and it appears that when this tiny eye-making rivulet had penetrated far enough into matter the result was a highly complex organ of vision. And a peculiarity of this conscious rivulet of life is that it could make but one kind of eye, an eye possessing cornea lens, and complexity of structure. Unfortunately, however, Nature has produced an entirely different sort of eye, the eye of Nautilus, which is the simplest eye possessed by any animal of the same bulk and general elaboration of organisation. Sir Ray Lankester describes it as "simply a slightly projecting hemispherical box like a kettle-drum, half an inch in diameter, its surface looking like that of the surrounding integument, whilst in the middle of the drum-membrane is a minute hole." Bergson says (*Creative Evolution*, p. 101) that "no matter how distant two species may be from each other, if the progress towards vision has gone equally far in both, there is the same visual organ in each case." Such is the Bergsonian theory; but Nature gives it the lie direct by holding up an eye, lacking cornea, lens, and complexity of structure, being but a simple pit of the integument, or "a pin-hole camera" kind of eye.

Now, Mr. Lloyd Thomas, being a divine, naturally prefers the metaphysical absurdities and inconsistencies of Bergson to the veritable discoveries of science. Disowning the intellect as a guide he gives the reins to an uninstructed and irresponsible imagi-

nation. Could anything be more illogical than the following: "The truth is that Human Life cannot exist without religion, and religion cannot exist without miracle." As a matter of fact, human life *does* exist without religion, and religion without miracle. These are stubborn facts, whether Mr. Thomas likes them or not. There are hundreds of thousands of Atheists in Christendom to-day who enjoy life to the full apart from religion, and there are multitudes of professing Christians who have renounced the miraculous. There is a distinctly Bergsonian and Lodgean flavor about Mr. Thomas's article. He despises facts, evidences, and demonstrations, and revels in baseless assumptions, ignorant fancies, and debasing superstitions. Listen to this echo of Bergson:—

"However loyal we may wish to be to science, we cannot acquiesce in the pedantic idea that the Universe is a self-contained machine, moving with uniform order, without any shock of surprise or thrill of the unexpected, or awe of unexperienced beginnings. Whatever order belongs to the world is the order, not of mechanism, but of an ever-poetic, creative life. It is not a thing of wheels and cylinders and pistons and cranks. It is essentially a Consciousness, a Divine Consciousness. It is the place of souls, the abode of intelligent beings who are being trained for ever-deepening communion with God.....Our secular affairs are saturated through and through with sacred meanings. Nature is soaked with supernatural significances. Humanity is drenched with Deity."

This delightfully out-Bergsons Bergson, whose task as a metaphysician has been playfully compared to that of "a blind man in a dark room hunting for a black cat which is not there." Bergsonism is a cross between the teleological and the mechanical views of the Universe. It denies that the Vital Impetus or push, which is at once a driving and a creative force in evolution, works with an eye on any specific end or with any specific purpose, which is true to fact, but by no means complimentary to the stream of conscious life. Here Mr. Thomas unceremoniously parts company with his philosophical guide, and gives expression to the most emphatic teleology. His knowledge infinitely surpasses that of the mere metaphysician, and emboldens him to state dogmatically that the ultimate end of the evolutionary process is to train man for "ever-deepening communion with God." From the heights of his omniscience he looks down disdainfully on science, and haughtily says:—

"Science is a sieve too coarse to hold the gold dust and liquid wonder of all the True, the Beautiful, the Good. Our scientific knowledge is a fisherman's net in the ocean of wonder—the tides and currents of the deepest life of the spirit pass and repass through its meshes unobstructed and unobserved. The sense of this breaks out now and again into a fresh plea for the miraculous."

As one observes all this is but "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal," or an unruly wave of pure emotionalism, or a tissue of sentimental trash, with neither knowledge nor experience behind it. It is Bergsonism carried to its farthest possible limits of illusion and absurdity. Though blind and in a dark room, Mr. Thomas wants us to believe that he has found the black cat, "which is not there."

The miraculous for Mr. Thomas is practically synonymous with the supernatural; and when he says that "the natural gives out the supernatural as a flower gives out perfume," he simply plays with words, and knows not what he means. To say that "where God's finger touches us, there our life leaps into flame," is to "speak with tongues" which none can understand, and the speaker least of all. It is unadulterated gibberish. The illusions formulated in Bergson's books are condemned by Sir Ray Lankester as "worthless and unprofitable," and as "causing waste of time and confusion of thought to many of those who are induced to read them"; but Bergson's illusions pale into insignificance beside the illusions formulated by Mr. Thomas in this short article. When a man can talk seriously about viewing the invisible, touching the intangible, knowing the unknowable, and clutching the inappre-

hensible, we have a fearful example of what befalls those who repudiate the guidance of the intellect in favor of that of a will-o'-the-wisp called instinct or intuition. Knowledge comes as the reward of careful investigation. Nature is a mine in which we dig for the precious ore of truth, and the intellect is the pick. So far as we know this mine has no outside or beyond. It is the only object the existence of which is known to us. The Great Beyond of theology is dreamland, and the life of those who imagine that they are in contact with it is dream life. It is the scientist alone who deals with realities, while the psalmist is the victim of hallucinations and illusions.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Freethought and Christianity in Madagascar.

FOR a long time past Madagascar has been a vast school of experiment and expropriation in the interests of the rival Catholic and Protestant departments of the great business of Christian cajolery. The trade of humbugging the natives with pills and formulæ for the "cure" of souls was, I believe, first started—at any rate, on the large scale—by the Protestant practitioners of the great art and mystery of religion. Their efforts at establishing anything like a decent connection were made after the country had been desolated by the European, but Christian, slave-hunters, principally Portuguese, whose civilising exploits dated back to the old bad Braganza and Inquisition days. After them, in 1642, came the French missionaries, whose dictatorial arrogance was promptly quelled by wholesale extirpation. And then, after a lull of 150 years, during which six generations of Madagascar heathen poured their damned souls in one long fiery stream into the flames of hell, the London Missionary Society, prodded by divine Providence, began, about 1811, to busy themselves with the salvation of the Malagasy. Such measure of success as was attained, after much internecine carnage and persecution, by the Protestant missionaries, soon excited the professional jealousy of Holy Mother Church, whose emissaries came along and set up branch establishments of the old concern whose headquarters are at Rome, and whose "angels and ministers of grace" are ubiquitous. Both the Catholic and the Protestant sky-pilots vended the same commodity—salvation, and, in both cases, they acted as the advance agents of two rival political influences, the French and the English. And thus it happened that until the iniquitous annexation of the island by the French, the Malagasy Christians, who happened to be Catholics, had one eye fixed on God and the other on France, whilst the Protestant converts put their trust in Jesus and the English protectorate.

At length, when, in the fulness of time, the Napoleonic regime sank in the blood and shame of Sedan, the French Republic, after emerging through the many vicissitudes of its terrible struggle for life with the Church, began its beneficent work of secularising the institutions of the country both at home and abroad. By this time the annexation of Madagascar by France was a *fait accompli*, and nothing remained but to administer the new possession in as enlightened a manner as possible. Towards that end, the *Mission Laïque Française*,\* founded at Paris, in June, 1902, for the propagation of secular education in the French Colonies, has already done good work. In his speech of November 22, 1903, at a banquet under the auspices of the above society, the president, M. Doumergue (a former French Minister for the Colonies) spoke in high terms of the important pedagogic work accomplished in the island by M. Deschamps, the then director of the Board of Education in Madagascar. The labors of this enlightened administrator in the cause of secular education were made possible by the firmness

\* *Revue de l'enseignement Colonial*, p. 4; Paris, 1904; Picard et Kaan.

and good sense of M. Augagneur, who, besides being the Governor-General of Madagascar, is a well-known and respected figure in the French Free-thought movement. To the united efforts of these men it was due that the secular spirit in education so far triumphed in Madagascar that the Christian Brothers, who had enjoyed the practical monopoly of education, were compelled to evacuate the island, and the lay schoolmasters reigned in their stead.

All these influences—the influence of religious dissension amongst the missionaries and their converts, the influence of Christianity upon the conduct of its professors, as seen either in the horrors of the old slave-drives or in the atrocities connected with the recent annexation of the country, and last, but not least, the influence of education dispensed in the schools established by the more or less enlightened amongst the invaders—bore its legitimate and logical fruit in the growth of Free-thought in Madagascar. In his invaluable survey of international Freethought during 1910,\* M. Eugène Hins, the new Vice-President of the N. S. S., to whom the Freethought cause throughout the world stands indebted for so much of its knowledge of the movement in many lands, quotes from a letter of a Madagascar Freethinker, stating that—

"now that republican principles have been brought to us by the French Government, and that the light of secular education is guiding us to reason and delivering us from religious obscurantism, the good sense of the Malagasy is awakening, and many young men, warned by the dangers of religion, and aware of the benefits of secular education, are embracing Freethought."

