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There are two virtues which Christians have found it very hard to exemplify in practice. These are modesty and civility.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

Blasphemy.

WE have been reviewing Professor Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought* at some length, and this week's instalment was to be the conclusion of our criticism. We intended to point out that the worst part of the book—if we may use such an unpleasant word in this connection—is what he calls "The Progress of Rationalism" in the nineteenth century. His knowledge of the subject is inadequate. He almost appears to consider that the principal part of Freethought is the sixpenny reprints of the Rationalist Press Association. No doubt those reprints have done some good, but they frequently suggest funicular railways to extinct volcanoes. To take them as representing the main work of the Freethought movement in England is a most absurd mistake. Professor Bury is too fond, also, of taking academical gentlemen, like Leslie Stephen, as being the main moving agencies in Freethought propaganda. He evidently knows extremely little of the popular side of the movement—the great appeal to the people through a long succession of speakers and organisations from the days of Richard Carlile down through Taylor, Southwell, Watson, Holyoake, and Bradlaugh to the recent and present work of the *Freethinker*, the National Secular Society, and all sorts of "spurt" societies that come and go and leave *some* sort of impression behind them, however difficult it may be to estimate. Nor does he allow for the tremendous effect of Darwin's philosophy upon the minds of the more thoughtful multitude. Everybody is an evolutionist now, except the Salvation Army, the rural clergy, and the Christian Evidence Society. But in the sixties and seventies the great battle of evolution *versus* special creation raged in the streets as well as in the high places of "culture." There is nothing like it now, because the fight is over, and one side is victorious and the other side is defeated. But it is fair to say that it was the popular Freethought movement, after all, that caught the full significance of Darwinism and its inevitable effect upon the thought and life of future mankind.

Professor Bury does not recognise the vast importance of Lord Coleridge's judgment on the Blasphemy Laws—or rather the Common Law of Blasphemy—in 1883. We say this at the risk of being considered egotistical. We really cannot help being involved in the case. It is an undoubted fact that some of the old "blasphemers," such as Taylor and Southwell, made brilliant speeches against their indictments. Holyoake made a very able speech at his trial in 1842. But he spoke for nine hours, and he used to say, humorously, that he deserved the sentence for the length of his address. Those speeches, and many more, were worthy of considerable applause as oratorical efforts. But they were immethodical and even chaotic. Our own speech (we venture to say), before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in the Court of Queen's (now King's) Bench in 1883, was the first *scientific* defence of "blasphemy." Mr. Atherley Jones, the leading counsel in the Boulter case, in handing us back the verbatim report, which he had borrowed, remarked: "You did it completely; there's nothing more to be said." It was that scientific presentation of the Freethought case and the right of free speech which arrested and maintained Lord Coleridge's attention. He saw the importance of the occasion; he prepared his own charge to the jury with great care—and he revised and published it in a separate form soon afterwards. That judgment of Lord Coleridge's—which might hardly have been delivered except for the character of our own speech—which forced consideration and argument from the court—marks an epoch in the history of the Blasphemy Laws. He did not meddle much with the Statute. That was only too clear and explicit. But all prosecutions had been under the Common Law—which, as we ourselves pointed out to the jury, is subject to change with the changes of human intelligence and human society. And what was the Common Law of Blasphemy? No matter what it *had* been, what was it *then?* Lord Coleridge laid it down that toleration had grown with the times, and that it had reached a stage where the very fundamentals of Christianity might be attacked, if only the decencies of controversy were respected. It was on that rock that we founded the Secular Society, Ltd., which became the model for succeeding organisations.

Attacking Christianity is, in itself, perfectly legal; although it may be done, as other things may be done, in an illegal way. Professor Bury does not quite see the scope and force of this dictum. "Some of the judges," he says, "seem to have taken the line that it is not blasphemy to attack the fundamental doctrines provided 'the decencies of controversy' are preserved, but that 'indecent' attacks constitute blasphemy. This implies a new definition of legal blasphemy, and is entirely contrary to the intention of the laws." But what is the good—we mean for practical purposes—in talking in this way? Sir J. F. Stephen objected to Lord Coleridge's new reading of the Common Law as illogical. It might be as full of illogicality as an egg is full of meat. But there it was. It occupied the field. It could not be exorcised by all the logic in the world. And it occupies the field still. It is not accurate to say that *some* judges accept it. *All* judges accept it. It has been accepted by every judge who has tried a "blasphemy" case since Lord Chief Justice Coleridge laid it down. It is too late to challenge it now.

