

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXII.—No. 48

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1912

PRICE TWOPENCE

Our nurses lull us to sleep by their cant; other old women take us out of their arms and prolong it by incantations.—LANDOR.

“Materialism” and Divorce.

MR. HAROLD BEGBIE has put his foot into it again. It is a performance that he goes through frequently. The reason is that he does not know enough to have sound opinions on any subject he deals with. His lack of information does not prevent his writing with the utmost confidence. But this is not a strange phenomenon. Ignorance is so easily dogmatic. And when it animates a fluent pen, in the service of “respectable” causes, and especially in defence of the “old religion,” it is sure of a hearty welcome and an ample reward.

No sooner was the Report of the Commission on Divorce published than Mr. Begbie proceeded to concoct a counterblast to the “findings” of the Majority, and a ready entrance was found for his article in the *Daily Chronicle*. This paper once opened its columns to a long and general correspondence on the question “Is Christianity Played Out?” There seemed too much reason to believe that it was played out. Our contemporary was alarmed at the upshot of its enterprise. That was a good many years ago—some twenty or more, if we recollect aright—and it has never been guilty of any such indiscretion since.

“Marriage and Divorce” was the title of Mr. Begbie’s article, with the sub-title of “Manifesto of Materialism,” and “an enemy hath done this” might have been selected as a very appropriate motto.

Mr. Begbie starts by claiming England as a Christian country. Whether we believe Christianity or not, Christianity has made us what we are. All our private and public life bears the impress of “the long heredity of Christian character.” Evidently, therefore, the hand of the reformer is very little wanted. We have a standard in Christ and a sort of Code Napoleon in the Bible. This seems to be the philosophy of Mr. Harold Begbie. The whole duty of man, according to this gentleman, is of the simplest description. It may be stated in a sentence: Obey the Savior and follow the Book.

Nevertheless mistakes will happen in the best regulated nations. One reason is that obeying Christ is not so simple a matter as it looks; another reason is that following the Book is extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible. Catholicism hides these facts by means of an infallible Church which relieves you of the trouble of thinking for yourself; and it is thinking that makes good or ill,—which, by the way, must in the long run include right and wrong. Protestants, however, who allow some latitude for individual reason under the name of private judgment are a motley crew floundering in the pit of uncertainty. Whitaker’s Almanack shows every year a longer list of Protestant sects who profess to be guided by the same infallible Book (as though one infallibility could be better than another!) and to stand upon the same Rock of Ages. Protestant doctrines, too, are like the pieces in a

kaleidoscope, and they end in dissolving views that baffle the keenest sight. And the result is that while Catholicism has but one answer to all questions about Divorce—namely, that marriage is a sacrament and an indissoluble bond—Protestantism gives various and contradictory answers, which afford no real light or direction.

It is evident that Mr. Begbie knows little, if anything, about this question of Divorce as it emerges in history, philosophy, ethics, and religion. If he prefers the Catholic doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage, the answer is that this dogma only dates from the Council of Trent. If he prefers what is often called the Christian tradition, he must be asked, What is that? For the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches, ever since the so-called Reformation, are entirely at variance with each other on this subject. This appears plainly enough in the evidence given by clerical witnesses before the Commission. This common agreement is only a common disagreement. Listen to what the Commissioners say in the Majority Report:—

“The main ground urged by those who objected to any extension of the grounds for divorce proceedings was that such extension would be contrary to Christian principles. This subject is discussed in all its bearings in the Chairman’s notes above referred to, and in many parts of the evidence, but in our opinion it does not seem desirable that this Commission should attempt to express any definite opinion as to what are the true Christian principles applicable to this subject. Opinions of persons equally learned, equally able, equally pious and honest, equally disinterested and humane, and equally public spirited, have differed and still differ upon the point, although the original materials upon which the differing opinions are formed are of a limited character. From these original materials has grown up an immense literature, which embraces the writing and opinions of early Fathers of the Christian Churches, the provisions of ecclesiastical councils, decrees of emperors and popes, penitentials for the guidance of priests, canons of the Churches, and writings of theologians and jurists. These productions were necessarily affected by the state of belief and knowledge which existed at the respective times of their issue, and it seems to us that some of the conceptions on which they are based may fairly be reconsidered in modern times.”

The truth is that the Christians nowadays take themselves far too seriously. They are not everybody. There are others. This fact is drawn attention to in the Majority Report:—

“It has to be remembered that members of Christian Churches are not alone concerned in the matters which form the subject of our inquiries. There are large numbers of persons, subject to the State, who do not belong to any Christian communion, or are only nominally Christians, and are not interested in the theological points upon which opinions have been expressed before us.”

Yet here is Mr. Harold Begbie shouting his wrath against the suggestions of the Majority Report in favor of extended facilities of divorce, not only as though the Christians were all agreed, but as though none but Christians were really to be considered. He declares that if Parliament legislate on this Report it will be “the greatest act of national apostacy in British history,” and the “most daring repudiation of Christ’s authority.” How nonsensical this is, and how belated!

(To be concluded.) G. W. FOOTE.

Materialism and Its Critics.

SOME time ago, when dealing with an article on Atheism by Mr. Hilaire Belloc, I said that, in controversy, the superior person always exposed himself to the charge of impertinence. I did not, of course, mean by this that one may not be fully justified in thinking his own position or arguments superior to those brought against him. This can hardly be avoided at times; and to ape humility, or to express a sense of inferiority when it is not present is of all things the most nauseating. The superior person I had in mind is the one who confines himself to more or less dogmatic statements of his own beliefs, and who justifies his method by the assumption, or by the direct assertion, that his adversary occupies such an inferior position as to be unable to rise to the superior height of the opinions he rejects. I said that at that point controversy loses its value. But its worthlessness is due entirely to the one who declines to bring his opinions to the test of facts that are the common property of all. In religious controversy one is quite used to this method—largely because differences in religious opinion have always been expressed in terms of moral value. But it is a pity when the same vicious plan is carried into scientific or philosophic discussion.

After some weeks, the *New Age* offers a signed reply to my criticism of its anti-Materialism, which was published in the *Freethinker* for October 6 and 13. To call it a reply is really an act of courtesy, for if the article had not stated its purpose no reader could possibly have discovered it to be such. It is simply a long-drawn repetition of the statement that the Materialist is so hopelessly out of date, so chained to a lower view of things that he simply cannot rise to a comprehension of the superior truth in the position he attacks. This may, of course, be the case. It does sometimes happen that one man is quite unable to grasp another's reasoning, and in that case the wisest policy is silence. But while this may be so in this instance, there is nothing in the article in question to prove that it is so. Reassertion does not demonstrate strength; it may be symptomatic of the most fatal of all weaknesses—inability to perceive the bearing or strength of the attack.

The writer of the article is "M.B. Oxon," and he opens with the curious statement that "If the criticism had been written by a Freethinker, it would have been of great interest, but it would seem that the writer is only a Materialist." Well, I flatter myself that the articles could only have been written by a Materialist; and, if I may be excused saying it, by one who, instead of being hypnotised by a word, had taken the trouble to assure himself of the essence of the Materialistic position, instead of chaining himself to a form of expression necessitated by the knowledge of fifty or a hundred years ago. But, anyway, I am at a loss to see why the interest of the articles is dependent upon the opinions of the writer. They contained either truth or falsehood, sense or nonsense, and it is both permissible and legitimate for a reader to form any view about them he pleases. But to damn what are admittedly interesting articles because the writer is a Materialist, is the religious method unadulterated. It is the way the Salvation Army replied to one of my lectures criticising its financial operations—"The speaker is an infidel."

It is to be noted that no attempt is made to justify the *New Age's* original connection of Materialism with economic exploitation. What we are treated to are things of this kind:—

"Though one can well understand a Materialist believing himself to be a Freethinker, yet that a Freethinker should make himself out a Materialist seems almost incredible."

"It is quite impossible to talk with a Materialist on any of the subjects worth talking about; he has, by definition or axiom, excluded them from his world.

Within the world which he recognises, his logic may be unimpeachable, and as a hewer of wood and drawer of water he does most valuable service, providing material on which the Freethinker can work."

"Small Freethinkers are not very uncommon, though they do not achieve very much except, maybe, the seduction of some of the followers of Materialism from their allegiance.....The Materialists only recognise the Material portion of their make-up, or put themselves to considerable pains to remove any stigma of Free-thought which they chance to recognise in them."

"Materialist science is a most valuable thing, but it is not the engine which drives evolution, it is the brake on the wheel of the car which prevents our theories from running away down the hill. No one but a fool would wish to dispense with it; it makes progress safe; it does not make progress."

Now, a man who can write sentence after sentence in this fashion cannot by the wildest and widest stretch of courtesy be said to be conducting an argument. There is not present even the merit of courageous abuse. It is rather abuse by innuendo. Not that anyone is really hurt by it, and it is to be hoped that no one of intelligence is deceived by it. Some of it is not very intelligible—the last paragraph, for example. Of course Materialist science is not the engine which drives evolution. But is any science? Evolution is the name given to a process, and science in any form only describes to us the character of the process and helps us to understand the relation of its various parts. Is even "the engine which drives evolution" a legitimate or useful figure? Does it not suggest an outside power determining or coercing natural forces?—a conception that is as far removed as is possible from the best scientific thinking, whether it be of a spiritualistic or a materialistic kind. Moreover, Materialist science is no more a "brake" than any other conception. Any theory so far acts as a "brake" on an opposing theory. Idealism checks the extravagances of Realism, Spiritualism of Materialism, and Materialism of Spiritualism. This is the normal consequence of opposing theories; extravagance is checked and a reasonable measure of restraint imposed.

The trouble with "M.B. Oxon" is that he does not appear to have seriously inquired as to what Materialism really is. Like so many other critics of Materialism, he seems to be under the impression that it is dependent on a special conception of the nature of "matter"; and therefore, if this is shown to be weak or untenable, Materialism suffers to a proportionate extent. It is easy, on this plea, to make play with "matter" and "Materialism," and to say that Materialism has no place and no use for consciousness or mind. The principal objection to this method is that it leaves a genuine Materialism where it was, and the scientific Materialist quite unaffected. It may even be found that the Anti-Materialist has really been using weapons forged in the Materialist armory, and actually strengthening the position he believes he is demolishing.

Historically, it is true, Materialism has been associated with a certain conception of matter. In a world of uncertainty the one certain thing appeared to be the material that could be seen and felt, and the physical forces around us. Matter and force were admitted by all parties; and here was a common ground from which the discussion could start. Naturally, too, the philosophic Materialist was bound to adjust his conception of "matter" to the best contemporary scientific knowledge. If science said that matter was ultimately resolvable into hard, indivisible and indestructible parts, the Materialist was content. If later knowledge or more plausible speculation asserted that this was wrong, and that all matter might be resolved into some form of force, or energy, or something else, the Materialist was again content. The precise constitution of matter was not at all essential to his position, and there was no earthly reason why he should not be permitted to revise the presentation of his argument, as geologists and biologists from time to time revise theirs.