And then, in order to show that the hold of Free-thought upon the Malagasy is no empty boast, he cites the example of one of the dead heroes of Malagasy Freethought, Rakotofuringa, the late director of one of the official primary schools at Tananarive. Rakotofuringa was a brand snatched from the Christian fire. Educated by his father, an evangelist employed by the Protestant mission, he detached himself altogether from all ideas of religion, and took up an appointment in the official schools established by the French Government. He soon won the esteem of his chiefs, the sympathy of his colleagues, and the affection of his pupils, and became one of the most fervent apostles of Freethought. By his speeches, his writings, and his example he labored unwearyingly for the intellectual and moral emancipation of his fellow-countrymen sunk beneath the yoke of the missionaries. His last will, written in the presence of his family, contain these words:—

"I die as a Freethinker and an Atheist, without any regret. I insist that my burial may be a purely civil function, and that no word of religion be dropped into my tomb. I rely upon my chiefs and upon my secular comrades for the rigorous carrying out of this declaration."

Rakotofuringa died on April 25, 1910, and was buried on the following day, in exact conformity with his expressed wishes. An imposing crowd of Europeans and Malagasy, friends of secular education and of its distinguished advocate, accompanied the body of this young man—only twenty-four years of age—to his last address.

No doubt as the outcome of these labors, a Rationalist group has just been formed in Madagascar. It has established a weekly paper, *Ny Masoandro* [The Sun] (address, 31 Rue Augey-Dufresse, Ambatovinaki, Tananarive), whose editor desires to enter into friendly relations of exchange and communication with editors and contemporaries in other lands. The new group is composed of native Freethinkers, having a membership of 150 Malagasy, in addition to sixty-four Europeans, whose membership, however, is purely honorary. The present Governor-General of Madagascar is actually the honorary president of the Society.

The Society bears the title (in French) of "*La Mutuelle des Amis laïques.*" One side of the acti-

vities of the Society relate to objects of mutual aid amongst the members, e.g., by assuring secular burial to the members and by defraying the cost of interment, the succor of widows and orphans, and the relief of distressed members. But in addition to all this there is the educational and propagandistic work, secular in character, and anti-Christian and anti-missionary in its specific objects, carried on by the Society. The lectures organised by the Society are in the Malagasy tongue, and M. Hins' informants tell him that the addresses are well attended. These lectures deal with subjects like "Marriage Amongst the Sakalaves," "The Worship of Ancestors," "Tabous (sacred names and sacred places)," some details of which would be of great ethnological and sociological value to European students, and might, it is suggested, be contributed to this and kindred journals. But this is not all. Other addresses are directed specially against the teaching of the missionaries, besides which, the Society is concerned with the popularisation of general knowledge in history and other subjects connected, not with Kingdom-come, but with the intelligent development of the colony on secular lines. On account of the specially Freethought character of its work, the Society suffers from the attacks both of the French Catholic missionaries and the English Protestant missionaries, as well as from the fanaticised neophytes of both parties. Despite the fact that the Governor-General is the President d'honneur of the Society, its members are exposed to the persecutions of the inferior underlings, without the knowledge and, it may be, without the approval of the higher members of the administrative personnel.

It is in these circumstances that the Malagasy Freethinkers make their appeal to Europe and America for literature, books, pamphlets, and newspapers, in order that they may be furnished with the intellectual weapons of warfare against the baleful influence of the missionaries. I have no doubt that the different Freethought and Rationalistic agencies in the English-speaking countries will not be backward in responding to this appeal, which was addressed, in the first place, to our indefatigable friend Hins, who, in his turn, asks me to hand it on, so far as English and American Freethought journals and agencies are concerned, to all those whom it may concern. English and American Freethinkers, mindful of the fact that the old religious wares once in universal demand amongst us are now becoming a drug in the home market, will not, I hope, be disposed to look on with the eye of indifference at these unscrupulous manoeuvres on the part of the commercial travellers whose leading line is superstition and whose traditional methods are those of shoddy piety and genuine persecution. A generous sense of solidarity will no doubt inspire them to co-operate with these brave fighters who are defending an advanced outpost of the International Freethought movement.

In a recent number of *La Pensée* (June 23), our friend Hins summarises the actual situation in Madagascar, as obtained from private information just received from a correspondent in the island. It appears that the coast tribes of the west and south, principally the Sakalaves, have preserved their customs, their sorcerers, and the worship of ancestors; whilst the population on the east coast and the high plateaux, the Hovas and the Betsileo, the traditional enemies of the Sakalaves, have become enslaved to the French, English, and Norwegian missions. Their secularisation will be a difficult task, whilst that of the Sakalaves will soon take place, owing to the official schools, of which the number is on the increase year by year, thanks to the zeal shown by the Governor-General, M. Augagneur, and his successor, M. Picquié. In order to counteract the secular schools, the missionaries have created all kinds of societies in all classes in the colony, and exploit the natives in the most shameful manner for the provision of salaries to the sky-pilots, the maintenance of Christian joss-houses, the purchase of Bibles, and other pious works.

\* *La Libre Pensée internationale*, p. 90 (Brussels: 250 Chaussée de Baudal).

The missionaries are described as omnipotent. They bring pressure to bear upon the public functionaries by means of the distinguished people who have made themselves their imps of power.

*Ny Masoandro* was founded in 1910, thanks to the moral and pecuniary support of a number of Freethinkers and Freemasons in Tananarive. The first number of the new Rationalist weekly appeared on October 14, 1910, and its pages are enriched by the writings of some twenty collaborators. Attached to the journal is a publishing business for the dissemination of pamphlets amongst the natives who understand foreign languages.

The missionaries were furious, and retaliated by the widespread distribution of a pamphlet, entitled "Offspring of Monkeys." They followed up this meek and mild insinuation by various acts of calumny intended to bring down upon the Freethinkers the strong hand of the Government.

Now that the tricks of the missionary trade in Madagascar are being denounced in Europe and America, and brought home to the knowledge of the French Government, it is to be hoped that these soul-curiers may be watched and checked in their operations and made to walk circumspectly within the limits of prayer and praise and non-intervention in the secular concerns of the island. Throughout the world Freethinkers will rely upon M. Picquie keeping a watchful eye constantly open upon the missionaries.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

#### QUESTIONS OF THE HOUR.

A priest who was possessed of an endless flow of language whenever he arose to make a speech, was once addressing a body of Irishmen on the subject of Irish benevolent societies. He spoke from eight o'clock until eleven, and his audience was yawning wearily.

At last he ended, and then, with a broad smile, inquired if anyone wished to ask a question.

A stubby little man in the rear of the hall stood up.

"Ah, Mr. O'Malley," said the priest, "what question can I answer for you?"

O'Malley yawned. "Please, father," he said, "what toime is it?"

#### AS THE TYPE TOLD IT.

The Rev. Dr. Charles Lee Reynolds, of the Second Presbyterian Church, preached a powerful sermon on the subject: "The Cup in Joseph's Sack." The *Herald*, through one of its linotypes and its proofreader, made Dr. Reynolds talk about "The Sup in Joseph's Sock," though it is well known that they didn't wear socks in those days.

The Rev. Dr. George F. Pentecost, who was a recent visitor to Lexington, preached a sermon in Dr. Reynolds's church, taking for his text the lesson of the great draught of fishes and speaking from the subject, "The Broken Net." The *Herald* said the good doctor preached about "The Broken Neck."—*Lexington Herald*.

#### GETTING BACK AT HIM.

This one is told about an East End dancing class. There was a young woman who thought a good deal about ancestry and descent, and there was a young man who thought that all such stuff was snobbish. The two sat out a dance together, and the girl mounted her hobby almost at once.

"What was your father?" interrupted the young man.

"Father was a gentleman."

"Ha! But what did he do for a living?"

The young man thought that smart, but the girl came right back.

"What was your father?" she asked.

"My father raised hogs."

"I see he did. But what did he do for a living?"

#### A DRAWING CARD.

"We have called the Rev. Dr. Blank to our church next year."

"You don't mean it! I never heard of him. What church has he ever had? Is he a famous preacher?"

"Famous preacher! Should say he was. He has been indicted by a grand jury twice, and was three times suspended from the ministry in four years. I expect we shall have to build an addition to our church in six months."

#### Acid Drops.

"How these Christians love another!" That was said some sixteen hundred years ago. Who would say it now—in Belfast?

M. Maurice Maeterlinck has been awarded the triennial prize for French dramatic literature for his play, *The Blue Bird*. A still bluer bird is mixed up with origins of the Christian superstition.