It leaves the Christians, of course, in a very mean position. We do not dispute that. We rather enjoy contemplating it. They take down the old rod of persecution which still hangs behind their door, and which they refuse to dispense with altogether, as it reminds them of other and better days, but they find that they cannot beat an educated unbeliever with it. They can only beat the uneducated or half-educated; those who are reckless or unskilful in the use of language. They can no longer use their old rod upon the backs of leading Freethinkers; they can only use it upon the backs of commoner soldiers, and they are sometimes obliged to find victims amongst the very camp-followers of the Freethought army.

How is it then, it may be asked, that we have been constrained to observe that blasphemy prose-

cutions never fail. This is a simple question, and the answer is equally simple. The determining factor is the way in which "blasphemy" prosecutions are conducted. You take a Freethinker and put him in the dock. That is something against him to begin with. If he is not guilty what is he there for? You charge him with attacking Christianity in a vulgar, indecent manner. "Indecent" is one of the most elastic words in the English language. It usually means no more than "indecorous." But it is a good strong word, and is therefore in frequent request. You call a man's conduct "indecent" if he but picks his teeth with a match, or even a fork, at a Lord Mayor's dinner; and you would use the same word if he were guilty of personal exposure or of handling young persons improperly. A capable defendant would be able to point out the trickery of the word "indecent" and guard himself against it. But able defendants in the dock, especially for the first time, are not exactly frequent. The word is usually pressed for all it is worth upon the jury. Rhetorical exaggerations transform a mouse into a monster. And who *are* the jury? Twelve actual or professed Christians, most likely. And as "blasphemy" means attacking Christianity in a way distasteful to Christians, the jury are asked in effect, "Gentlemen, do you like that?" Of course they *don't* like it—and that means a verdict of Guilty. It is the greatest joke in the world since butchers got upon the bench to try sheep.

There is no positive guarantee for freedom of thought and speech until the Blasphemy Laws are repealed. Suppose the educated opponents of Christianity are safe now. "Can we be certain," Professor Bury rightly asks, "that there may not come a great set-back?" It came once and buried the civilisation of Greece and Rome. Will it *never* come again? Who knows? Let the friends of freedom be always on their guard. The wise old Greeks made the goddess of wisdom a goddess armed.

We shall deal with the Stewart case at length next week. Meanwhile we hasten to say that Lord Coleridge, the jury, and the prosecution are all to blame. If the sentence includes hard labor it is an illegal sentence. "Blasphemy" is a misdemeanor, not a felony, and cannot be punished in that way. And if the prisoner said nothing worse than the sentences which were quoted several weeks ago, we are ready to brand the trial as a travesty of law and justice.

We desire to close this article with an interesting quotation from Professor Bury on the subject of Atheism and Agnosticism:—

> "The Agnostic holds that there are limits to human reason, and that theology lies outside those limits. Within those limits lies the world with which science (including psychology) deals. Science deals entirely with phenomena, and has nothing to say to the nature of the ultimate reality which may lie beyond phenomena. There are four possible attitudes to this ultimate reality. There is the attitude of the metaphysician and theologian who are convinced not only that it exists but that it can be at least partly known. There is the attitude of the man who denies that it exists; but he must be also a metaphysician, for its existence can only be disproved by metaphysical arguments. Then then are those who assert that it exists but deny that we can know anything about it. And finally there are those who say that we cannot know whether it exists or not. These last are "Agnostics" in the strict sense of the term, men who *profess not to know*. The third class go beyond phenomena in so far as they assert that there is an ultimate though unknowable reality beneath phenomena. But Agnostic is commonly used in a wide sense so as to include the third as well as the fourth class—those who assume an unknowable, as well as those who do not know whether there is an unknowable or not. Comte and Spencer, for instance, who believed in an unknowable, are counted as Agnostics. The difference between an Agnostic and an Atheist is that an Atheist positively denies the existence of a personal God, the Agnostic does not believe in it."