And the Materialist could do this cheerfully, because, as I have said, he was not vitally concerned with the ultimate nature of "matter." Historical Materialism must be taken in conjunction with historical Spiritualism, without which it has no significance whatever. Now, the essence of Spiritualism is, that in addition to material forces (I must use this term for want of a better or clearer one) there existed another force of a generically different nature. This other force (spirit) could neither be developed from, nor resolved into, material forces or conditions. It worked in conjunction with "matter" but remained independent of it. On the other hand, the essence of Materialism consisted in a denial of this duality; in the assertion that, given adequate knowledge, all the so-called spiritual phenomena would be found to be, not the manifestation of a separate and independent principle or force, but the product of the same ultimate substance that meets us in the world of matter and energy. So far as the Materialist is concerned, "matter," as a substantive fact, may be annihilated. We may say with Berkeley that it is a figment of the imagination. As a matter of fact, the atom was never more than a working scientific conception; it is as much an hypothesis as is the ether; and if a better working conception is to be found, no one need be alarmed or raise an objection. Ultimately, mind and matter are equally abstractions. We have one class of phenomena—mental states—that give us the abstraction, "mind." We have another class of phenomena—chemical, electrical, gravitative, etc.—which gives us the abstraction, "matter." This is really the bare truth of the subject, and its due appreciation might have saved much paper and ink.

The essence of Materialism, then, does not lie in any special view of the ultimate nature of matter. It is an assertion of what, for want of a better name, may be called mechanism. It is an assertion that whatever the ultimate nature of the substance of the universe may be, all its activities are ultimately resolvable into that. Calling the ultimate substance mind or spirit neither negatives nor weakens this view. Names are nothing to those who really think, and whether we call the material of the universe matter, mind, or spirit, is a point of little consequence. It is the evolution of all existing forms from all past forms, and so on through an endless sequence, without the intrusion or co-operation of an external and independent force, at any stage of the process, that is the very kernel of Materialism.

One word in conclusion. "M.B. Oxon," like many others, appears to think that the problem of problems—and the one on which Materialism breaks—is the origin and nature of consciousness. This is quite a mistake. Admitting that we do not know the origin and nature of consciousness, so long as we do not know, neither Spiritualist nor Materialist can derive legitimate strength from our ignorance. The former can only utilise ignorance as a ground of assertion, and the latter suggest theories that are incapable of actual proof. But the man must be either ignorant or rash, who, in the present state of knowledge, denies the possibility of resolving complex mental phenomena into simpler and simpler elements, until they are finally lost in chemical, or physico-chemical reactions. At any rate, consciousness is only a more complex example of problems that face us in all directions, some of which are rapidly yielding to patient treatment. The ultimate problem is not why consciousness exists, but why anything exists. It is existence itself that is the ultimate and insoluble problem. Given existence, all else is a matter of investigation, of patience, of time. And in this respect there is only one principle that steadily gains ground. The more we know the more securely the mechanistic principle stands. All actual, verifiable knowledge supports it. Against it there is nothing but a wall of blank ignorance. It is not only a conception that is so far verified by known facts; it is an indispensable condition of scientific thinking.

C. COHEN.

The Spirit of the Age.

SOME people are firmly of opinion that the world is gradually getting worse, that the present age is the very worst in its whole history, and that the general trend of things is downwards. Their censure of to-day is as extravagant as their praise of yesterday. Nothing is so vehemently condemned as what is called the spirit of the age. To these modern Jeremiahs it is an exceptionally evil spirit, aiming at the demolition of all that makes for the real welfare of mankind, and at the establishment of all that makes for its downfall. It is the spirit of wickedness too successfully warring against the spirit of holiness. Such is the conviction of the leaders who admit and deplore the gradual decadence of the Christian religion. It is perfectly true that supernatural religion is visibly dying, and that it is the spirit of the age that is killing it; but is it not within the bounds of possibility that the spirit of the age is undermining supernaturalism simply because it is a good, benevolent spirit? When a Christian asserts that "there is no merely ethical solution of grave moral problems," is he not saying what richly deserves to be vigorously opposed as a pernicious heresy? If grave moral problems are not capable of a merely moral solution, the natural inference is that they are insoluble. Or when a minister declares that church collections are acts of worship, is he not uttering a pious fiction? Everybody knows that collections are taken up in order that the church may be a paying concern. When a noted clergyman undertook to conduct the opening services of a mission church in a poor district, and saw, on his arrival, a large-lettered intimation on the notice-board, "No collection," he exclaimed: "What? No collection? You might as well intimate, 'No prayer,' or 'No praise.' Giving to the Lord as he has prospered us is an act of worship; it is one, and not the least, of the means of grace."

The spirit of the age delights in *criticism*. It flatly refuses to take anything on credit. Its motto is, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." It knows of nothing that is above criticism. There exists neither book nor institution that cannot be freely criticised. While "monarch reason" slept the Church reigned supreme for centuries as a Divine and infallible establishment; but as soon as reason awoke and cast its eye upon her both her divinity and her infallibility began to fade away, and her faults and crimes were seen to be legions. For a long period the Bible was worshiped as God's own book, and its word was law on every subject; but when criticism plucked up sufficient courage to examine it methodically it was not long before it discovered what a strange, bewildering mixture it was of fact and fiction, truth and error, wisdom and folly, with a vast abundance of contradictions, absurdities, atrocities, and immoralities. The spirit of the age treats the Bible in precisely the same manner as it does all other books. Naturally, the bibliolatrists hotly resent such irreverent attitude and conduct, while Secularists hail it as a most hopeful sign of the day.

The spirit of the age is a *liberty-loving* spirit. It hates all forms of oppression and intolerance, all coercive or repressive policies, all external and self-constituted authority. It claims the right to think and speak with unfettered independency; and what it claims it grants. The spirit of the age has lost faith in the man in the pulpit, and no longer pays heed to his utterances. It looks upon the priest as a conscious or unconscious fraud, as a man who is not and cannot be what he pretends to be. Week-ends, Sunday golf, lectures, and concerts are not signs of degeneracy, but of the subsidence of supernaturalism and the triumph of the natural. They are also indications that the Platonic and Pauline contempt for the body is passing away.

The spirit of the age is also a *knowledge-acquiring* spirit. The Christian glorification of faith is an abomination in its sight. The believer prays for an

increase of faith, while the philosopher diligently digs for knowledge in Nature's mine, and finds it. The Christian believes what he cannot know, believes against the evidence of numerous ascertained facts, believes to his own intellectual undoing. Listen to the following fallacious reasoning with which the Rev. Dr. George Adam Smith, Principal of Aberdeen University, sought lately to edify a congregation in London:—

"I am aware how much there is in the present experience of men and in the advancing knowledge of the world which appears to render incredible the belief of our fathers in a personal providence. But I should like to spend a very few words in showing you why reasons which are sometimes quoted against such a faith are illusory, and that there is nothing which can rob you and me of such a faith except, of course, our own moral delinquencies. Every temptation we yield to, every affection we abuse, every wrong use we make of mind or body, every insincerity of which we are guilty, every piece of scamped work that we let leave our hands—these are things that shake our faith in God and that make it increasingly more difficult for us to believe that our life is a mission from him."

Dr. Smith is one of the greatest living Hebrew scholars; but his presentation of the ultimate grounds for faith shows that he is as blind a believer as the most illiterate and ignorant disciple of the Nazarene. It is simply not true that people guilty of the faults he enumerates lose their faith in God's providence. Lots of persons yield to temptation, abuse affection, violate body and mind, and scamp their work, and yet enjoy a vivid sense of God's presence and care and love in their lives, and believe that they "are thought upon and cared for and carried upon the heart of the Infinite Unseen." On the other hand, multitudes of people who cannot be described as sufferers from "moral delinquencies," and who live exquisitely beautiful and deeply philanthropic lives, are yet wholly devoid of Theistic belief. They recognise neither God nor his providence. Besides, if there were such a thing as Divine providence it would certainly prevent people from falling into "moral delinquencies." And if a man were to become guilty of some or all of the sins mentioned, his loving Heavenly Father would be so consciously near and helpful to him that there would be no possibility of his losing his faith in him. As a matter of fact, the spirit of the age is on the side of unbelief in God and his providence, because knowledge of the facts of life makes belief in either a sheer mockery.

Another characteristic of the spirit of the age is *aspiration*. A writer in the *British Congregationalist* for November 21, admits, but regrets, "that the great fact of to-day is that the Christian standard and view of life is less than formerly the one which governs life and directs civilisation." He is undoubtedly right; but it by no means follows, as he seems to think, that the standard of life which now governs and directs civilisations is lower than the Christian. In the opinion of many it is much higher. It is quite certain that the Sermon on the Mount is an utterly impossible standard, so ludicrously impossible that society has never made a single attempt to conform to it. The only individual who seriously approved of it and tried unsuccessfully to put it into practice was Count Tolstoy, with the result that he became the laughing-stock of Christendom. But although the so-called Christian standard of life is not in the ascendant, still we are obliged to admit that the trend of social evolution is upwards, not downwards. On every hand we meet with a firm and resolute demand for healthier, juster, and happier conditions of life. In all departments this demand is under consideration and discussion; and it is undeniable that, however reluctantly and stingily, it is being acceded to. Humanity aspires, and very slowly it rises against all odds. The writer just quoted declares that "mere brotherliness (good as it is in itself) cannot hope to accomplish the task of bringing into the service of man's soul and higher nature the whole fabric of our complex and stupendous civilisation." He also asserts that "the

brotherhood of man becomes a mere figure of speech confronted with the needs of the age." Then he mentions "the brotherhood of Christ," whatever that may be, and claims that it is equal to the stupendous task. Well, we have had two thousand years of the brotherhood of Christ, and the task is still unaccomplished; but the brotherhood of man has not had a fair innings yet. It is a reality of the future towards which evolution is slowly tending. Whatever is meant by the brotherhood of Christ, it has clearly failed to perform its self-appointed work, while the brotherhood of man is only faintly beginning to be realised. Do not pronounce it a failure before it has been tried.

The spirit of the age is unquestionably anti-Christian and almost as fully anti-Theistic; but it is, on the whole, pro-human, and it is slowly, though not quite steadily and continuously, making for the advancement of man.

J. T. LLOYD.

Charles Southwell.

"O comrade, lustrous with silver face in the night."

—WHITMAN.

AT the present time, when there is a recrudescence of the persecution of Freethinkers, and men are being fined and imprisoned for the priest-made crime of blasphemy, it is interesting to call attention to the notable personality of Charles Southwell, the editor of the first definitely Freethought paper in England. During the period prior to the birth of an organised Freethought party in the country, Charles Southwell stood in the forefront of the movement. His eloquence, ability, and audacity attracted the "intellectuals," and also drew on him the resentment of the Christians.

Charles Southwell was born in 1814, the year before the battle of Waterloo, and he was the youngest of a large family of thirty-three children. His father was a militant Freethinker, who, when upwards of seventy years of age, married a handsome lass of twenty, Charles being the offspring of this singular union. In his schooldays, young Southwell was chiefly remarkable for playing truant and for possessing a wonderful memory. When he left school at the age of twelve, he had, to use his own words, "knowledge enough to puzzle pedants, and ignorance enough to disgrace a Hottentot." During his short life he was orator, soldier, actor, Socialist, Freethought advocate, editor, and prisoner for freedom. At one time he joined the Spanish legion formed for the purpose of assisting Queen Isabella to maintain her throne against Don Carlos. For two years he consorted with this motley crew; and, in spite of loathsome surroundings, chronic starvation, and the attacks of fever, he came through his military adventure without serious damage. On his return to England, he began to make history with the publication, in 1841, of the *Oracle of Reason*, which will always be remembered as the first periodical devoted to Freethought propaganda. The literary tone of the paper may be estimated by the fact that it contained articles on "Symbol Worship," "The Theory of Regular Gradation," and "Is There a God?" The Christians were seriously alarmed, and threatened Southwell with all the rigors of the law; and the intrepid editor, his fighting spirit aroused, carried the war farther into the enemy's camp. Hitherto, the columns of the *Oracle* had been occupied with literary and philosophical articles; but now its pages were laden with caustic criticism of the Christian superstition, and on the appearance of the fourth number, Southwell was arrested, tried by Sir Charles Wetherell, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, with a fine of £100.