Even the Pope is alarmed at the multiplication of nunneries in the Catholic Church. According to reports in the public press he has decided to suppress all that have been in existence less than ten years, or that have less than fifty members. The greatest fault of these too numerous nuns appears to be that they don't bring money enough into the Romish exchequer.

Christians are very particular about the "language" of Freethinkers, and are ready to give them three or four months' imprisonment for speaking too plainly. But wouldn't it be better if they paid a little more attention to their own "language"? Viscount Wolmer, for instance, speaking at the late big Cardiff meeting to protest against the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, said: "We will not see our ancient Church spoiled, disgraced, and robbed by this damnable Bill." Suppose a Freethinker called the Bible a "damnable Book,"—how the Christians would howl!

At the inquest on Dora Hussey, who was found with her throat cut in a field at Bourne End, near Wycombe, it transpired that Philip Truman, her sweetheart, who was lying by her side with wounds in his throat, had left a letter which contained the following passage relating to the breaking off of the engagement by her parents on account of his jealous disposition:—

"I am quite sane, but I cannot live without my girl, who is the purest in the world. God forgive my soul! Sorry for all the trouble. Please forgive my rash act, and don't wear any mourning at the funeral. God bless and help you all! In this world I have nothing to live for."

Not a trace of Atheism as, according to Talmage and Torrey, their ought to be in all cases of suicide.

Several years ago the Rev. Frank Ballard was appointed as Christian Evidence lecturer by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. His mission was to go forth and smite the unbelievers hip and thigh, until there should be no more of them in the land. It was stated at the time that his equipment for such a work was "unique," and from time to time reports of overcrowded meetings and slaughtered unbelievers began to come in. These were probably written by Mr. Ballard himself; but they appeared. Now we learn, from last week's *Methodist Times*, that Mr. Ballard's career as official infidel-slayer is at an end. It certainly cannot be because there are no more Freethinkers left. The *Methodist Times* rather cruelly says that "the requests for his services have declined," and so the Home Mission Committee declines to proceed further with the experiment. Probably those who did engage Mr. Ballard found that his efforts made no appreciable difference in the number of Freethinkers, and may even have suggested doubts to many of the Christians who listened to him. And so, after five years, every Freethinker, so far as Dr. Ballard is concerned, is to be permitted to go to Hades in his own fashion.

Rev. Thomas Phillips is indignant that some large West End firms have opened their grounds to their employees for Sunday afternoon cricket and tennis. We appreciate the common sense of the firms in question. It will do good to the people who are employed behind the counter or in the office all the week, and will no doubt benefit the employers themselves. The only ones who may suffer are people in the same line of business as Mr. Phillips. But an inspired gospel ought to be able to hold its own against a game of tennis. After all, these employers do not say that their workpeople shall not attend chapel. They can go if they wish to, and that being the case, we do not see that anyone is justified in grumbling at their choice. Mr. Phillips also says that, if there is a God in heaven, there is a terrible day of reckoning coming for the "irresponsible rich" who play golf on Sunday. He evidently thinks there is "a hell of a time" coming for them.

The great Duke of Wellington was fond of annotating books with a pencil. Reading a History of the Battle of Waterloo, he wrote "L" and "D L" in many margins.

Asked what these mystic letters meant, the Duke replied: "Lie" and "Damned Lie," to be sure." Just imagine the Bible annotated with the same freedom.

We are not quite sure what Lord Morley had in his mind in his address before the University of Manchester, but this is what he said:—

"In the four great faiths—Christendom, Judaism, Islam, Buddha—in spite of reformation and counter-reformation, internecine conflict, even displacements by fire and sword from without, yet how steadfastly the names, the rights, the practices, and traditions persist."

Without serious qualifications such a statement is so misleading as to be almost untrue. It is quite true that the names of the great religions persist, but that is about the only thing that goes without serious change. The practices, the rights (is this a newspaper misprint for rites?), the doctrines are all in a constant state of change. A Christianity, for example, that remained unchanged would soon be disowned by every educated man and woman. Religions do not persist unchanged; they persist because they change; and people imagine because they keep the old name they have retained the old religion. Even the gods undergo change. Social and intellectual growths are too powerful for even them. And the final stage of the process is when humanity sheds for ever its clothing of superstition and is conscious of its own strength and creative possibilities.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that many people mistake perspiration for inspiration. May be; but the clergy do not thank us for pointing it out.

The Archbishop of Capetown, speaking at York on "The Day of Opportunity in Africa," is reported in the *Huddersfield Examiner* (July 3) to have said: "When he first went to the Zulu country he never thought of sleeping with his door shut, but times had changed with the bringing of civilisation to the people. That was the pity of it, and one could not understand it." Certainly it is a pity; and just as certainly it may be understood. The Archbishop does not see that he is paying a very back-handed compliment to his own religion. The plain, simple, honest Zulus have been corrupted by vicious Christians; not by "civilisation" but by "Christian civilisation."

The Dutch Reformed Church Synod, which met and talked at Pretoria in June, gave its attention to the shocking fact that "God" had been entirely omitted from the South African Constitution. The Synod demanded that "God" should be inserted. The Almighty ought to be recognised. Quite so. And the Almighty, if there be an Almighty, will be recognised when he (she or it) wants to be. The Synod need not worry about that. Nor is it necessary to say nasty things about General Botha and General Smuts. Their orthodoxy may not be absolutely sound, but it appears to be enough to allow of their attending to the political business of that part of the British Empire. The Synod, however, thought it wise to write to Botha about the neglect of "God," for, as one of the Dutch preachers present said, "God is a jealous God, and as sure as fate he would cause the destruction of a political union that did not honor him." But one delegate, who had a little common sense as well as a lot of religion, suggested that they would have to "do" something. Talk, talk, talk, would only make Botha and the government laugh at them. Well, we shall see what the indignant friends of the jealous, neglected God will "do."

One of the Synod speakers, evidently a good old Conservative, remarked that they (that is, the Dutch true believers) used to have the help of God before the war. Perhaps so. But it would have been more to the purpose if God had helped them during the war. God did not help them to beat their enemies. And a good many of the younger Boers have laid the lesson to heart.

The Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity in Brooklyn defers to medical science and hygiene by adopting a sanitary communion cup. A while ago, when the idea was broached in England, one of the bishops violently protested against the profanation of the sacrament involved in disinfecting the utensil in which it is administered, or providing individual cups. In this country Bishop Grafton of Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, echoed the English bishop's excited shout. He told his followers they might take their blood-of-Jesus in confidence that God would protect them from the operation of the laws of nature manifested in the communication of disease by means of germs. And it does look as though Grafton and the Britisher were the logical and consistent

parties. When God was on earth and lost his life by disagreeing with his creatures on the subject of religion, he came out of his grave to tell the faithful that they should take up serpents or drink any deadly thing and it would not hurt them. Rector Melish of the Brooklyn church had to be shown before he would believe there was poison in the communion cup; but when 'a member of the vestry who combines in a splendid way scientific method and religious reverence' made a bacteriological test and found germs of disease on the rim of the cup, his doubts flew away. Now he has a six-square cup, with six separate drinking places on the edge; he handles it himself, and when six persons have had it, he sends it to the dish-washer and takes another. The communion, with the implication that the partaker is drinking the blood of a man-god, is a queer survival of barbarism in this age. It is preserved only because it is pickled in superstition."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

*Burdett's Hospitals and Charities* for 1912 contains the following:—

"The more we study the accounts of these bodies, the more we are impressed with the feeling that they do not accurately indicate either the financial position or the actual work done by most of the societies charged with the organization of foreign missions. The time has come when those responsible for Church government, and especially those who are members of the Church of England, should face this fact and insist upon reform."

We have been saying the same thing, in stronger and plainer language, for years. But we are not sanguine of any reform taking place. The main motive in publishing the reports is to secure subscriptions; and facts are not allowed to interfere with these coming in. If any registered company issued a statement of accounts and report of work similar to that issued by many of the missionary societies, public attention would soon be called to the fact. But in the name of religion almost any imposture is protected against exposure.

Some liars for the glory of God once invented the yarn of Queen Victoria having styled the Bible "the source of England's greatness." Mark Twain said the English are only once mentioned in the sacred volume and that is in the Beatitude—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

The Rev. Alfred Holland, vicar of St. Agnes, Kennington, London, S.E., complains that he cannot get Brixton and Walworth to mix. He must be a sanguine man to expect working class people and middle class snobs to associate because he tells them the fairy tales of the Bible.

It appears that some time ago there was a religious census taken in Australia, and a summary of the returns is contributed to the *Christian World* by the Rev. F. C. Spurr. It seems that 3,254 returned themselves as Freethinkers, 3,084 as Agnostics, 579 as Atheists, and over 110,000 declined to make any declaration. We think we could give a fair guess at the religious opinions of the bulk of this last lot. According to Mr. Spurr, in ten years—the date of the last census—Freethinkers have declined 65 per cent., while Agnostics have increased from 971 to 3,084, and Atheists from 274 to 597. This looks as though the vague "Freethinker" had given way to a more definite non-religious frame of mind. For ourselves, we salute the gallant 579, and hope that they will gain recruits both from the Christian world and from those who are not Christian, but who prefer the adoption of a slightly more "respectable" term than that of Atheist.