We propose to discuss this hereafter.

G. W. FOOTE.

Reasons for Not Being a Christian.—II.

(*Concluded from p. 740.*)

WE have seen with what glaring effrontery the Rev. Mr. Stanley Russell, in his eagerness to exalt Jesus, falsifies history. There is no truth whatever in the assertion that the Galilean ever morally transformed the world, which is proved by the simple fact that the world never stood in greater need of moral regeneration than it does at this moment. Thus the reverend gentleman's first reason for being a Christian falls ignominiously to the ground, and rises again as a powerful reason for *not* being a Christian. Mr. Russell's second reason for believing in Jesus is even worse than the first. To hold the view that "the message of Jesus is the only one that can give the world and the soul progress, development, expansion, and expression" is to labor under the vainest of delusions. The preacher waxes hilariously sarcastic at the expense of a writer who thought he had made a tremendous discovery when he found the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you"—among the sayings of Confucius. He replies to that writer only by complaining that "he does not tell us of the great thoughts that Jesus has given to the world which are not to be found in the writings of the Chinese philosopher." That is really too funny for words. Will the reverend gentleman mention a single thought expressed by the Gospel Jesus with which the world had not been familiar centuries before his time? He goes on to say that when a man imagines that Christianity is a competitor with Confucianism, Mohammedanism, or Buddhism, he only shows himself "woefully ignorant of the true character of these systems." We make bold to retort that, judging by the descriptive allusions to them in this sermon, Mr. Russell's ignorance of the three Pagan religions named is simply colossal. He dismisses the God of Mohammed as a hard and cruel being who produces "the isolation and almost slavery of the Eastern woman, the bloody wars of conquest—so-called religious, the stagnant, unprogressive life of the East," and who, consequently, "has no message for an age which is the most active and complex of all the world's history." This is a wicked caricature of the Mohammedan religion. The Koran represents Allah as merciful, admitting the doers of good works into Paradise; and as just, punishing the doers of evil. What about the Christian God who consigns, not doers of evil, but unbelievers in Christ, to endless torment in hell-fire? Jesus is made to say, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," while Mohammed is represented as advising his followers thus: "Allah has given each of you intelligence and common sense. If you are in a difficulty or perplexed, do that which your mature judgment tells you is good and right, and that will be the voice of Allah speaking unto you."

The reference to religious wars shows how utterly blind prejudice is. It is a notorious fact that Christianity is the most warlike religion the world has ever seen. It has come down the ages swimming in the blood of Pagans and heretics. Has Mr. Russell never heard of the odious Crusades, themselves essentially criminal and opening the way to the commission of innumerable hideous offences, with a death-roll of nine millions? Has he never read the heart-breaking story of the Albigensian massacres which resulted in the extermination of tens of thousands of France's best citizens? This is Dean Milman's candid description:—

> "Never in the history of man were the great eternal principles of justice, the faith of treaties, common humanity so trampled under foot as in the Albigensian War. Never was a war waged in which ambition, the consciousness of strength, rapacity, implacable hatred, and pitiless cruelty played a greater part. And throughout the war it cannot be disguised that it was not merely the army of the Church, but the Church itself in arms. Papal legates and the greatest prelates headed the host, and mingled in all the horrors of the

> battle and the siege. In no instance did they interfere to arrest the massacre, in some cases urged it on. 'Slay all, God will know his own,' was the boasted saying of Abbot Arnold, Legate of the Pope, before Beziers" (*Latin Christianity*, vol. iv., p. 208).

It would be difficult to find a parallel to this bloody war in history. At the taking of Beziers twenty thousand people were put to death, the faithful sharing the fate of the heretics. Is our friend ignorant of the Thirty Years' War, which was waged between Catholics and a militant union of Lutherans and Calvinists, and during which the population of Germany was diminished from twenty to fifty per cent? When it began there were 400,000 people in Würtemberg, but by 1641 only 48,000 were left. Can Mr. Russell contemplate the conquest of Mexico and Peru without blushing for very shame? Brutal in the extreme was the persecution of the Anabaptist movement at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and of the Huguenots, which brought about eight bloody civil wars, and which has for its high-water mark of inhumanity the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The truth is that Mohammedanism has no religious wars to compare either in number or in blood-thirstiness with those for which Christianity must be held responsible.