The indictment was comprehensive, and included paragraphs from an article on "Symbol Worship," one from an essay on "Religion," with a long extract from "The Jew Book," a powerful criticism of the Bible.

During the trial Southwell's colleague, William Chilton, adopted a very ingenious method of outwitting the authorities who had seized the copies of the *Oracle*. He printed and sold at a halfpenny copies of the warrant, a document that set out all the indicted passages from the various articles. The Freethinkers made a brave stand against the enemy. During Southwell's imprisonment Holyoake edited the paper, and when he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment Thomas Paterson took his place. "Bull Dog" Paterson, as he was affectionately called, was sent to gaol, and in turn George Adams and his wife, Harriet, stepped into the breach, each to be imprisoned. Chilton succeeded them, and edited the paper until the end, which was hastened by the formidable debts incurred in the continuous prosecutions and the heavy fines imposed. The *Oracle of Reason* lasted just over two years; but during its short but stormy career it created a profound impression, which afterwards led to the formation of a properly organised Army of Freethought. After his release from prison, Southwell carried on a Freethought agitation in many places, and ultimately settled in New Zealand, where he edited the *Auckland Examiner*. He died in 1860 at the early age of forty-six.

Southwell wrote much, but few of his publications survive. Perhaps the most interesting of his works is *The Confessions of a Freethinker*, published about 1845. To present-day Freethinkers Charles Southwell is but a name; but those of an older generation recognised in him one of the most remarkable figures that have appeared in the Freethought movement. His life was a veritable romance. A gifted and unfortunate man, he fought well and suffered so much in the noblest of causes. Considering the storm-clouds that are looming on our horizon, it may be that a glance at such an heroic figure of other times will be acceptable and timely. Around the camp-fire, in the pauses of the battle, the soldiers of the Army of Liberty may well hear a story of the brave days of old.

MIMNERMUS.

The Vale of Tears.

THE march of man through the centuries has sounded, often but feebly, above its accompaniment of pain, and yet happiness, when it came, remained. Joy kindled the life-forces within him, consuming the ghosts that haunted his mind. Smiling hope bent over, shielding the sparks of his wit from the rain of adversity. Realisation fanned the flames of desire till they illumined the blackness of night. Man showed himself able to do what the gods had hitherto done for him; and, behold! there were no more gods. Man discovered he could make himself what his gods had never made him—happy; and lo! at one stroke he struck from his wrists the chains he himself had hammered on the anvil of faith. In the light of happiness there are no shadows of gods. When the man laughs the gods flee. Merriment murders gods with the weapon of foolishness. Man found happiness to be good, and knew it as his right. He laughed and was glad; and his mirth made him mightier than his gods.

But man's pathways were not always pleasant. Not always did they awaken his joyfulness, nor did they always encourage, by their beauty and brightness, the life-force within him. In his nature there lay instincts not yet governable, passions that linked him to his brute fellows, that controlled and subdued, throwing him back to the times when he was as they are.

On the pathway he would chance upon something that tingled the low-lying chords of his being. In a moment the animal nature would be aroused. For a moment it would be active. In a moment it would be gone. In that short period he had renounced all his strength, his greatness, his beauty. He had become an animal, even as the animals are. Passion had dominated reason. He had lost the power to

guide and to control. And, as he tramped along, the sunrays were dulled to mist; the fresh air was stagnant and oppressive; the vitality of his body heavy and slow. His eyes became dimmed with the tears of contrition. He was passing through the vale; for his mind was closed to the causes, open only to the effects, and these, magnified by their proximity, appeared insupportably weighty.

It was then religion returned to him. His strugglings and strivings, his great endeavors, and grand successes, how miserably pitiable they seemed now. The strength on which he had placed so much hope, and which had performed so many magnificent deeds, seemed like a firefly on a morass. The will power he had made strong to rescue him from destruction had become a thin willow-bough. It was religion's triumph.

In his dejection he groaned aloud, bearing the full responsibility for his failure. Yet there would come thoughts, thoughts of the Devil, he imagined, whispering to him that the weakness of his nature was stronger than his strength, for which he was not accountable; that, from the past, he inherited crookednesses, from which liberation was yet to be achieved, but only through long spells of hard training; that he was irresponsible, and should not grieve. The grandeur of humanity, the tempter whispered, counterbalances the individual degradation. Goodness prevails, because it must. Nature decrees that man disobey her laws at his own peril. Man seeks to live; and to live he must obey these laws; and upon these laws is goodness built. The individual may fall; still, there may be within even him other powers whose activity for good may outweigh the evil he does.

But from his mind man flung these insidiously debasing thoughts, as he conceived them; and turned to worship the gods his laughter had dethroned, craving for the pardon nature could not give.

So, in the march of man, has passion brought its reaction, and religion its solace. They have robbed him of his reason, and weakened his will-power. They have led him from his purpose to the shadows of despair, breaking his spirit, and enswathing his aspirations in the cerements of death. From the peaks of noble ambition they have plunged him into the depths of a seeming futility; and tortured him with the horrors of a mental prison whose damp walls mockingly re-echoed his self-condemnations of contemptible weakness.

The old instincts are still alive, awaiting the call, awaiting the removal of the necessary restrictions, to spring forth and dominate the man whose strength of will is weaker than their power. We are nearer the animal oftener than we would admit; which would say little for the Christian's God if he *did* exist. The mind may lift us high in the altitudes of civilisation; the baser impulses, the lower instincts, the mental primitivism, remain still to gloat over our failures.

In the life of the individual it would seem as if the biological law were equally true in personal emancipation from the thralldom of instinct, and its effervescence, passion. Some of us there are who seem to possess some of that portion of the will-power and mental strength of humanity wherewith to subdue, with little difficulty, the baser promptives of our natures. Others there are of us whose lives seem little else than an epitome of the whole human struggle from the domination of instinct, mental and physical. It is as if the whole history of man's escape from animalism, with its innumerable failures and hardships, its hopelessnesses and its futilities, were being enacted in our own lives, with the concentration of its pain. These must bow their backs to the burden, and go stumbling along the rough road. For them there is no recompense but the unsatisfying knowledge that, against the inevitable, they have fought to the best of their skill; it is well. They walk through the vale of tears, the valley whers dwell the bloodsuckers and parasites; the valley from which only the few fortunate emerge, not to health, enjoyment, and well-being, simply to

the consciousness that they have fought for and obtained that which can hardly be expressed in words: freedom of mind.

To the unfortunate travellers in the valley, softly, seductively, a voice says: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." They come; and religion walks with them through the valley of tears; but the burden is not lifted. Their steps may be quickened a little by the new mental influence irradiating from the visioned companion. Eyes may brighten with the hope that seems to glimmer in the darkness. Days drift into the past; and soon the more mentally energetic ask, "Where is the Rest you promised? Give us some." In sweet words, in honeyed hopes, in verbal dew-drops, religion answers; but the burden remains unlightened. "You tell us to cast our burden on the Lord. We have tried, and cannot. Here is the burden; but where is the Lord? Ha! You, and your Lord, and your rest are lies. There is no Lord but death; no rest but the grave. We'll have none of you. Go; get you gone, impostor." And the stronger-minded go alone through the valley. Content to bear their burden bravely, they know that fortitude, heroic complacency, unconquerable determination to plod on, if they do not minimise the weight, at least are not less admirable because there is no reward.

Religion knows its futility as harbinger of real rest to the traveller in the vale of tears. It knows that, if the burden but be heavy enough, its powers, even to engender the idea that religion has accomplished relief, are useless. It knows it lies when it promises rest; when it offers the Lord's back; when it says I will give you peace. It is a liar all the time. Gulling the weak-minded, it makes them weaker. It is the scavenger of humanity, sweeping the thoughtless into heaps, to serve as a barricade against a spirit that can never permanently be retarded.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Trade Unionists and Secular Education.

THE Trades Union Congress by large and repeated majorities has affirmed its adherence to Secular Education. The last Congress at Newport was the first for many years at which no vote was taken on that issue. A motion, however, was passed that the subject should not be discussed in future, and it has been represented that this decision reversed the declaration in favor of Secular Education. This was not so. The vote at Newport was not taken on the merits of the rival systems. It was professedly based on considerations of expediency. On every occasion when the question of Secular Education has been discussed the Congress has declared for the Secular Solution by a large majority, and those decisions remain as the expressed opinion, unchanged and unchallenged, of that great assembly of labor. At Newport the opponents of Secular Education did not venture to propose its condemnation, nor did they attempt to reverse the decision of previous Congresses.

In declaring against any further discussion of the question the Newport Congress yielded to a minority which, on every occasion when the question was decided on its own merits, had been overwhelmingly defeated. This action was taken avowedly on the danger to Trade Unionism of alienating a discontented minority, however small. But is there any justification for this discontent? The principle of Secular Education is that in State-supported elementary schools there should be no teaching of religion in school hours or at the public expense. It is a principle in no way hostile to any religion. It insists that religious teaching pertains to parents and to the Churches, and not to the public authorities, who represent the whole community.

The teaching of any particular religious creed cannot be properly entrusted to secular bodies, constituted irrespective of all creeds, and drawing their resources from funds to which all citizens, of whatever creed, must contribute. Such a system is a distinct menace to the freedom of teachers, which can only be maintained by State neutrality in the schools. This is a consideration which affects equally the members of every Church; and no one knows who may be the next victim. Only lately a teacher in Scotland was dismissed because she had joined the Catholic Church. Such cases of injustice must necessarily arise under a system which requires the teacher to give religious instruction.

The principle that the discussion of religion should be excluded from the Trades Union Congress is excellent; but a discussion of the question as to who should give religious teaching, and who should pay for it—whether the particular Churches or the whole community—is not a discussion of religion. In fact, the principle by which the discussion of religion is excluded from the Congress is the very same principle by which the teaching of religion should be excluded from the State schools. In Trade Unions and also in State schools, which alike draw their support from men and women of various beliefs, it is undesirable that any question of religious difference should arise. The State, like the Trade Union, unites men of all opinions for purposes that are common to all. Citizens and Trade Unionists have in their respective churches the agencies for teaching their religion.

An efficient school system is vitally important to labor. On the adequate education of the workers' children depends in a large measure the position of the workers in the next generation. Efficiency is hindered by everything which makes the schools the centre of religious controversy. Such controversy diverts the attention of the civic authorities from the secular side of education—the only one they have competence to deal with; it diminishes the freedom of the teacher; it lessens the effectiveness of his work; and it prevents the State from being able to command the services of some of the ablest members of the teaching profession. Why should a Protestant be taught arithmetic by an inefficient teacher because he is a Protestant, rather than by a good teacher who is a Catholic? And how can considerations of a teacher's faith be disregarded if that teacher has to teach a particular creed? It behoves Trade Unionists, as all other citizens, if they wish to free education from these trammels, to do their utmost to secure the establishment of that principle of Secular Education in State schools which the Trades Union Congress has so often endorsed and has never repudiated.

—Issued by the Secular Education League. Copies for distribution can be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. H. Snell, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, London, W.C.

Acid Drops.

Rev. H. J. Cossar, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, speaking at the annual meeting of the Soham auxiliary, said that "a friend of his" (second-hand information) had witnessed some awful Turkish atrocities in the Balkans. One woman of 70 was dying with eight bayonet wounds in her breast, the work of Turkish soldiers. Six children were thrown into quicklime, three being pulled out dead and three living. Shocking—if true! But does the reverend gentleman fancy that these things are only done by Turks?