Mr. Spurr says that the number of Freethinkers is inconsiderable. As a mere item in an arithmetical calculation, that is so. The mistake men like Mr. Spurr make is considering that Christians are the most important because they happen to be the most numerous. Mr. Spurr should reflect on the rabbits in Australia. We believe they considerably outnumber the whole Christian population. He also says that thirty years ago, when there was a propaganda "led by a notorious person whose morality was a very dubious quality," Atheists were very numerous. Like most clergymen, Mr. Spurr is very lavish in innuendo, and very economic in names and dates. The only person who could really claim to be a leader of Atheists in Melbourne thirty years ago was Joseph Symes. If he is the one whom Mr. Spurr refers to, we beg to inform him, quietly but decidedly, that Joseph Symes was a better man than ever Mr. Spurr could hope to be. We never heard any whisper against the character of Joseph Symes, and it is odd that we should get it now—not so odd, perhaps, when we consider that it comes from a clergyman. Mr. Spurr also finds that the Atheists in Australia are persons whose

"education is extremely defective." So, also, with the Agnostics. The majority of those Agnostics "who have come to me with their religious difficulties" are very ill-informed on matters in general. We can well believe this. Agnostics who would go to a man like Mr. Spurr with their religious difficulties would be very poor specimens indeed. Mr. Spurr might perhaps reflect on the workings of the principle of affinity. Intellectual and well-informed Agnostics would be likely to apply elsewhere. And Mr. Spurr's own discounting of the number of Freethinkers is discounted in turn by the comment that it would be interesting to know how much of the belief professed by the four million Christians was real. So should we. And we should expect to find that the majority of these professed Christians either because they were too mentally indolent to question what they had been taught or as a badge of social respectability. And it is hardly open to question that in the life of a community a few thousands of earnest, thinking, independent minds count for more than the slavish following by millions of an ancient superstition.

Dr. Dixon has been lecturing on "Labor Unrest and its Cure." We gather that the cure is to join the Metropolitan Tabernacle and listen to the more or less harmless taradiddles and fossilised science of Dr. Dixon. Explicitly we learn of Dr. Dixon two things. First, Jesus Christ is in sympathy with the toilers, because while he was "the only man in history who could choose his birthplace and his mother, He chose to be born among the common people." Second, the secret of curing the labor unrest is for "everybody to get right with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There it is! There is the cure in a nutshell; and we hope the Labor leaders and others will make the most of it. Seriously, it is almost unbelievable that such colossal ignorance and egotism can find an audience in an age that delights in calling itself civilised. Dr. Dixon has a large church, a large congregation, and, we presume, a large salary. And we invite serious-minded folk to consider the effect on social life of thousands of people who can look up to Dr. Dixon for light and leading. For, after all, Dr. Dixon is nothing in himself. He is a mere symbol, and a symbol of a most unpleasant and dangerous fact in our civilisation.

Melbourne, a small town in Derbyshire, contains two lads, Charles Brown and Laurence Fitchett,—the latter, we suppose, being no relation to the clerical gentleman (from Australia) who makes a good thing out of Jingo books of his own writing. Brown and Fitchett fell in love with a pretty young actress, and the rivalry of these juvenile lovers reached a climax at a farewell song and dance given by Nellie Payne at the Church Boys' Club. Fitchett bought a bottle of scent to give to Nellie, and Brown bought a pistol for the benefit of Fitchett. Fortunately young Brown (fifteen!) was a bad shot, and the open pocket knife with which he proposed to back up the bullet was wrested from him by his intended victim. Brown was indicted at the Derbyshire Assizes, but was too young to be dealt with on the serious charge of shooting. The judge ordered that he should receive twelve strokes with the birch, following ten days' detention. His lordship and the prisoner were both Christians. That explains them both. Violence on one side is corrected by violence on the other. Two blacks are to make a white.

It was not the seraphim who turned Adam and Eve out of Eden, but Charles Darwin with a steel pen.

Peter's Pence brings in the paltry sum of £1,500,000 yearly. "Blessed be ye poor is a fine sentiment, eh, papa?"

At a recent open-air meeting at Brighton, under the auspices of the National Service League, a local clergyman presided. The chairman was asked by a member of the audience why he supported militarism, seeing that one of the commandments was "Thou shalt not kill." The clergyman quibbled by replying that the prohibition only applied to individual murder. His opponent thereupon scornfully asked if "Thou shalt not steal" palliated wholesale theft. The audience roared.

The Brighton Town Council is probably one of the most hypocritical public bodies in this Pharisaical country. They run race meetings, but exclude all halfpenny papers, except one single copy of the Brighton *Argus*, from the Public Library, because they contain racing news. They overcrowd the Corporation tramcars, and fine the 'bus company if they overcrowd their vehicles. They run Sunday concerts at the Aquarium and Preston Park, but refuse to grant Sunday licenses for inflammable films to the picture theatres, and they are compelled to use non-inflammable films on that

day. They are always more ready to perceive the mote in their brother's eye than the beam in their own. The great wealth of the Church founded by the tramp-carpenter of Nazareth enables it to manipulate the municipal elections, and churchwardens are usually returned unopposed for all vacancies.

The *Hibbert Journal* is getting more and more orthodox. Its manners are getting orthodox too. In the book-reviews department the authors who cling to theology and metaphysics are all patted on the back, while more advanced writers are treated with something very much like insolence. A few lines in the new *Hibbert* are devoted to Mr. Hugh S. R. Elliott's *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*. Sir E. Ray Lankester's introduction to the volume is treated as a subject of grave rebuke, at which he will probably have a hearty laugh. "One can only express regret," the reviewer says, "that a distinguished man of science should give his sanction to anything so futile and irrelevant as this volume, for the most part, contains." Evidently the reviewer means that both Mr. Elliott and Sir E. Lankester may consider themselves annihilated.

The Bishop of Stepney, speaking at Southend recently, said "God had, in answers to prayers and longings and hopes, granted the Israelites of old that on which all their hopes were stayed." He might have added that the prayers in all the ghettos of the world in more recent centuries had failed to prevent the countless persecutions of "God's chosen people."

A new book has been published with the title *Brass Faces*. It does not contain the portraits of the leading ecclesiastics.

Reviewing Mr. Algot Lange's *In the Amazon Jungle*, the *Daily Chronicle* concludes with the following paragraph:—

"The photographs convey admirable impressions of a country where weirdness and beauty of scenery are in sharp contrast, and where the problem as to whether there be any purpose at the back of all the carnage and misery attendant on animal existence has only its emphasis, and never its solution."

This is a wary insinuation of the great truth that, when the theologians have done with their sophistical justification of human suffering, there remains the vast suffering of the lower animals, which is utterly indefensible.

Colonel Mark Sykes, in the House of Commons discussion on the Territorials, on July 5, made the legislators laugh by his references to the Crusaders and the Jews of the Exodus. He remarked that the Crusaders had "keenness and enthusiasm," but no discipline, science, or leadership, and "were not very successful." The Israelites at the time of the Exodus had no enthusiasm, but "they had good military leaders, and a good organisation, and that brought them through." No wonder the House laughed at this. The only military leader the Jews had was an old gentleman of eighty, who had spent most of his time as a shepherd in watching sheep. The less said about their "good organisation" the better. As for "bringing them through," it took them forty years to perform a fortnight's journey from Egypt to Palestine, after dodging the Red Sea by miraculous agency. Colonel Mark Sykes can hardly have read the Bible since his childhood. He should refresh his memory by another perusal.

Three churches were destroyed by the tornado that burst over Regina, killing nearly a hundred people, injuring hundreds more, and doing a million pounds' damage. Another proof that "Providence" does not recognise its own buildings on these occasions.

The Marquis of Lincolnshire says that "Of three great ecclesiastics I have known, Archbishop Temple stood for Faith, Cardinal Newman stood for Hope, and General Booth stood for Charity." Apart from the infelicity of bracketing Newman and Booth, we always thought that Booth stood for other people's charity.

More pious police follies! A Freethought lecturer named E. B. Stephens has been charged by the police at Rotherham with "unlawfully and wilfully publishing a certain scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane libel of and concerning the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion." We understand that the "prisoner" is a most inoffensive speaker. More of this next week. Meanwhile the N. S. S., through the new Sheffield Branch, is seeing to Mr. Stephens' defence.

## Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

### To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £168 10s. 8d. Received since:—Dr. E. B. Foote (New York), £10 4s. 1d.; F. G. Margetson, 10s.; T. Stringer, 2s. 3d.; A. Davis, 10s.

J. L.—See paragraph. Accept our best thanks.

A. MCPHEE.—We have asked Mr. H. Snell, secretary of the Secular Education League, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C., to send you a packet of the League's tracts and pamphlets, which will probably supply all you require. Other correspondents will perhaps take note of this address and write to Mr. Snell direct when they want such literature.

W. C. DODD.—Sending as desired. See also "Sugar Plums."

W. STEWART.—You must be interested in the document locally. It is of no particular importance otherwise. We are not at all disposed to turn Mr. Mann (whose articles you like) on to the Rev. C. L. Drawbridge. Mr. Mann has better things to do—and he doesn't live in London.

J. HEPPORTH (S. Africa).—See paragraph. Thanks.

E. BURKE.—We are obliged to postpone dealing with your letter for at least another week.

E. T. JARVIS (Johannesburg).—See paragraph. Thanks.

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

J. W. WHITE.—Inserted: but very belated, isn't it?

H. IRVING.—We cannot compel Freethought lecturers to sell the *Freethinker*, and in some cases it would be just as well they didn't.

E. B.—Thanks for welcome cuttings.

R. H. GRANT.—Your letter is dated July 5, but the postmark is July 6 (afternoon), and a Saturday afternoon letter does not reach our office until Monday.

F. G. MARGETSON.—May your good wishes for the *Freethinker* be all realised.

T. STRINGER.—We are not blind to the position of Freethinkers in the army. We hope to tackle the subject some day.

A. DAVIS.—Placed to the Fund, as you will see. Thanks.

F. W. ASHBY.—Shall be sent. Glad to hear the friend to whom you had six consecutive weekly copies sent has become a regular subscriber.

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the 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.

We are glad to see that some of our friends are taking our recent appeal seriously and are trying their best to get us new readers. Here is an extract from the letter of a Lancashire "saint":—

"As I think you really deserve encouragement I have decided to get at least six new readers for your very admirable and always instructive paper. The enclosed is the first of the six."

The "enclosed" is a cheque for a year's subscription to the *Freethinker* from one of our correspondent's friends. We wish other friends of this journal would bestir themselves in the same manner.

Since the previous paragraph was written and set up "J. L." has sent us a cheque for the second of his six new yearly subscribers. Evidently he means business. We hope his determination will inspire other friends of the *Freethinker* to go and do likewise.

Branches of the N. S. S., or individual subscribers who could distribute "specimen" copies of the *Freethinker*, can be supplied with any quantity of back numbers for that purpose by applying to our shop manager (Mr. H. Saill) at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C. All the

cost to applicants is the payment of carriage. We cannot afford to do that ourselves.

We have received the *Secular Education Chronicle* for July, issued by the Secular Education League, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C. This little publication is now issued quarterly. We commend it to the best attention of our readers. The price is one penny. Another advanced publication is the *Rationalist Peace Quarterly*, issued by the Rationalist Peace Society. The price of this also is one penny. It is published by the Chancery Lane Press, 1, 2, and 3 Rolls-passage, E.C. We advise our readers to make its acquaintance.

The Secular Society, Ltd., has arranged for a three months' propagandist tour through Yorkshire and Lancashire during July, August, and September,—which may be continued afterwards if the experiment is reasonably successful. Mr. Jackson, of Leeds, who spent a fortnight in the local prison for using "profane language"—including the abominable and ghastly statement that he did not believe in the existence of God—is to be the lecturer on this tour, and is to be accompanied by Mr. Gott as salesman of literature. The work is to be carried on systematically week after week, and day after day, and something like £5 a week of the funds of the Secular Society, Ltd., is earmarked for the enterprise. The meetings held will be entirely free in every sense of the word. Not even collections will be made. On the other hand, Mr. Gott, who is an old practitioner in the business, will push the sale of the *Freethinker* and other literature supplied to him by the Society. Mr. Gott will also be the local organiser of meetings under this plan, and, as far as public work is concerned, will devote himself exclusively to the effort. Readers of this journal who want to see something done in their towns (in Yorkshire and Lancashire, of course) would save time by writing to him direct at 28 Church-bank, Bradford. Those who prefer to do so can write to the N. S. S. headquarters secretary (Miss E. M. Vance) at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

At the last N. S. S. Executive meeting leave was given for the formation of two new Branches—one at Sheffield and one to be called the Leeds and Bradford Branch. Both start under promising auspices. Open-air work is being carried on during the summer. What can be done during the winter will be easier to decide a little later on.

Mr. Cohen's visit to Leeds on Sunday was highly successful. The open-air meetings were very large; indeed, the police say they were the largest ever held in the Square. They were also very orderly and enthusiastic; and Mr. Gott reports an unusually large sale of literature. It was intended not to take up collections, but the evening audience insisted on giving one, and to prevent money being thrown at the lecturer and the chairman (Mr. Jackson) the collectors had to go round. They took up £2 3s. 7d., which is a big amount for an outdoor meeting. This does not end the N. S. S. work at Leeds. Mr. Cohen's visit will be followed up, and further announcement will be made at an early date.

The Edmonton Branch's excursion to Loughton takes place to-day (July 14). Members meet at 34 Chiswick-road at 8 a.m. and leave not later than 8.30, going by tramcar to Ponder's End, and thence walking to Loughton. Tea at the "Vale Retreat" at 5 p.m. Tickets 1s.

The Bradlaugh Fellowship paid its fifth annual visit to the grave of Charles Bradlaugh at Brookwood on Sunday last; the party numbered 130, and contained many of the old veterans of Freethought. From the weather point of view the day was an ideal one, perfect in every way. After visiting the grave, the party adjourned for luncheon, and in the afternoon a meeting was held on a piece of vacant ground in the village, where brief speeches were made by Messrs. Heaford, Perkins, and Garrity on Bradlaugh and his work. Afterwards the visitors spent the rest of the day in walks and drives over the beautiful surrounding country, returning at night all highly delighted with the outing, and voting hearty thanks to the Hon. Sec., Mr. W. J. Ramsey, under whose management everything went without a hitch.

Mr. Foote is spending a few days with his old friend Mr. J. W. de Caux, J.P., of Great Yarmouth. His editorial work has to go on, of course, but it is minimised as far as possible. All other work is allowed to slide. This includes all but really urgent correspondence. Those whose letters don't get answered (we mean by post) will therefore understand the delay.

## The Decay of the Churches.

FROM time to time we have under discussion the recurring question of the declining Church membership, alternatively with this other problem: How can we get the people to attend places of worship? In most of the discussions on the subject that I have been privileged to read or participate in, it is assumed by most of the writers and speakers that non-attendance at church or chapel, as the case may be, is absolute and unquestionable evidence of moral decadence and national deterioration. But is it so? If all the churches and chapels closed to-morrow, never to open again for the purpose of religious worship, would the world be any the poorer, morally, spiritually, or intellectually? I submit not. This may at the first blush seem a shocking statement to make, but I will endeavor to substantiate it. Was the world any poorer, morally or intellectually, when the Roman Temple of Janus, or Greek Parthenon, was closed? All that happened was that men sought and found other methods of association and co-operation. The Greeks and Romans, unlike our feeble imitations, had not one god, but many gods. And as it happened when these ancient heathen temples were closed, so would history repeat itself to-day should the event I have described happen. It is no valid argument to say that these were heathen, not Christian, temples. It might just as reasonably be contra-argued that this is the twentieth, not the first, century—the civilisation of one ill-befitting the other.

Mr. R. Mudie-Smith, in the *Daily Chronicle* of Saturday, May 18, adopts the view I have alluded to, and "most painful" and "undeniably serious" are among the terms he uses to describe the situation. Nor is it extraordinary that this view should prevail so largely among those who take the trouble to write on the subject. It would be extraordinary were it otherwise, as they are all, or nearly all, interested in maintaining and extending the existing order of things; and, naturally, take an exalted view of their own side of the question, if not a debased view of all other agencies. Most writers and speakers on the subject are either parsons, elders, deacons, or church officers of one description or another, more or less partisans, and, therefore, I submit, the very last people to discover the truth of the matter. Is non-attendance, or declining attendance, at places of worship necessarily a sign of moral or spiritual decay? I submit not. We have myriad forms of worship, and temples almost as numerous and varied. If only one method is right, hundreds must be wrong. If all are right, or wrong, it is immaterial—obviously it must be largely accidental, a matter of birth and early training—which method one finally adopts or rejects. The decline of worship, therefore, is evidence, not of moral declension or intellectual deterioration, but of a change in a particular form of recreation or pleasure. It may even be a sign of growing enlightenment. I submit that it does evidence increasing mentality, a broader intellectual outlook, a strengthening of the moral fibre, and a more scientific, therefore more exact, knowledge of the realities of life. In the language of the nursery rhyme:—

"Remember that ignorance oftentimes flies  
What wisdom regards with benevolent eyes."