In the final paragraph of our last week's front-page article we drew attention to the fact that in the war about Crete, some fifteen years ago, both Turks and Greeks (or Cretans) killed their prisoners. But that was not the whole brutality of the situation. Had not the European Powers intervened it is probable that all the Mohammedans of the island would have been extirpated, under circumstances of terrible cruelty. We quoted at the time from London newspapers accounts of the most horrible butchery and mutilation of Moslem women and children by the Christians.

The Vienna correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* wired on Thursday, November 21, that Lieutenant Wagner, whose letters to the *Reichpost* have been so noticeable in the dearth of war correspondence, was prevented by the Servian Government from going to Uskub, but while staying at Nish he "heard well-nigh incredible details of barbarities alleged to have been committed by the Servians on the Albanians," his informant being a doctor belonging to the Red Cross Society. The latter said:—

"They gave no quarter. All the Albanians, armed as well as unarmed, including women and children, who fell into their hands were mercilessly killed. General Stefanovics had the Albanians captured at Kratove formed up in two ranks and shot dead with machine guns."

General Zivkovich ordered 950 Turkish and Albanian notables to be cut down near Sjenica. After the battle of Kumanovo many wounded Turks and Albanians were buried with the dead.

Still another illustration of the kindness and humanity developed by a war in which appeals to religious feeling—on the Christian side—are so prominent. The Constanti-

nople correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle* telegraphed on November 20 as follows:—

"Greek soldiers in Salonika have sacked the Jewish quarter, ransacking and destroying the synagogues; they have also violated young Jewish women. Terror and desolation prevail. Rabbis are invoking the protection of M. Bompard, the French Ambassador, and Sir G. A. Lowther, the British Ambassador at Constantinople."

It is also said that the Greek troops are behaving generally in a bad way, and that ill-feeling is rife between them and the Bulgarian troops.

The *Church Times* confesses to "a feeling of disappointment" at what at present looks like the Turks stalemating the armies of the Balkan States. "We had hoped," it says, "that we had seen the last of the Turkish rule in Europe, and that the Church of Santa Sophia would be restored to Christian use." There speaks the true Christian spirit. The deaths of thousands of men are counted as nothing if a sectarian advantage is to be gained and sectarian feelings gratified. Most of the talk about getting rid of the Turk from Europe in the interests of good government is the rankest cant and humbug. First of all, good government is not more desirable in Europe than it is in Asia. And if the Turk cannot or will not govern well—a quite wild and absurd supposition—it is ridiculous to leave him territory on which he has full permission to govern ill. Second, if we do come to the absurd conclusion that it is only in Europe that bad government will not be tolerated, why not transport Christian Spaniards to Africa, or Holy Russia to Asia? Massacres are not unknown in Russia, and its treatment of the Jews equals anything narrated of Mohammedan treatment of Christians. Finally, are we quite sure that the banishment of the Turk will mean good government in Servia and other Balkan States? Judging from what we know the beneficial consequences are not by any means so certain as some people appear to think.

The Turks know just as much about God as the Balkan Christians do. They declare that God is on *their* side. The Turkish Government at Constantinople, however, is of a different opinion. In reply to the Allies' terms of peace the Turkish Commander-in-Chief was instructed to "continue military operations with the help of God." Which side is the Deity on? On the winning side, of course; so we must "Wait and See."

The London County Council is not going to close the Picture Shows on Sundays. We note that fact to its credit. The puritans, and the trade rivals who adopt the puritan label as a blind, have failed once more,—though we may be sure they will return to the attack next year. At Liverpool the cinematograph film "From Manger to Cross" has been tabooed at a special meeting of the Committee of the Town Council. They consider the show "objectionable" as "tending to cause a breach of the peace." But why should it do that? Are not the Christians all agreed on the Life of Jesus as related in the Gospels? Or is it apprehended that Christians and Freethinkers would fall out over this particular exhibition? If so, we reply that Freethinkers would laugh at the very idea. Nobody need go to see it if he does not want to, and if Christians like to patronise it, well and good. There are many tastes, and this is one of them.

Sunday picture shows are stopped again at Brighton. This is the direct result of clerical agitation. The Chief Constable testifies that the Sunday picture shows keep young people off the streets and promote the order and good behavior of the town. But what do the clergy care about that? They prefer the disorder and bad behavior of the town to the slightest loss of their godly traffic on the Lord's Day.

"From Manger to Cross"—the expensive cinema film of the (imaginary) Life of Christ—is meeting with great difficulties. The censorship of the tradespeople, for the most part, who form the Town Councils and other licensing bodies in England, is up in arms against such a profane treatment of holy things. A full meeting of the Liverpool committee has been called to deal with the question of licensing this novel show. For our part, we can well understand the alarm of the orthodox, and especially of the clergy. Left to imagination, the New Testament miracles are not incredible on the face of them, but they shock reason when they are performed, as it were, under our very eyes. The beginning of Christ's career couldn't be represented at all, as it would only raise questions in biology; and such a miracle as turning water into wine would look too much nowadays like a trick at Maskelyne's—besides having all the teetotalers against it. Altogether the career of Jesus

Christ, as related in the Gospels, is better left to faith than presented to sight.

While so strong an effort is being made to secure the closing of cinematograph shows on Sunday, it is well to bear in mind some opinions expressed by officials concerning their influence on the population. Thus the Governor of Newcastle Prison, commenting on the smaller number of prisoners under his charge during last year, says: "I am credibly informed that the large number of cinematograph halls in the city and suburbs is largely responsible for this decrease." There is the same report from Preston, and the same opinion expressed as to the influence of the picture shows. Even the clergy have been driven to admit that no fault can be found with the general character of the entertainment provided. Indeed, it seems unquestionable that anything that attracts young people to a decent entertainment, and so prevents their hanging about the streets or lounging in public-houses, must so far count for good.

For our part, we are not even anxious to attribute the decreased number of prisoners to the influence of picture shows. The causes that make for an increase or a decrease in our prison population are very complex, and it is rash to credit any particular factor with the result. But this much is clear. The Sunday picture shows offer the opportunity for many thousands of young people spending their evenings in what is admittedly a harmless manner. They can visit these places instead of aimlessly loitering about or otherwise picking up bad habits. Had the clergy any genuine desire for the betterment of people they would welcome these places as so many aids to that end. Instead of this, they are devoting their whole energies to closing them, simply because they threaten their own professional interest. They would much rather see a population drunken and immoral and pious than see the people sober and cleaner-living and non-religious. Disguise it as they may—and we believe a good many of the clergy disguise it from themselves—the crusade against Sunday shows exhibits the clergy of this country in the poorest and most sordid possible aspect. The objection that certain forms of entertainment were demoralising did at least cover their action with a pretence of decency. The removal of this plea leaves their sordid professionalism plain to all. They talk largely enough of the unconscionable vested interest of the publican. Is it less active, or less scrupulous, than that of the clergy?

It seems almost impossible to get Dr. Clifford to face an issue fairly and honestly. On the education question he has been so long dodging and twisting that he may have forgotten in which direction the straight path lies. We are not, therefore, surprised that Mr. George Greenwood should have failed where many others have not succeeded. Mr. Greenwood wrote in the *Daily News*, in reply to Dr. Clifford, that "If the State devotes public funds to the maintenance of Cowper-Templeism, I fear I have no option but to call that a form of State endowment of religion." Whereupon came the reply, "Mr. Greenwood assumes that Cowper-Temple teaching endows my religion." Mr. Greenwood obviously assumed nothing of the kind, but simply stated the indisputable fact that any form of religion taught in State schools amounted to an endowment of religion. Dr. Clifford wants Cowper-Templeism taught by the State, and so far asks for the State endowment of religious teaching. The issue is quite plain, but it does not suit Dr. Clifford to see it.

A *Church Times* reviewer asks:—

"When will people get it out of their heads that the Middle Ages were gloomy and sombre? We should try to imagine Westminster Abbey, for example, without its ugly white marble statuary, but with its walls covered with patines of gold, the light from radiant jewelled windows striking down on vestment and censer and rich furniture or tomb, and the now blackened and silent cloisters humming with life and work."

We do not know that there has been any very strong complaints about the comfort and beauty of mediæval cathedrals. But the life of the world was not spent in cathedrals. Their gorgeousness only threw into greater relief the hovels in which the people herded—the filthy, unlit, unswept streets, the unventilated houses in which the people lived. The wealth of the cathedral must be taken in conjunction with the poverty of the people, their strength with the insecurity of life, and the denial of freedom. Inside the church there may have been light and warmth and peace of a sort. Outside were darkness, squalor, degradation, and social decay. Life must be judged as a whole if it has to be judged wisely. But those who can see in the overthrow of a rival religion the main justification of the present Balkan war may well find ample compensation for the human degrada-

tion of the mediæval period in the erection of gorgeous cathedrals erected on the sufferings of millions and paid for not of the plunder of ages.

Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* states on good authority that the seeds of drunkenness have been sown in the "Holy Communion" with its port wine, and that reformed drunkards have had the old thirst for drink revived in them by the same agency. We may quote in practical corroboration of this a confession made by Dr. Hicks, Bishop of Lincoln, in a Temperance address at the Albert Hall, Manchester, on Friday evening, November 22—and widely reported in the public press. We take the following passage from the report in the *London Star* :—

"Drinking the sacramental wine, he said, had often made him practically intoxicated. For forty years as a priest he had had to consume the remainder of the wine consecrated at the Sacrament. On many occasions he had been distressed by the symptoms of giddiness and momentary eclipse of sobriety which followed."

The Bishop's remedy is to use weak wine and water. But this was declared to be a heresy by the ancient Christian Church. *Bible and Beer* contains some interesting reading on this point.

Mr. J. H. Harris, in his recent work, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, says that one day, on the West Coast, he visited a leading native Christian. The native took Mr. Harris over his farm, showed all the arrangements, and finally a building divided into three compartments. Of this building "one section was used as a gin store, the middle section for prayer meetings, and in the third the man kept his wives. All this he boldly asserted could be justified by reference to the Scriptures." Mr. Harris does not appear to agree with the native Christian in his conclusions, but we fancy that on any honest appeal to the Bible the latter would have the best of the argument. Polygamy is manifestly a Biblical institution; put at its mildest there is no condemnation in the Bible of drinking, and Mr. Harris would certainly not say that it condemned prayer meetings. The native's real fault seems to have been that of reading the Bible honestly.

A correspondent signing himself E. G. Blythe, and dating from 9 Briarwood-road, Clapham, S.W., writes Mr. Foote a terribly long letter *re* his lecture on "Jesus and Mohammed." The writer affects to be a Freethinker himself, but was pained that Jesus was represented as in many respects inferior to Mohammed. But he gives himself away as no-Freethinker by writing the "Him" and "His" relating to "Christ" with a capital H. Moreover, he describes Jesus as "giving up his body to a cruel death." "Giving up" in this connection is the language of a worshiper, not of a critic. Jesus only "gave up" his body to a cruel death on the theory that he was superhuman; for, according to the plain language of the Gospel narrative, he was arrested, indicted, found guilty, sentenced, and executed like any other prisoner. On the face of it there was no "giving up." He could not help himself. Further, this writer calls Thomas Paine "dirty," and Darwin a eulogist of Christ, and puts Jean Valjean in the list of eminent Freethinkers with Gibbon, Hume, and Mill. The whole passage reads like a vamped-up piece of Christian Evidence composition. Jean Valjean, of course, is not even a real person, but an imaginary character in one of Victor Hugo's novels—*Les Misérables*. Another tell-tale bit is the writer's reference to Freethinkers as "filled with animus and ready to believe anything detrimental to the religion of their country." The cloven hoof indeed!