Man never occupied so high a plane morally and intellectually as he does to-day, as investigation in every possible direction will demonstrate.

It is impossible within the compass of a single article to give all the accumulative testimony in this respect. One can do little more than baldly enumerate them. What are the usual criteria of moral and spiritual excellence in a community? Sobriety? In this respect, bad as it still is, there is a wonderful improvement compared with only ten years ago; but, if we extend our range of vision to fifty years ago, there is a still greater contrast. Prison commitments? In this respect the falling

off has been immense, our prison population being less than half, notwithstanding an increased population of about one-third in the same period. Social habits? There has been a vast improvement in this respect, which has expressed itself in the more refined forms of sport and recreation now indulged in by the people, and the increased leisure they now enjoy. Educationally? Fifty years ago there was no popular education, and illiteracy among the working class was the rule, instead of the exception, as it is to-day. Many were ignorant, brutish, and depraved. Now, as everyone may easily discover, the bulk of the workers are fairly educated, intellectually alert, better read; and socially, morally, and in every other respect vastly improved. These briefly, very briefly, are some of the evidences of progress.

It requires only a very moderate acquaintance with history and with social statistics to discover that the moral and intellectual progress of the people is reflected in the material prosperity of the country. The pauper population has fallen off by one-half, and is diminishing at a greatly accelerated rate. Most of our pauperism now consists of children and the aged, the latter largely the product of conditions rapidly passing away. Our material prosperity is in turn reflected in the better health, greater immunity from many forms of sickness, and increased longevity of the people. Whether the material prosperity of the workers has kept pace with the increased wealth of the capitalist class may be a debatable proposition, and somewhat foreign to the subject, but the improved position of the bulk of the people, morally, intellectually, and physically, cannot be disputed. And it is, I submit, advantageous for the workers to be absolutely better off than they were at any period in the past, although they may be relatively worse off than their richer neighbors at any given time. As we read in Proverbs, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty" (x. 15). A capitalist has always an advantage over a non-capitalist, but I am not discussing, except incidentally, the economics of the situation.

Progress is a law of nature, and evolution is the outward expression of that law. If evolution be true, it is absurd to pretend that it does not operate in the sphere of morals and sociology as in that of physics. That it does so operate hardly needs demonstration in face of the changes continually taking place in the outward expression of religion. Evolution is as certain and unchanging in its method as gravitation. Just as Polytheism gave way to Monotheism, and Paganism to Christianity, so Christianity for nineteen centuries has been, like life itself, a continuous adaptation to new conditions. I am old enough to remember, and any person of middle age can confirm, that the theology of the Churches thirty, twenty, or even ten years ago, was very different from the teaching of to-day. Many of its repulsive features have been modified, and its more grotesque crudities have been discarded for ever. I need not point these out. Every student of patristic theology knows the facts. Even in the creed-bound Churches there is a wide divergence between the language and spirit of the pulpit and the ancient writings.

The Church, in the language of Mr. Mudie-Smith,—

"instead of fighting the temper of the times by increasing the severity of its demands, has thought to hold its own by relaxing its claims. In consequence, the line to-day between the 'World' and the Church is so faint as to be almost unrecognisable, and it is not surprising that men and women either ignore the Church altogether, or merely patronise its services, taking no responsibility for its government or welfare."

This is not only true, but the explanation is simple. People attend church, not from any deep conviction of its necessity or importance, but from habit. It has long been fashionable for "respectable" people to go to a place of worship on Sunday, and the bulk of folk go for no better reason. And they recognise no more responsibility for the entertainment than

they do for the stage management when they go to the theatre or opera.

Mr. Mudie-Smith rather resents the Church's relaxation of its claims. But the Church is more worldly wise than Mr. Mudie-Smith. According to tradition, when the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain; and the Churches have been compelled, whether they liked it or not, to compromise with the "World," or find themselves deserted. They have discarded theology for sociology; and the P. S. A. and Brotherhood meetings are replacing the ordinary services, which have lost their interest for the bulk of grown-up men and women. It is a truism that there is nothing so fickle as fashion, because it rests on no settled basis, and the fashion of unvarying attendance at church is gradually changing. At first it manifested itself in "the custom of attending church," as Mr. Mudie-Smith says, "without definite association with the Church," and this is hardening into a permanent habit." But, unlike him, I do not regard this as "a depressing situation" any more than a philosophic mind regards any other natural phenomenon as something to be mourned over. It is a natural and inevitable sequel of the situation. Non-attendance at church in increasing ratio is exactly what any intelligent person acquainted with the facts, and in touch with reality, without any pretension whatever to the gift of prophecy, might predicate. With growing enlightenment and scientific knowledge, it was inevitable. It is a healthy, not an unhealthy, sign.

As the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher said:—

"Every civil society is the legatee of all that went before. It inherits all that is good, and much that is evil. There must be, therefore, in every healthy community something that is worn out and should be extruded.....Absolute conservatism is absolute dotage. The attempt to wear the clothes of our childhood would not be more absurd than for Society to maintain its old institutions unmodified. The new should grow out of the old. Thus, as in Nature evolution goes on from lower to higher, without any break or chasm, and from less good to greater good; so should it be in the State."

"The chief lines along which the Churches must proceed in order to reverse their present downward trend is to increase the severity of their claims," Mr. Mudie-Smith tells us, "and to insist that there can be no compromise between those claims and the 'World's' claims." This reminds one of Hotspur's rejoinder to Glendower's boast, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep." "Why, so can I, or so can any man; but," asks Hotspur, "will they come when you do call for them?" I do not doubt Mr. Mudie-Smith's good intentions; but, as Mr. Jas. A. Froude says, you cannot "work a steam engine on moral reasons.....or legislate that water should run up hill," and what is the use of trying remedies that are proved failures. Not all the severity of the Inquisition could rehabilitate the Churches, restore the previously existing state of things. They have gone for ever. It would be as easy to bring back yesterday.

When a physician is called in to a patient, his first duty is to diagnose the complaint. Unless the symptoms are very pronounced, or the malady is somewhat rare and obscure, his training, experience, and observation enable him at once to discover the nature of the complaint and to prescribe the remedy. But there are quacks as well as physicians, and when the former are called in, they either wrongly diagnose the complaint or prescribe the wrong medicine. Many, many quacks have been consulted on the malady of the Churches, and, mostly, they have wrongly diagnosed the complaint and prescribed the wrong remedy. Nor is the reason far to seek. They have mostly been interested in concealing the patient's true position, and in pushing quack nostrums. Whilst I put Mr. Mudie-Smith—if he will pardon the metaphor—in the category of quacks, I do not believe he has any special nostrum to dispose of. He is simply mistaken.

A thousand and one different reasons have been urged to account for the abstentions from church; but all, or nearly all, discuss symptoms, and ignore the great root-cause. The root-cause is unbelief—absolute Scepticism—and it is folly to blink the fact. Men have discovered that the Churches have no message. They no longer believe in Old World legends of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Tower of Babel, and a hundred similar fables. The history and science alike of the Old Testament are discredited. Geology has knocked the bottom out of the Story of Man's Fall, and evolution has demonstrated that he is not a fallen creature but a risen being. With the Fall of Man has crumbled away not only the foundation, but the whole superstructure of Christian theology. The Devil and Hell have long been discarded as vulgar myths, and so one might go through the whole gamut of Christian teaching; but I forbear.

The average preacher conveys the impression that he knows very well that what he is saying is either not true or immaterial. An apostle should be the incarnation of his own teaching; but the wide divergence of practice from precept, not only in the pulpit and the pew, but everywhere, has compelled men to see the sham and hollow hypocrisy of the whole situation. Christianity in no sense has saved the world, whilst it has been an obstacle to advancement and intellectual enlightenment. And, instead of asking why men do not go to church, the majority are now asking: Why should men go to church?

Many parsons, to their credit be it said, have discernment enough to perceive the trend of events and the hopelessness of their position, but they are victims of the situation, and can hardly help themselves. They are in the position of the unjust steward, "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed" (Luke xvi. 3), and they live in continual hope that somehow, somewhen, somewhere, light will be vouchsafed to them, and a way out of their perplexing dilemma will be found. In the meantime, they compromise with conscience, and continue to occupy a consciously false position. I can sympathise with them. It is not easy, even if willing, to surrender the position of a lifetime, to sever every association, take up a new profession or calling; to say nothing of the economic difficulty that would arise if something like a hundred thousand parsons of all denominations were to be suddenly thrown on the labor market. It will come in good time, but the process will be gradual. I dare not trespass further on your space, so must reserve further observations for another occasion.