How difficult it is to find anything in print about Freethinkers that is really true. Turning over the pages of Cassell's *Biographical Dictionary* our eyes caught the item "Bradlaugh." In the course of some thirty lines we found two gross blunders. The first is that Bradlaugh was "bankrupt" in 1870, the second is that he "refused to take the oath" in 1880 and afterwards, and that it was for this reason "he was not allowed to take his seat." There is not a grain of truth in either of these statements. Bradlaugh was never bankrupt and he never refused to take the oath. On the contrary, he tried to take it, and did take it (with his seat) in 1886—under the ægis of Mr. Speaker Peel.

The glorious free press is more glorious than ever. Here is a newspaper that cannot find space for anything that is not orthodox in religion, politics, or sociology, paying for a telegram from Italy relating the night performances of a ghost on board a ship, one of which was hitting the police over the head with "an invisible shovel." Being invisible, how was it known to be a shovel? As the orator said, we pause for a reply.

The anonymous correspondent who sends us an anonymous cutting from an anonymous paper in favor of flogging criminals is reminded that epithets are a poor substitute for arguments, and that to regard everybody with whom you don't agree as "wrongheaded" is only a short cut to personal infallibility. We may add that there is one overwhelming argument against severe and brutal punishments. It is one of the most positive principles of rational jurisprudence that crime diminishes with the growth of civilisation and humanity, and that heavy penalties do not act as deterrents. Crime was more rife a hundred years ago than it is now. Yet criminals were hung for what are now considered minor offences. The severity of the punishment did not act as a preventative.

The Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury has been discussing some unpleasant matters. There was the third question in the ordering of deacons, for instance, which runs thus :—

"Do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testament?"

A proposal was made that this should henceforth run as follows :—

"Do you unfeignedly believe that the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all things necessary to eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?"

This alteration, the Dean of Westminster said, would save "perplexity, trouble, and distress to many young men." Canon Newbolt, however, said it would be "a most serious blow to the Bible," by suggesting that there were many things in it that could not be believed. Then came this sad confession (we quote from the *Daily News* report) :—

"There were three things in which Englishmen were losing their belief. The first thing was the observance of Sunday, which was dwindling away in a terrible manner. Then Englishmen used implicitly to believe in the sermon, but, judging by the troops who left before the sermon, especially at St. Paul's, that belief was fast losing its hold. The third thing they believed in was the Bible, but he thought they were fast losing their faith in that."

Fancy all three religious virtues going together; Sabatarianism, Faith, and Bibliolatry! What will become of England shortly? And what will become of the clergy? Ay, there's the rub! No wonder Canon Newbolt is upset.

Colonel Chaillé-Long, in his recently published *Autobiography*, tells how he first met General Gordon, and became Chief of Staff in the Egyptian Equatorial Provinces. "How are you, old fellow?" Gordon said, "come and take a b. and s. (brandy and soda); it will help us to talk about Central Africa." "Led by Gordon," the Colonel says, "into his room, we seated ourselves at a table on which there was an open Bible and an open bottle of brandy." Comment would be an anti-climax.

Something to drink seems to have been dear to Gordon, and he appears to have liked it as hot and strong as his something to read in the Bible. Colonel Chaillé-Long mentions finding Gordon with an open Bible and an open bottle several times afterwards. Once it was cognac and once it was sherry, with cognac to bring it up to the requisite strength.

Mr. Harold Begbie was taken to task very promptly in the *Daily Chronicle* by a Hindu dating from Cambridge. Mr. Begbie had said (and it was just like him!) in his article on the Divorce Commissioners' Report that woman had been "degraded" in India, while Christianity in England had "dignified, exalted, and consecrated the Christian women." "What," asks the Hindu, "about the thousands of women who rot in your abominable factory towns? What about the army of hapless girls who are driven to adopt a still worse means of livelihood?" And are there not English ladies who "would rather nurse a puppy than carry a baby"?

How well Christians know their own "blessed book"! Here is a press cutting—and from a pious South Welsh paper too—about some "striking changes" that have been made in the revised edition of the Bible just published by the American Baptists' Society. "In the new Bible," we read, "the story of Jonah and the whale is changed, so that the words 'great fish' take the place of 'whale.'" This is left to be corrected by an "infidel." The "great fish" has been in the Jonah narrative all the time; it is there still—in the Authorised Version. In the same Version it is Jesus that calls the great fish a "whale" (Matthew xii. 40). And the joke is that the *whale* is not a *fish*. It lives in the sea, but it is a degenerate mammal; as much a mammal, indeed, as the "Mother of God" herself.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, December 1, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W. : at 7.30, "Where is the Moral Governor of the Universe?"

October 6 to December 15, every Sunday evening, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London, W.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 15, West Ham. PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £254 5s. 1d. Received since:—Mrs. C. (second sub.), £1 11s. 6d.; H. T. C. (second sub.), £1 11s. 6d.

T. H. DICKINSON.—It is odd at this time of day to be asked whether Charles Bradlaugh was an Atheist or not. Of course he was. He lived an Atheist and died an Atheist. The word was at the top of his journal, the *National Reformer*, to the very last. What he meant by "Atheist" you may see for yourself in his *Plea for Atheism*. Never mind what Dr. Harrison said. All that matters is what Bradlaugh himself said.

CONVERT.—We also hope it will do the reverend gentleman some good. Thanks.

V. TOPHAM.—Thanks for cuttings.

ARTHUR GIBSON.—The statement is correct, but the reference should be Leviticus xi., not v. Mistakes of this kind will occur, even in the best-checked books. A Bible was issued once in which the "not" was omitted from the seventh commandment, which read "Thou shalt commit adultery."

E. A. HAWKINS.—Interesting bits as "fill ups" are very welcome.

PONTFRACT.—Will the customer who orders some Pioneer Pamphlets, and encloses a subscription, kindly forward his name and full address? All he gives in his letter is "Pontfract."

COL. H. H. HART, writing from one of the most delightful parts of Asia, the thought of which makes us lament the wretched climate we have to work in at present in "Merry England," tells us that he "much enjoys reading the *Freethinker*." "I read every word of it" he says. We appreciate the compliment. At the same time we smile (cannot we afford to?) at the common Christian notion of the *Freethinker* as written by illiterate journalists for illiterate working men.

D. HELRENE.—Glad to have relevant cuttings, but we like them up to date. Some bits you send us have been dealt with in the *Freethinker* already. Pleased to hear you are doing successful missionary work amongst your friends.

GEORGE PRIOR.—South Africa is a long way off, a fact which should govern your choice of cuttings. We have already dealt with the praying for rain in the Transvaal. Thanks, all the same.

Mrs. C. AND H. T. C.—We note your sorrow that "the President's Honorarium Fund is dragging on," and thank you for your handsome second subscription. We shall have something definite to say about the Fighting Fund next week.

W. OWEN.—Next week; too late for this.

A. M.—Shall appear.

VICTOR ROGER.—Glad to have your report, as well as Mr. Clifton's, of the substantial success of the Croydon lectures and of the universal appreciation of Miss Kough's lectures and replies.

E. B.—Many thanks.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Why are things left in this way to the last minute? Your date is November 23; the P.O. date is different.

A good deal of correspondence stands over till next week.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures at the Queen's (Minor) Hall to-night (Dec. 1). His subject will be "Where is the Moral Governor of the Universe?" In the present condition of European affairs, with the possibility of the roar of battle being at any moment multiplied and prolonged, this question should command wide attention.

The attendance necessary at the Queen's Hall lectures is also cheerfully and gratuitously given by members of the Executive and their families, but continuous attendance is almost impossible. Miss Vance, the N. S. S. Secretary, is always glad of volunteers to fill the gaps, of which there are one or two at present. Who speaks first?

Miss Kough's lecture on "Immortality" at the Public Hall, Croydon, on Sunday last, concluding the lectures during November, was well attended and much appreciated. Several questions were asked and two gentlemen offered opposition, one of whom acknowledged the very courteous treatment to opponents at the lectures. The Chairman invited those interested in forming a Branch of the N. S. S. to give in their names, and several did so. Possibly a further course of meetings will be held in the New Year.

The course of lectures just terminated at Croydon, arranged by the Secular Society, Ltd., has received the personal attention of Messrs. Roger, Wood, and Barry, three of its directors, also of Messrs. Leate and Brandes, members of the N. S. S. Executive. Valuable help has also been given by Mr. Clifton, an old and valued member of the N. S. S., who has personally superintended the advertising.

Messrs. Jackson and Gott's engagements take them as far as Manchester to-day (Dec. 1). Mr. Jackson delivers two lectures at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, at 3 and 6.30 p.m. All seats are free, with a collection in aid of the expenses. Local "saints" should take advantage of this fact to bring along some of their Christian friends to the meetings. Mr. Gott will sell literature before and after both lectures.

A debate between Mr. Bernard Alderson and Mr. F. E. Willis takes place to-day (Dec. 1) at 7 p.m. at the King's Hall, Corporation-street, Birmingham, on "A Belief in God Preferable to Secularism." The former maintains, the latter denies.

The attention of Freethinkers who are able to do some missionary work on their own account—and it is really very little trouble and expense—is called again to the "Pioneer Pamphlets," which are being issued by the Secular Society, Ltd., under Mr. Foote's editorship. Each pamphlet is given a "run on its own" to start with. That is why they are not published in too rapid succession. The latest is the lecture edition of Ingersoll's evergreen *Mistakes of Moses*—thirty-two pages well-printed on decent paper. The idea of all this cheap propagandist literature is that Freethinkers will buy half-a-dozen, a dozen, or more copies, and give them away to likely persons whom they meet in the intercourse of life. A tremendous good work might be done in this way if the "saints" would only bestir themselves a bit more. We beg those who have not attempted it to make a beginning. They will soon find a taste for it growing upon them. It will be one of the unmixed pleasures of their existence. If they doubt it, we say "Try." They'll never know till they do.

New Zealand is a long way off and the last number of Mr. Collins's *Examiner* that reaches us from Christchurch is dated October 1. It contains, amongst other matter, a report of the annual dinner of the New Zealand Rationalist Association. In the course of Mr. Collins's reply to the toast of "Kindred Societies" we observe that the National Secular Society was far from being forgotten. Mr. Collins's pen is as strong and firm as ever. His opening article on "The Origin of Life," with special reference to Professor Schafer's presidential address to the British Association, is excellently written.

Our Fighting Fund.

[The object of this Fund is to provide the sinews of war in the National Secular Society's fight against the London County Council, which is seeking to stop all collections at the Society's open-air meetings in London, and thus to abolish a practically immemorial right; this step being but one in a calculated policy which is clearly intended to suppress the right of free speech in all parks and other open spaces under the Council's control. This Fund is being raised by the Editor of the *Freethinker* by request of the N. S. S. Executive. Subscriptions should therefore be sent direct to G. W. Foote, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to him.]

Previously acknowledged, £71 5s. 3d. Received since:—V. Phelps, 11s. 6d.; R. Harrison, 1s.; Mrs. C., 10s. 6d.

The Passing of Jesus.—II.

(Continued from p. 741.)

"The Christian religion was not founded on a man, but on a divinity; that is, a mythical character. So far from being derived from the model man, the typical Christ was made up from the features of various Gods, after a fashion somewhat like those 'pictorial averages' portrayed by Mr. Galton, in which the traits of several persons are photographed and fused in a portrait of a dozen different persons merged into one—that is, not anybody. And as fast as the composite Christ falls to pieces, each feature is claimed, each character is gathered up by the original owner as with the grasp of gravitation. It is not I that deny the divinity of Jesus the Christ; I assert it! He never was, and never could be, any other than a divinity; that is, a character non-human, and entirely mythical, who had been the pagan divinity of various pagan myths that had been pagan during thousands of years before our era."—GERALD MASSEY, *The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*, p. 91.