GEORGE E. QUIRK.

MANHOOD'S MEASURE.

The man who loves his fellow man,  
And winds a willing arm about  
His brother when the storms are out,  
And lends him all the help he can—  
No matter what may be his creed,  
A kind God knights him for the deed.

The man, however scorned and poor,  
Who bares his arm for truth, and breaks  
A lance for crippled justice, shakes  
A shower of good from shore to shore—  
And heaven, unfolding, gilds with grace  
The swart lines of his sturdy face.

However lowly be his guise,  
The man who finds it in his breast  
To brave the worst and hope the best,  
Is nobly poised, and in him lies  
The bursting germ whose bloom shall be  
The badge of immortality.

—J. N. Matthews.

Obituary.

It is with the deepest regret that I have to record the death of Mrs. Dorothy Ann Nicholson, wife of Mr. Hall Nicholson, of West Stanley, who died on Monday, June 1. In accordance with her expressed desire, she was accorded a Secular burial, the Service being rendered by an active Atheist, namely, Mrs. Horatio Johnston, who paid her last tribute to her departed friend in a very able and impressive manner. The sympathy of all friends will go out to Mr. Nicholson in his loss of such a genial and devoted wife.—  
JOHN W. WHITE.

## Tales of Our Times.

By A CYNIC.

### I.

A FAMOUS preacher, discoursing from Genesis ii. 7, was delivering himself of one of those eloquent and ornate perorations for which he had become deservedly celebrated. It ran thus:—

"Hence, my brethren, do we realise that man is indeed a living soul, and not the mere automaton which the gross, debased materialism of the age would attempt to make him. Within us breathes the eternal, the divine spirit—not the slave and servant of molecules and atoms—not a mere 'function of protoplasm,' as the jargon of science describes it—but the supreme reality of existence, the very breath of life, emanating from Him who is the source and fountain of all being.

"Whence originates the melody of the grand organ? In its metal pipes and ivory keys—in its stops and pedals—its levers and valves? These play a part, indeed, but a subordinate one. The origin of the music is in the living genius of its composer, in the living skill of its performer, not in the material parts of the organ; and even as the glorious music, pealing down the cathedral aisle, has its origin and inspiration in something far nobler than the metal tubes from which it issues, so do the celestial harmonies of our spiritual nature, sweeping in mighty chords through our material being, tell us of an origin higher than the material, of a freedom and supremacy transcendent and divine."

That evening at dinner the preacher's wife noticed with alarm that her husband seemed unable to take his soup properly, as a good deal of it was being spilled, and on going hastily to his side she found to her horror that he could not speak. With great and evidently painful effort he was able to pronounce only two words, namely, "God's mercy," using them in answer to all questions, and their singular inappropriateness served only to increase his wife's distress.

"What is the matter with you, dear?" she asked in agonised tones.

"God's mercy," said the sufferer.

"Cannot you tell me what you feel, dearest?" she implored.

"God's mercy."

The unfortunate man was at once got to bed, and it was soon discovered that, though quite unable to express himself in speech, he could do so quite well in writing—so well, indeed, as to show clearly that his mental faculties were unimpaired. But presently, when paralysis began to creep over the right arm and hand, this method of communication was cut off, and in the course of a few days the paralysis gradually spread to other groups of muscles on the right side.

The doctor who was called in, not having had much experience of this obscure disorder, advised the immediate summoning of a well-known specialist in brain diseases. He arrived without delay, and having seen the patient and made a few inquiries of the wife, proceeded to confer with his professional colleague.

"From what I can gather the diagnosis offers little difficulty," said the specialist. "We are informed that an injury on the left side of the head, but apparently involving fracture, was sustained about a year ago. The position of this injury, joined with the distinct aphasic symptoms and the partial hemiplegia, seem to indicate a lesion over the left frontal—probably Broca's convolution. The localisation of the injury admitting of so little doubt, I think we are perfectly justified in resorting to the trephine without waiting for further developments. I propose to operate to-day—after lunch if that will suit you, doctor."

Then there followed that wonderful exhibition of human skill and resource whereby the very substance of the living brain is laid bare to the operator's manipulations, just as any other piece of delicate mechanism is treated when it becomes deranged.

"Ah," said the specialist, pausing to regard his work with the air of an artist contemplating a creation of his brush. "This is quite satisfactory. Fortunately we have correctly localised the trouble, and I find that the original injury has caused some induration and thickening of the bone, and has led to a weakening of the blood-vessels of the pia-mater immediately below it. One of these has suddenly ruptured, causing an extravasation of some magnitude, and consequent pressure on the cortex. There appears to be no definite cortical lesion, and the case, therefore, proves to be extremely simple, though not altogether without interesting features."

Having completed his work the specialist, going into the next room, found the patient's wife kneeling by a chair with her face buried in her hands, and evidently praying.

"Now, now, my dear madam," said the specialist, cheerily, "I assure you there is no need to resort to such extreme

measures. I think we can promise your husband's speedy and complete recovery with the help of the ordinary means at our disposal."

This promise was fulfilled, and in due course of time the eminent preacher was again impressing crowded congregations with sermons on his favorite topics—the freedom of the will—the supremacy of spirit, and its complete independence of matter in all mental processes—and the fallacies of the "gross Materialism of the age." His perorations, too, were as charmingly ornate as ever, and even men of science had been known to acknowledge that if the materialistic philosophy could possibly be destroyed by such beautiful pulpit rhetoric it would stand a very poor chance indeed.

### II.

A holy war was raging between the subjects of the Sultan Hakem and those of the Sultan Hashem—good historical names, but which, even had they been of English derivation, would not have seemed altogether inappropriate to these monarchs considering the sanguinary nature of their conflict.

About five years previously, a holy hermit, who had spent half his life gazing over the sands of the desert, suddenly appeared among men, announcing that the angel Gabriel had commissioned him to make an important correction in the Koran, a serious error having escaped his angelic eye when reading the original proofs. This correction was to the effect that the bone of the Resurrection—the bone which remains incorruptible till the last day, and from which the body is to spring up afresh—is not the rump bone Al Ajb, as Mohammed taught, but the atlas bone, or uppermost bone, of the vertebral column, which, being the highest bone in the body and invested with the important office of supporting the skull, exceeds in honor and dignity all other bones. This doctrine rather recommended itself to the bold and innovating mind of Hakem, while Hashem, with a stronger tendency towards orthodoxy and conservatism, would have none of it. The subjects of these respective potentates, adopting the opinions of their rulers with a zeal and wholeheartedness which is becoming sadly rare in these degenerate days, and exhibiting a degree of religious fervor which also seems to be deplorably on the wane, a holy war was immediately entered on; and for five years it had been raging with that thoroughness and absence of all squeamish sentiment which holy wars so admirably exhibit.

One morning Sultan Hashem was having a conference with his Grand Vizier, who had just returned from a visit to the seat of war, who was wearing a very grave expression of face.

"What news of the war?" asked the Sultan. "Why are you looking so dejected? Are these heretics gaining the upper hand?"

"Not so, O Sultan," replied the Grand Vizier. "If anything the true believers are gaining slightly, and Allah seems inclined to favor your Majesty's arms as a true defender of the faith. But a strange development has arisen which may seriously complicate matters. One Abdallah-ben-Omar, a man skilled in anatomy and other profane knowledge, has begun to declare that the holy war in which we are engaged is all about nothing whatever, that there is no such thing as an incorruptible bone in the human body, and that all bones—rump bones and atlas bone included—are equally corruptible."

"By Allah!" exclaimed the Sultan, "this must be put a stop to. Are these Atheistic opinions gaining any credence among the people?"

"I regret to say they are, O Sultan," replied the Grand Vizier. "They are gaining many adherents not only among your Majesty's subjects, but also among those of Sultan Hakem. Indeed, unless some prompt measures are taken, it is quite possible that the holy war may come to an ignominious end."

"The holy war come to an end!" shouted the Sultan. "By the beard of the Prophet, I will see that it does nothing of the kind till Hakem and his heretic subjects are brought to their knees. Have this dog of an Atheist arrested and brought before me at once."

When Abdallah-ben-Omar stood before the Sultan's judgment-seat, and was asked what he had to say in his defence, he spoke as follows:—

"O Sultan, live for ever. Shortly after the commencement of the holy war in which your Majesty is so piously engaged, it occurred to me that here at last was a religious controversy of a unique kind. All previous religious quarrels I had heard of involved matters concerning which no human being could really know anything at all, but in this case the question in dispute was one which seemed to admit of easy solution by anyone who would take the trouble to investigate the matter. I accordingly made an extensive collection of human bones, including many rump bones and atlas bones of true believers—"

"Where did you get them?" thundered the Sultan. "Did you desecrate the graves of true believers or go in for wholesale murder? A dog of an Atheist would be quite capable of such crimes."