"In one respect alone we are at one with the interpreters of the supernaturalist school, and that is, that we too, like them, believe that the Gospels intend to describe the life and history of a God. It is not our Jesus, but the Jesus of modern theology, that is a novelty, in accepting which we break with the tradition of eighteen centuries; it is a pure hypothesis that the myths in which the earliest Christians gave expression to their ideals and their philosophy can be made at last by means of a sterile rationalising treatment to reveal trustworthy data for the life of an historical person."—DR. G. A. VAN DEN BERGH VAN EYSINGA, *Radical Views about the New Testament*; 1912; pp. 32-3.

PROFESSOR SMITH examines the testimony of the historian Tacitus as to the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Nero, who charged them—according to this historian—with having caused the great fire of Rome.

Now the *Annals* of Tacitus, as we have them now, are derived from a single copy, discovered in the fifteenth century by Poggio Bracciolini, who has been charged with forging the *Annals* himself. However this may be—and most scholars declare for their authority—Professor Smith himself says "there are very cogent reasons against this contention."* There is no doubt that the passage relating to Nero's persecution of the Christians is a forgery, probably inserted in the work at the time of its discovery in the fifth century. For, as our author points out, "*Early tradition is absolutely silent about both the Neronian persecution and the Tacitean testimony.*" Moreover, if the story told by Tacitus is true, then the story told in the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament is false; for we are told there that Paul was living at Rome at this very time; that he lived there two years, "and received all that came in unto him. Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts xxviii. 30, 31). And this at the very time when Nero—according to Tacitus—was seizing the Christians in Rome and burning them to illuminate his gardens at night.

If this had happened Paul would have known it, and if he had known it would have made a fine narrative of it, for he was never backward in narrating the hardships, persecutions, and perils he had to endure; but we have his word for it that in Rome he preached "with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Professor Smith traces the first beginning of this tradition one hundred years after the date of the fire of Rome in a quotation by Eusebius, that Nero and Domitian slandered the Christian doctrine, but "he has apparently no knowledge and no idea of the Neronian persecution as now set forth in Tacitus" (p. 242). From this time the legend begins to grow. If there was a persecution under Nero, the first Christian writers seem actually to have avoided the subject. Says our author:—

"At length, in the fourth century, it is suggested, in a fabricated correspondence, that Christians and Jews had been punished as incendiaries. At last, in the fifth century, we read the details in the terse Sulpicius, 'the Christian Sallust.' In the famous forty-fourth chapter

of the *Annals* of Tacitus we find still greater elaboration. The suggestion seems irresistible that the chapter represents an advanced stage of a process that had been slowly at work for hundreds of years."*

There is no doubt, as he further observes, we may "suspect that Nero is made to play the role of persecutor only because he was so perfectly suited to the part."

Every word of the New Testament requires careful examination and turning over to see what lurks beneath it. Professor Smith examines some of these words—"Gethsemane," "Nazareth," "Gabbatha," "Golgotha."

Jesus is said to have been born at Nazareth, but the name is unknown outside the Gospels until the fourth century. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor by Josephus in his voluminous History of the Jews; neither is it mentioned in the Talmud. There was a sect of Nazarees or Nazarites among the Jews, and the ignorant Gospel writers have probably turned the name of a sect into the name of a town.

Of Gethsemane we are told "no one knows anything whatever about it, and its topographic reality appears highly problematic." The meaning of Gethsemane is "Wine-press of Olives," and, as Professor Smith remarks: "It is very unlikely, then, that there was any place named *Wine-press of Olives*. The symbolism seems perfectly obvious. The wine-press is that of Isaiah (lxiii. 2)—the wine-press of divine suffering." (P. 295.)

Of the Gabbatha mentioned in John (xix. 13) our author cites the conclusion of Canney in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* that it seems not unlikely that it "existed, as a definite locality, only in the mind of the author." And of Golgotha, "the Place of Skulls," Professor Smith says: "The search for Golgotha has been quite as futile as for Gabbatha." (P. 298.)

And what, asks the Professor, would the Gospel writers have replied to such keen-witted critics?

"They would have smiled wearily, and said: 'Gentlemen, alas! that you do not understand. The letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive. We are not writing history; we are writing Gospel. We are very sorry you do not see our meaning; but if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.'"

As he further observes, "We must never forget that the Scriptures were written for believers, and not for unbelievers." They would not balk at impossible eclipses, or stumble over imaginary places and patent anachronisms; absurdities would not disturb them, and the more miracles the better.

We do not anticipate that these learned works of Drews and Smith will have any more influence in making English scholars speak out than the learned works of J. M. Robertson had. Those who oppose them will speak out bravely enough; those who believe in them will keep silence. The conventions of English society are too strong and binding to permit of free utterance upon such subjects without risk of ostracism, if not absolute ruin. We have seen how Spencer and Huxley compromised with religion. The historian Luckey is a glaring instance of the same perverseness; he piles up a mountain of the most damning evidence of the evils wrought by historical Christianity, and finishes by summing up in favor of the prisoner at the bar. The Christian apologist flaunts the verdict of acquittal in our faces, but ignores the mountain of evidence.

The other day we were reading Frazer's *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, and were struck by the similar attitude of that scholar towards the popular religion. Now, no one can read the work just mentioned without having the conviction forced upon him that all the rites and ceremonies, along with the principal events in the life of Jesus, were familiar to the pagans ages before Christianity appeared upon the scene. After proving all this up to the hilt, he hastens to assure us that Christianity was at first an "ethical reform,"

* *Ecce Deus*, p. 239.

* *Ecce Deus*, p. 265.

and was afterwards contaminated and corrupted by its followers, who introduced Paganism into its original purity (see p. 202). Moreover, in a footnote, he remarks as the denial of the historical reality of Buddha and Christ:—

"It would be just as reasonable to question the historical existence of Alexander the Great and Charlemagne on account of the legends which have gathered round them. The great religious movements which have stirred humanity to its depths and altered the beliefs of nations spring ultimately from the conscious and deliberate efforts of extraordinary minds, not from the blind unconscious co-operation of the multitude. The attempt to explain history without the influence of great men may flatter the vanity of the vulgar, but it will find no favor with the philosophic historian."

This is an astounding deliverance, coming from such a source. The fact is that it is really the "vulgar" who believe that all the great events are the results of the great men. A "philosophic historian," on the other hand, like Buckle, wrote his monumental *History of Civilisation* to prove the exact contrary. Moreover, Dr. Frazer does not believe in the historical existence of Adonis, Attis, or Osiris, who inspired their worshipers with quite as much devotion and piety as Jesus Christ did his. He does not believe in the historical existence of Mithra, whose worship was so marvellously akin to Christianity that the early Christians declared that the Devil had imitated the Christian religion *before it existed* in order to lead souls astray. We are obliged to ask ourselves the distasteful question: Is Dr. Frazer merely kow-towing to social convention, or is he still hypnotised by the beliefs implanted in his mind during his childhood?

As Professor Smith remarks:—

"It is not true that the great critical events and movements of history have been always, or even generally, determined by single personalities; it has often happened that there has been no one all-dominating individuality, but that several, or even many, have conspired in the expression of some one overmastering ideal" (p. 13).

And he cites (p. 119) Professor Friedrich Paulsen, who refers "mythico-religious" phenomena to the "collective mind," and observes: "Nowadays no one speaks of a founder of the Egyptian or the Greek religion."*

In this connection we cannot do better than quote the verdict of the learned Dutch writer, Dr. Eysinga,† whose work has just been published here. He says:—

"Is it true, as some opponents of the symbolic explanation of the Gospel story maintain, that in this way Alexander the Great or the Emperor Augustus—to say nothing of Napoleon and Bismarck—might be relegated to the domain of legend? The examples are badly chosen, for the cases are absolutely unlike. It may appear at first sight hypercritical to doubt the historical character of every single feature of the Gospel story; nevertheless, this is the only correct standpoint to take towards writings which tell not of Alexander or Augustus, but of Christ or Simon Magus. The sources which inform us about Alexander or Augustus are of a totally different character. We have irrefutable data from contemporaries, whose accounts corroborate one another—authentic documents, official records, inscriptions, the histories of other nations who came in contact with them. For the history recorded in the Gospels we have the Gospels alone. If we knew nothing nothing more about Attila than what we read in the *Nibelungenlied*, we should be obliged to say: It is very uncertain whether he ever lived, whether he is not just as much a mythical personage as Siegfried. The sources for a life of Jesus are no better."

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

The Split Infinitive.

NOT long ago one of those seismic disturbances that shake everybody but the unbeliever, came to agitate our village peace. The Wesleyan Church, a building whose officers are wont to boast that "at a pinch" it will seat a congregation of 150, and whose facade is somewhat marred by a badly repaired crack, was the storm centre. Ostensible theological differences, the discussion of which produced great heat and little light, served to obscure the real reason, which was that certain porcelain Congregationalists (incomes up to £800) were too haughty to worship with mere delf-ware Wesleyans (incomes up to £150). The membership threatened to rend like the building. Our one local paper, with that praiseworthy impartiality which a Church-controlled organ can exercise in a quarrel between two "chapels," gave publicity to the rival views, and the topic became first favorite in the village conversation. Even the Saturday evening band performance lost its lustre. The Congregational lawyer, usually on nodding terms with the Wesleyan pastry-cook, now cut him dead; and the wife of the Wesleyan ironmonger omitted, for the first time for many years, to send the wife of the Congregational house agent specimen pots of home made jam. The upshot of it was that the Congregationalists split from the Wesleyans and started a branch establishment under a new manager. It is gratifying to know, however, that all the offended parties on both sides found comfort in a profound sense of rectitude and in the consolations of the Holy Spirit.

"We've started," said the porcelain house agent to me one morning. "Our first services were held last Sunday."

He had been appointed deacon of the new church and was consequently all self-satisfaction and gas.

"So I understand," I replied. "What sort of congregations did you get?"

"Very good for a commencement," he said. "We must not expect too much at first."

Earlier in the week I had heard from a mere delf-ware Wesleyan that the "very good" evening congregation had consisted of fifteen children, nineteen women, three men, and a young lady at the borrowed harmonium. So I said nothing.

"I'm afraid," my friend continued, "the Wesleyans are still very angry with us. Some of their members, I fear, are not sufficiently filled with the Spirit."

"Ah!" I replied. "'Nothing like cant and Methodism for producing a superfluity of bile.'"

I had just been reading those delightful *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and happened to remember the passage. But the house agent didn't recognise it. His taste in literature wasn't much above the level of a sale catalogue, and if I had mentioned the name of George Eliot he would have been certain to use the masonline personal pronoun in speaking of her. So he looked very knowing and went on—

"I don't like to be severe on the Wesleyan brothers, but they have too much rigidity. Too hard and fast—not enough play. Their faith has no mysticism in it—and if you take away the mysticism from religion you take away its heart."

Exactly how many times my friend had made use of those very words it would be impossible to calculate. He liked to think that they constituted his main reason for helping to establish a new church; and the constant repetition of the words "rigidity" and "mysticism" had given him the reputation of uncommon learning in the village. And many a town-made reputation, be it observed, has been obtained by a repetition no more illuminating. I knew he was a mystic, for a few weeks before he had explained to me at great length the theological differences between a Congregationalist and a Wesleyan. Subtleties they were which none but a mystic at work with a microscope could have discovered. But to my mystical friend a spoonful of heterodoxy, like a spoonful of whisky to a temperance tout, became a bathful, and he

* Introduction to Philosophy, pp. 3, 4.

† Radical Views About the New Testament, pp. 31, 32 (Watts Co.).

wallowed in it. So I simply said "Yes?" with the note of interrogation, and he proceeded—

"We started our new church under the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is working with us now, and we're praying for more of it."

"I trust there may be poured out upon you," I said, somewhat ambiguously, "a double portion of the publican's spirit! But what does your new church propose to do in the village?"

"We're starting a Bible class next month," said my friend. "We are already holding a Sunday-school, and we hope to start a "Men's Own" on Sunday afternoons to get hold of the children's fathers. Our young women are arranging for a Christmas bazaar. We have prayed for a successful church and"—here, evidently unmindful of his supplications, he fell back on a very unspiritual self-reliance—"we're going to jolly well make it so!"

I need report no more of the conversation. There was something worse in it than the split infinitive. Any Freethinker who has the virtue of a patient listener must have heard similar stories over and over again. Stupid differences, bitter separations, dwindling membership, struggles to pay the parson, and an annual bazaar to avoid debts—of how many churches in this the true history? Scarcely an ounce of effort in what might be called external social service, and not a single internal thought or idea checked by criticism or modified by new discovery. But instead—an endless succession of meetings! Meetings of children, meetings of mothers, meetings of men, meetings of committees—until one wearies of the very name and recalls with consolation the deaf old Methodist who sang lustily but forgetfully:—

"We'll part to meet no more!
We'll pa-art to meet no more!
We'll pa-a-art to meet no more!
Beyond the swelling flood!"

It is gratifying to know that the number of people who find satisfaction in that sort of thing is rapidly diminishing, and that in the all-conquering, crusading army of the Church the desertions outnumber the enlistments. When men wish to understand the secrets of the universe or to participate in the world's useful work they turn their eyes and hands in another direction. "You can fool some of the people all the time; you can fool all the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." Would that we could project our vision forward to the day of our great-grandchildren to see by what artifice and self-deception our national religion will be endeavoring to keep itself alive!

R. NORTH.

John Burroughs, Rationalist.

The Most Eminent of Nature Writers Has No Christian Faith and Sees No Deity.

SOME time ago a correspondent of the *Truthseeker* having read a recent article by John Burroughs in one of our leading monthly magazines, appeared to have been left in doubt as to Mr. Burroughs's real convictions on the subject of religion. This is only natural if said article is the only one your correspondent ever read from the pen of John Burroughs. He is widely known as a charming and truthful portrayer of the ways of nature; as a popular interpreter of nature he stands supreme. Mr. Burroughs not only excels as a naturalist, but he is equally at home in the field of literature and as a popular exponent of the doctrine of evolution. He is probably less widely known as a religious controversialist, yet here he wields as fearless and trenchant a pen as ever did Huxley or Ingersoll. Those readers of the *Truthseeker* who have not yet read his admirable and most convincing book, *The Light of Day*, have a splendid treat in store for them, and I have often wondered why the *Truthseeker* Company does not have it for sale, or at least mention it as a most desirable work for every Freethinker to have in his

library. I shall quote somewhat at random from this work, and let the readers judge for themselves how this greatest of American nature writers stands upon the question of orthodox Christianity. He is not an aggressive opponent of orthodox religion, but he is nevertheless an Agnostic, as much so as Ingersoll or Huxley ever was.

The Light of Day contains sixteen chapters, and an idea of the subjects dealt with may be gathered from some of the titles: "Science and Theology," "Natural versus Supernatural," "Faith and Credulity," "In Corroboration of Professor Huxley," "The Modern Sceptic," "The Decadence of Theology," "Religious Truths," and "God and Nature." In all of these Mr. Burroughs stands firmly and logically by the natural and rejects absolutely the supernatural.

In his preface he says in part:—

"My polemic, so far as it is such, will be found, I hope, aimed more at theology than at religion. Theology passes; religion as a sentiment or feeling of awe or reverence in the presence of the vastness and mystery of the universe, remains. The old theology had few if any fast colors, and it has become very faded and worn under the fierce light and intense activity of our day. Let it go; it is outgrown and outworn. For my own part, the longer I live the less I feel the need of any sort of theological belief, and the more I am content to let the unseen powers go their own way with me and mine without question or distrust. They brought me here, and I have found it well to be here. In due time they will take me hence, and I have no doubt that will be well for me too."

In "A Retrospect," the first chapter, he draws an amusing picture of his early boyhood, where during the long winter evenings he listened "time after time" to his old-school Baptist father and his Methodist neighbor, Jerry, disputing earnestly and at times angrily over the meaning of certain texts of the Bible. Of course, neither one convinced the other, but like Will Carleton's husband and wife, "the more they argued the more they couldn't agree." One thing is certain, the "arguments" were wasted on the boy, for he has grown up to believe in the doctrine of neither his father nor his neighbor, but has utterly renounced the dogmas of orthodox Christianity.

For seventeen hundred years, he tells us, mankind was under the sway of a religious organisation as under a nightmare. "It perverted nearly every natural fact and paralysed every natural instinct of the heart."

"In the Catholic Church this nightmare still rides mankind; in the Protestant Churches its spell has been partially broken. Protestantism is more or less a compromise with reason, but Catholicism deliberately puts reason under foot. The Catholic reasons very astutely within certain limits, but he is tethered and cannot go beyond a fixed point. His reason is the servant of his faith, and he obeys it implicitly. It is like a muzzled ferret that hunts not for itself but for its master; the game belongs to faith."

In the chapter, "Science and Theology," he pays his respects to Professor Drummond's book, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, and handles the Scotch divine without gloves. It is a most admirable critique of the Scotch pseudo-scientist's position, and he leaves him not a peg to stand on. I could quote more liberally, but space will not permit. I must be content with a few extracts from this chapter:—

"Of all the great historical religions of the world, theology sees but one to be true and of divine origin; all the rest were of human invention, and for the most part mere masses of falsehood and superstition. Science recognises the religious instinct in man as a permanent part of his nature, and looks upon the great systems of religion—Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, the polytheism of Greece, Rome, Egypt, etc.—as its legitimate outgrowth and flowering, just as much as the different floras and faunas of the earth are the expression of one principle of organic life. All these religions may be treated as false or all of them treated as true; what we cannot say, speaking for science, is, that one is true and all the others are false. To it they are all false with reference to their

machinery, but all true with reference to the need to which they administer.....Science affirms that every child born of woman since the world began belonged to the human species, and had an earthly father; theology affirms that this is true of every child *save one*; *one* child, born in Judea over eighteen hundred years ago, was an exception, was, indeed, very God himself. Theology makes a similar claim with regard to the Bible. It affirms that every book in the world was written by a human being, and is, therefore, more or less fallible *save one—that one is the Bible.*"

"What can science, or, if you please, the human reason, in its quest of exact knowledge, make of the cardinal dogmas of the Christian Church—the plan of salvation, justification, the Trinity, or 'saving grace,' etc.? Simply nothing. These things were to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, and to the man of science they are like an utterance in an unknown tongue. He has no means of verifying them; they lie in a region entirely beyond his ken."

"Out of the potencies of matter science traces the evolution of the whole order of visible things. Theology may step in and assume to know all that science leaves unsaid, but in doing so let it not assume to speak with the consent and the authority of its great rival."

"What perpetually irritates the disinterested reader of Drummond's book is the *assumption* everywhere met with that the author is speaking with the authority of science, when he is only echoing the conclusions of theology."

Quoting from some of Drummond's rhapsodies, in which he asserts the great superiority of the "spiritual" man over that of the "natural" man, our author proceeds:—

"As rhetoric or as theology, one need care little about this; but when it is uttered as science, as it is here, it is quite another matter. When it is declared that a man, say like Emerson, in comparison with the General of the Salvation Army, is a crystal compared to a flower, and the declaration is made in the name and with the authority of science, it is time to protest."

"In fact, to aver that the finest specimens of the race who lived long before the advent of Christianity, or who have lived since, and honestly withheld their assent from the Calvinistic interpretation of it, came short of the higher life and the true destiny of man, as much as the stone comes short of the plant, may do as the personal opinion of a Scotch professor, but to announce such an opinion as the result of a scientific demonstration is an insult to science and an outrage upon human nature."

"The Fathers taught that all men were under condemnation from the moment of their birth, and that at death the souls of unbaptised infants went straight to hell. St. Augustine taught, and the Catholic Church still holds, that when water from the hands of a priest falls upon the head of an unconscious infant, a miraculous change is wrought in its spiritual nature—a change by which it becomes essentially a new and a higher being; and the Church says, with characteristic charity, of him who believes not this impossible doctrine, 'Let him be accursed.'"

"I think we may safely rest upon the statement that no natural evidence can establish the supernatural. Our senses cannot apprehend it because it is super-sensible; our reason cannot verify it because it transcends reason. The historical proofs of Christianity are adequate to establish ordinary events, but not extraordinary."

"Faith is neither evidence nor substance, though the religious world is constantly persuading itself that it is."

"Religious faith is losing ground in our day because the light which fills the world, begotten by science, education, industry, democracy, is more and more the light of broad noonday, clear, strong, merciless. Our fathers stood much nearer the twilight, the region of sentiment, of emotion, of enticing but delusive lights and shades. The morning of the world is past; what the completed day will show forth does not yet appear."

"If religion is not its own reward as much as art or science is, if it is not salvation here and now, if it be not in the life and character of a man like Ingersoll as truly as in the life and character of a man like Moody, then it is a delusion and a snare."

From "God and Nature" we have this:—

"When I look up at the starry heavens at night and reflect on what it is that I really see there, I am constrained to say 'There is no God.' The mind staggers in its attempt to grasp the idea of a being that could do

that. It is futile to attempt it. It is not the works of some God that I see there. I am face to face with a power that baffles speech. I see no lineaments of personality, no human traits, but an energy upon whose currents solar systems are but bubbles."

These, then, are some of the utterances of this forceful writer which can bring no comfort to the believer in creeds and dogmas, and of revealed religion.

Clear, logical, and dispassionate, he calmly states his position without bias or reserve.

No fairer disputant ever entered the lists in defence of Rationalism and against superstition than John Burroughs. He has rendered valuable service to the cause of Freethought, not only because he is one of us, but because he enters homes where militant Freethought may not.

Mr. Burroughs has rounded the seventy-fifth year of his life, and the snows of winter are on his head, but his intellect is as keen and alert as ever, as is shown by his recent contributions to the leading magazines of the day.

Of course, if you would know John Burroughs more intimately, you must read his other and earlier works, those dealing almost exclusively with the wild life about us—with the study of nature at first hand. If you are a real lover of nature, and wish to become familiar with her many and varied moods, read John Burroughs and enjoy the sweetness and charm of all he portrays in a style altogether his own. Let us hope he may live to instruct and entertain us for many years to come.

—*Truthseeker* (New York). J. J. SHIRLEY, M. D.

Official Notes.

THE NORTHERN TOUR.

THE snap of cold weather last week was not conducive to large outdoor meetings. The first meeting, arranged for Burnley, suffered in consequence; but the meeting at Nelson on the following night, thanks to the activity of the local preachers, who are now beginning to wear a worried look when our friends appear, was highly successful, their questions being ably dealt with by the speaker; and the return visit to Burnley on the Sunday, when two meetings were held, resulted in large audiences and good sales of literature.

A meeting at Blackburn followed, with the same result, and a good demand for *Bible and Beer* (N.B.—The pamphlet, *not* the commodities).