"Nay, O Sultan, whose life, let us hope, will be indefinitely prolonged," answered Abdallah calmly. "My collecting grounds were the battlefields on which your Majesty's armies are so gloriously defending the true faith. There I found innumerable bones, both of true believers and of heretics, well cleaned for me by the jackals and vultures, and beautifully bleached by the sun. Having made my collection, I subjected my specimens to careful and repeated experiments, treating them with lime and various kinds of earths; and the result of these experiments is to prove beyond possibility of doubt that all human bones are quite corruptible, including those two famous bones of contention over which the present holy war is being waged. Having made this discovery, great Sultan, I felt it my duty to proclaim it as widely as I could in order to arrest, if possible, the needless misery and carnage which the holy war is causing among men."

"Councillors and Ministers of State," said the Sultan, as soon as he was able to speak with calmness, "this man's defence merely furnishes his own condemnation. He is evidently an Atheist of the deepest dye—a disbeliever in Allah—a despiser of the Prophet. Is there anyone among you who wishes to say aught in his favor? If so, let him speak."

But the Councillors and Ministers of State were far too prudent to do anything of the sort.

"Abdallah-ben-Omar," said the Sultan, "you are condemned out of your own mouth, and your sentence is that you receive one hundred and fourteen strokes of the bastinado—one for each chapter of the blessed Koran, for which may the Prophet be praised; that all your worldly goods be confiscated to the State; and that you be banished to the desert for the rest of your life."

This sentence was duly carried out, and Abdallah-ben-Omar had ample opportunity for meditation on the rashness of trying to interfere with a holy war.

### About the Munich Congress.

The program of the International Freethought Congress at Munich this year has already been published in the *Freethinker* (March 24). That Congress, the sixteenth Congress organised by the International Freethought Bureau since its foundation in 1880, will be the first international gathering of the kind held in Germany. I need scarcely say that the German Freethought Federation (which has its seat at 88 Barerstrasse, Munich) extends a cordial invitation to all Freethought organisations throughout the world to make the Munich Congress a record-breaking success.

The Congress will open its proceedings on August 31, at the Tonhalle, and the varied items of the Congress, as settled since the *Freethinker* notice was published, are as follows:—

**Saturday, August 31.**—Reception of delegates. In the afternoon, from 4 to 6 p.m., preparatory meeting of delegates. At 8 p.m., general gathering of the friends attending the Congress, speeches, and musical entertainment.

**Sunday, September 1.**—At 10 a.m., opening of the Congress by a Freethought *Fête*, concert, reading of reports, speech by G. Tschirn (the President of the German Federation, who will also be President of the Congress), followed by the formal opening of the public business of the Congress and the fixing of the constitution of the Congress. In the afternoon, visit to the Industrial Exhibition; and afterwards, at 7 p.m., popular *fête* characteristic of Upper-Bavaria, to be held in the Exhibition grounds.

**Monday, September 2.**—In the morning, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and in the afternoon, from 3 to 6 p.m., meetings of the Congress. In the evening, at 7.30, theatrical performance at the Volkstheater.

**Tuesday, September 3.**—In the morning, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Congress again meets, also in the afternoon, from 3 to 6 p.m. The afternoon proceedings will include a private meeting of the delegates. At 8 p.m., great public meeting in the grand hall of the Bürgerbraukeller.

**Wednesday, September 4.**—Collective excursion to Starnberg, and a boat excursion on the lake.

Delegates and others attending the Congress should bear in mind that they should furnish themselves with a Congress card, costing 6 marks. The card will admit, without farther payment, to all the festivities attending the Congress, to the visit to the Industrial Exhibition, to the performance at the Volkstheater, and to the excursion to the Starnberger See.

I may as well subjoin, once again, the subjects to be discussed at the Congress. These are as follows:—

1. Freethought and its objects.

2. The problem of the separation of Church and State in the different civilised countries.

3. Freethought and Education.

The reports to be presented to the Congress on these questions will no doubt be published in a separate volume which, it is anticipated, will form a veritable repository of facts and information. It will be a pity if the distinctively English point of view fails to be presented in adequate literary and statistical form to the Congress.

Of course, it is a far cry and an expensive journey from London to Munich. The cost of the visit will vary according to the route selected, but roughly speaking the railway fare from London will be about £6 10s. second class. There is a cheaper way, by taking a ticket to Mannheim (*via* Rotterdam, and thence four days' steamboat up the Rhine), £2 2s. second class return. The second class fare Mannheim to Munich and back will be about 35s. second class. The Batavier route is quite delightful, but it consumes time. I may further add, for the further information of intended visitors, that the Belgian friends announce two routes from Brussels, costing 112 francs second class, or 72 francs third class. The circular ticket (Brussels, Strasburg, and Munich, and return to Brussels by Cologne) is available for sixty days.

I have written the above notes in response to various inquiries by friends of the movement, and for information only. Any local information as to the Congress may be obtained on application to Herr J. Peter Schmal, 88 Barerstrasse, Munich, the secretary of the German Federation and president of the Organising Committee.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### Correspondence.

#### DEATH OF G. L. MACKENZIE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sure that you will be both interested and sorry to hear of the death of Mr. George Leslie Mackenzie, on June 7, at the age of sixty-two. The cause of death was stated as arterial decay, which seemed to paralyse the brain.

Many years ago he was an active contributor of verses to your paper, and when he collected them into a book you wrote a highly appreciative introduction.

I think it is probable that you saw or heard little of him of late years; he became more and more absorbed in reading when away from his business duties, until his health broke down almost suddenly at the end of February last.

Mr. Mackenzie's family were in very poor circumstances at the time of his boyhood, and it was necessary for him to begin to earn his livelihood at an early age. The great regret of his mother was that she had not the means of sending her children to college; and her spirit, no doubt, gave the lad the bent for learning that characterised him throughout life. He taught himself both French and Italian; his knowledge of the former language was extraordinarily extensive.

After less congenial occupation, the lad entered the service of an architect in his native town, Aberdeen, and the boy's aptitude so interested the master that he was made a pupil. Some time after the expiration of his articles, he came to London and worked in the offices of several architects in a leading capacity. His work was mostly of a utilitarian order, but was always distinguished by great thoroughness and attention to detail.

That Mr. Mackenzie might have done work in other fields which would have brought him fame, is known to the few friends who were permitted to see some of his original drawings, and is evident to all who have read his verse. His poems not only rest on a firm basis of reasoned philosophy (take "God-Making" as an example) but were as perfect in scansion and rhyme as it was possible to make them.

He was passionately fond of music; could read at sight and sing with great expression; and no reminiscences gave him more pleasure than recalling the singing of Sims Reeves, Santley, Edward Lloyd, Vernon Rigby, etc. He was especially devoted to the oratorio music of Handel and Mendelssohn.

"Success is not secured by work alone,  
Nor merit always measured by success;  
A man may win and yet have conquered less  
Than he who, striving, fails to hold his own."

Mr. Mackenzie enjoyed the high esteem of all who knew him, as a token of which, a fine floral emblem was sent to his funeral by his colleagues, five of whom had been associated with him for twelve years or over were present at the graveside. His family saw fit to give the funeral a religious character.

E. A. H.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

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

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

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brookwell Park): 3.15 and 6, A. B. Moss, Lectures.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S.: Outing to Loughton. Meet at 8 a.m. at 34 Chiswick-road.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, W. Davidson, "The Wonders of the Bible."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Christian Sects; or, We are Not Divided."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Allison, "Where Eden Was."

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

YORKSHIRE AND LANCASHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—*Rochdale* (Town Hall Square): Sunday, July 14, at 11, "When I Was in Prison"; at 3, "Philosophy of Secularism"; at 7, "The Dead, Masters of the Living." *Whitworth* (Main Street): July 15, at 7.30, "The Devil and All His Works." *Bury* (Market Place): July 16, at 7.30, "The Cause and Cure of Christianity." *Heywood* (Town Centre): July 17, at 7.30, "What Would Jesus Do?" *Halifax* (Market Square): July 19, at 7.30, "What must we do to be saved?" *Bolton* (Town Hall Square): July 20, at 7.30, "Blasphemy and Profanity."

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, July 14, at 7.30, "Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*"; Monday, 15, at 7.30, "Philosophic Necessity of Materialism"; Tuesday, 16, at 8, "Modern Science and the Christian Valhalla"; Wednesday, 17, at 8, "Royal Parasites"; Thursday, 18, at 8, "Origin and Nature of the Christ Myth"; Friday, 19, at 8, "The Moon in Fact and Folk-Lore."

DUKINGFIELD (facing Town Hall): Joseph A. E. Bates—Friday, July 12, at 7.30, "Philosophy of Atheism."

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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