Bolton being in the throes of a bye-election, a visit was hastily arranged, meetings being held in the dinner-hour as well as in the evening, when special attention was paid by the speaker to the subjects of Secular Education and the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

At the time of writing, Messrs. Gott and Jackson are spending the week, holding outdoor meetings in Manchester and the near vicinity (for particulars see *Lecture Notices*); and on Sunday, December 1, Mr. Jackson, for the first time during this tour, makes his bow to an indoor audience at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester, the hall having been hired by the Secular Society, Ltd., for this purpose. All seats are free, with a collection to help defray expenses, and it is to be hoped that our friends in the neighborhood will attend in large numbers to give Mr. Jackson a welcome, and will not forget that important item in the program—the collection.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

PROOF REQUIRED.

The missionary of Mwumpo in East Africa had taken it into his head to convert Mikida, the cannibal priest. But that was not so easy to accomplish. Mikida would not make up his mind to believe. One day a brilliant idea occurred to the missionary. Some years before a scorpion had stung his hand and his arm had had to be amputated, so that ever since then he wore an artificial arm.

When Mikida came again, the missionary said to him, "I will perform a miracle before your eyes."

No sooner had he said this than he took off his artificial arm, swung it round three times in the air, then replaced it in his sleeve.

"Now," said he proudly and triumphantly to the cannibal priest, "can your God give you this power?"

But Mikida only said, "And now the other arm."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Where is the Moral Governor of the Universe?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Search for God."

OUTDOOR.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Mr. Lieberman, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, Debate between Bernard Alderson and F. E. Willis, "That a Belief in God is Preferable to Secularism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, Discussion, "Will the Single Tax Solve the Economic Problem?" Affirmative, A. M'Laren; Negative, J. Macdougall.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Jas. Murphy, "Our Work in the Future."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): Thos. A. Jackson, 3, "The Limitations of Jesus"; 6.30, "The Blasphemer in Evolution." Tea at 5.

OUTDOOR.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—Leigh (Market Square): Dec. 2, at 7.30, "Who Made God?" 3, at 7.30, "The Atheist in the Market Place." Bolton (Town Hall Square): 4, at 7.30, "The Crimes of God"; 5, at 7.30, "The Cause and Cure of Christianity"; 6, at 7.30, "The Dead Hand"; 7, at 7.30, "Providence and the Police."

E. LIEBERMAN, Champion of many Linguistic Competitions, is now arranging Day and Evening Classes in French, German, Russian, etc. His new method of instruction enables the student to acquire proficiency in these languages in an incredibly short space of time. Terms to Freethinkers exceedingly moderate.—For further particulars, address E. LIEBERMAN, c/o the *Freethinker*, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

America's Freethought Newspaper.

THE TRUTH SEEKER.

FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT, 1873.

CONTINUED BY E. M. MACDONALD, 1883-1909.

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

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

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

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

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

A NEW (THE THIRD) EDITION

OF

FROM FICTION TO FACT.

By F. BONTE.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

REVISED AND ENLARGED.
SHOULD BE SCATTERED BROADCAST.

SIXTY-FOUR PAGES.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Hunting Skunks*, G. W. Foote; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll. 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 6d. per hundred, post free 7d. Special rates for larger quantities. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

A LIBERAL OFFER—NOTHING LIKE IT.

Greatest Popular Family Reference Book and Sexology—Almost Given Away. A Million sold at 3 and 4 dollars—Now Try it Yourself.

Insure Your Life—You Die to Win; Buy this Book, You Learn to Live.



Ignorance kills—knowledge saves—be wise in time. Men weaken, sicken, die—not knowing how to live. "Habits that enslave" wreck thousands—young and old Fathers fail, mothers are "bed-ridden," babies die. Family feuds, marital miseries, divorces—even murders—All can be avoided by self-knowledge, self-control.

You can discount heaven—dodge hell—here and now, by reading and applying the wisdom of this one book of 1,200 pages, 400 illustrations, 80 lithographs on 18 anatomical color plates, and over 250 prescriptions.

OF COURSE YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT EVERYONE OUGHT TO KNOW.

THE YOUNG—How to choose the best to marry.
THE MARRIED—How to be happy in marriage.
THE FOND PARENT—How to have prize babies.
THE MOTHER—How to have them without pain.
THE CHILDLESS—How to be fruitful and multiply.
THE CURIOUS—How they "grewed" from germ-cell.
THE HEALTHY—How to enjoy life and keep well.
THE INVALID—How to brace up and keep well.

Whatever you'd ask a doctor you find herein, or (if not, Dr. F. will answer your inquiry FREE, any time) Dr. Foote's books have been the popular instructors of the masses in America for fifty years (often re-written, enlarged, and always kept up-to-date). For twenty years they have sold largely (from London) to all countries where English is spoken, and everywhere highly praised. Last editions are best, largest, and most for the price. You may save the price by not buying, and you may lose your life (or your wife or child) by not knowing some of the vitally important truths it tells.

Most Grateful Testimonials From Everywhere.

Gudivoda, India: "It is a store of medical knowledge in plainest language, and every reader of English would be benefited by it."—W. L. N.

Triplicane, India: "I have gone through the book many times, and not only benefited myself but many friends also."—G. V. T.

Panderma, Turkey: "I can avow frankly there is rarely to be found such an interesting book as yours."—K. H. (Chemist).
Calgary, Can.: "The information therein has changed my whole idea of life—to be nobler and happier."—D. N. M.
Laverton, W. Aust.: "I consider it worth ten times the price. I have benefited much by it."—R. M.

Somewhat Abridged Editions (800 pp. each) can be had in German, Swedish, Finnish, or Spanish.

Price EIGHT SHILLINGS by Mail to any Address.

ORDER OF THE PIONEER PRESS,

2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

WORKS BY G. W. FOOTE.

ATHEIST SHOEMAKER, THE, and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes post ½d. 0 1	
BIBLE ROMANCES. Popular edition, with portrait, paper post 2½d. 0 6	
CHRISTIANITY AND SECULARISM. Public Debate with Rev. Dr. McCann ... post 2d. 1 0	
Bound in cloth post 2d. 1 6	
DARWIN ON GOD post 1d. 0 6	
DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH post 1d. 0 6	
DYING ATHEIST, THE. A Story. ... post ½d. 0 1	
FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT. Series I. & II. cloth. Each post 3d. 2 6	
GOD SAVE THE KING. An English Republican's Coronation Notes post ½d. 0 2	
HALL OF SCIENCE LIBEL CASE, with Full and True Account of the "Leeds Orgies" post 1d. 0 3	
INTERVIEW WITH THE DEVIL post ½d. 0 2	
IS SOCIALISM SOUND? Four Nights' Public Debate with Annie Besant ... post 1½d. 1 0	
INGERSOLLISM DEFENDED AGAINST ARCH-DEACON FARRAR post ½d. 0 2	
IMPOSSIBLE CREED, THE. An Open Letter to Bishop Magee on the Sermon on the Mount post ½d. 0 2	
JOHN MORLEY AS A FREETHINKER post ½d. 0 2	
LETTERS TO THE CLERGY (128 pages) post 2d. 1 0	
LIE IN FIVE CHAPTERS, or Hugh Price Hughes' Converted Atheist post ½d. 0 1	
MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY. A Candid Criticism post ½d. 0 2	
MY RESURRECTION. A Missing Chapter from the Gospel of Matthew post ½d. 0 2	
PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM post ½d. 0 3	
REMINISCENCES OF CHARLES BRADLAUGH post 1d. 0 6	
ROME OR ATHEISM? The Great Alternative post 1d. 0 3	
SECULARISM AND THEOSOPHY. A Rejoinder to Mrs. Besant post ½d. 0 2	
SIGN OF THE CROSS, THE. A Candid Criticism of Mr. Wilson Barret's Play ... post 1½d. 0 6	
THE PASSING OF JESUS. The Last Adventures of the First Messiah post ½d. 0 2	
THEISM OR ATHEISM. Public Debate post 1½d. 1 0	
WAS JESUS INSANE? post ½d. 0 1	
WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM? post ½d. 0 3	
WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JESUS? ... post ½d. 0 2	
WILL CHRIST SAVE US? post 1d. 0 6	

WORKS BY COL. INGERSOLL

A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM post 1d. 0 6	
A WOODEN GOD post ½d. 0 1	
CHRISTIAN RELIGION, THE... .. post ½d. 0 3	
COMING CIVILISATION, THE post ½d. 0 3	
CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY... .. post ½d. 0 1	
CRIMES AGAINST CRIMINALS post ½d. 0 3	
DEFENCE OF FREETHOUGHT post ½d. 0 4	
DEVIL, THE post 1d. 0 6	
DO I BLASPHEME? post ½d. 0 2	
ERNEST RENAN post ½d. 0 2	
FAITH AND FACT. Reply to Rev. Dr. Field post ½d. 0 2	
GHOSTS, THE post ½d. 0 3	
HOLY BIBLE, THE... .. post ½d. 0 6	
HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH, THE post ½d. 0 2	
HOUSE OF DEATH (Funeral Orations) post 2d. 1 0	
INGERSOLL'S ADVICE TO PARENTS.—Keep Children out of Church and Sunday-school 0 1	
LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE post ½d. 0 2	
LIVE TOPICS post ½d. 0 1	
LIMITS OF TOLERATION, THE post ½d. 0 2	
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. An Agnostic's View post ½d. 0 2	
MYTH AND MIRACLE post ½d. 0 1	
ORATION ON LINCOLN post ½d. 0 3	
ORATION ON THE GODS post 1d. 0 6	
ORATION ON VOLTAIRE post ½d. 0 3	
ROME OR REASON? post 1d. 0 3	
SOCIAL SALVATION post ½d. 0 2	
SUPERSTITION post 1d. 0 6	
TAKE A ROAD OF YOUR OWN post ½d. 0 1	
THREE PHILANTHROPISTS, THE post ½d. 0 2	
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?... .. post ½d. 0 2	
WHY AM I AN AGNOSTIC? post ½d. 0 2	

Orders to the amount of 5s. sent post free.

Postage must be included for smaller orders.

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

PAMPHLETS by C. COHEN.

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

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

SUNDAY EVENING FREETHOUGHT LECTURES

AT

Queen's (Minor) Hall,
LANGHAM PLACE, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.

BY

Mr. G. W. FOOTE,

Editor of the "Freethinker," President of the National Secular Society, and Chairman of the Secular Society (Ltd.).

From October 6 to December 15, inclusive.

December 1:

"Where is the Moral Governor of the Universe?"

Subjects always liable to alteration in cases of special urgency.
Announcements will appear in Saturday and Sunday papers—such as the *Daily News*,
Chronicle, *Star*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Reynolds'*, *Weekly Times*.
Reserved Seats, 1s. Second Seats, 6d. A Few Free Seats at the Back.
Doors Open at 7. Chair taken at 7.30.

PIONEER PAMPHLETS.

A series of pamphlets under this general title is being issued by
The Secular Society, Ltd.
They are to be **Extremely Cheap** and of the **Best Quality**.

No. I.—BIBLE AND BEER. By G. W. Foote.

FORTY PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: single copy, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 6 copies, $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 18 copies, 3d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

No. II.—DEITY AND DESIGN. By C. Cohen.

(A Reply to Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace.)

THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: Single copy, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 6 copies, $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 18 copies, $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

No. III.—MISTAKES OF MOSES. By Colonel Ingersoll.

THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: Single copy, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 6 copies, $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 18 copies, $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

IN PREPARATION.

No. IV.—CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. By G. W. Foote.

No. V.—MODERN MATERIALISM. By W. Mann.

Special Terms for Quantities for Free Distribution or to Advanced Societies.

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