Mr. Russell is equally mistaken about Buddhism. Fancy a Master of Arts in the twentieth century defining *Nirvana* as "that cessation of all activity which was the only cure for sin." Every scholar knows that *Nirvana* "is the realisation of the final culminating stage in a single stream of life evolving from eternity. The victim of that stream's current has now become the master. The plant, to shift the metaphor, that takes years to reach florescence has burst into flower, and tastes its 'crowded hour of glorious life'" (Mrs. Rhys-Davids, M.A., *Buddhism*, p. 170). It is quite as great an error to declare that "Christ is the source and inspiration of all the new-found liberty" of China under the recently established Republic. There are a few Christians in the country, but it is a monstrous falsehood to assert that China turns to Christ to-day, rather than to Confucius or Buddha. China is not a Christian country, nor do its inhabitants show the least tendency to adopt the religion of the West.

Mr. Russell's third and last reason for being a Christian is a purely sentimental one. "I am a Christian," he says, "because of living and personal experience of the redemptive grace and power of Christ." We do not doubt the reality of the feeling, or the sincerity of the experience; but we do not only doubt, but deny, its evidential value; and our denial of its evidential value is based upon the fact that its effect upon character and conduct is more injurious than beneficial. One of the fruits of Christian experience is overweening egotism, proud arrogance, or haughtiness. Shakespeare speaks of "arrogant Winchester, that haughty prelate," and the same adjectives can be applied to every earnest Christian everywhere. Even Mr. Russell is so anxious to depreciate non-Christian religions that he fails to be just to them. They all "lay over the lands and hearts of those who profess them a great dark pall of pessimism, stagnation, and bondage." They are so imperfect and corrupt that it would degrade Christianity to enter into competition with them. In other words, Christians are the only sane, wise, and good people on the face of the earth. A religion that engenders such hateful arrogance is self-condemned. Another fruit of Christian experience is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is a feigning to be what one is not, a fault of which every zealous Christian cannot help being guilty. To be in Christ is to be a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, and, consequently, a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth. Listen to the heavenly citizen's wail:—

> "'Tis weary waiting here;
> I long to be where Jesus is,
> To feel, to see him near."
>
> "Here in the body pent,
> Absent from him I roam,
> Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
> A day's march nearer home."

How often have we heard a congregation sing such hymns with a fervor that could be justified only by an unspeakable longing for immediate translation into the glory land. Emotionally, for the time being, the singers no doubt did yearn indescribably for the "blessed home beyond this land of woe, where trials never come, nor tears of sorrow flow"; but the so-called happy experience was an emotional disease. It was a longing that did violence to the nature of those who cherished it. In sane moments even the greatest saints do not wish to leave the earth that gave them birth. When sickness assails them, instead of shouting "Hallelujah! the glorious change is at hand," they send for the doctor and do everything within their power to keep out of Paradise. "The desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better" than to remain here, is unnatural and essentially hypocritical, and its influence upon character cannot be wholesome. It is well-known that as members of society, the most emotional disciples of the Lamb are in no sense superior, if equal, to other people.

Mr. Russell's reasons for being a Christian impel us to reject Christ altogether. We reject him because he never lived, because the claims made on his behalf are discredited by all history, because faith in him produces hypocrites and persecutors, and because the religion that bears his name has always been, and is, pre-eminently a religion of the sword. Mr. Russell calls him "the one Man amongst men," and "the incomparable Master in insight and in purity," and then admits that—

> "The love of Jesus, what it is,
> None but his loved ones know."

We maintain that if what the Bible and Mr. Russell say about him were true, "his loved ones" would include the entire human race, and pain, sorrow, evil, vice, dissention, and wrangling would be unknown. Instead of that happy state of things, we have Christendom, which is an armed camp, and Christians who are perpetually crucifying one another and looking down with disdain or feigned pity upon all outsiders.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Purity Crusade.

JUST at present the British Public is passing through one of its periodic attacks of aggressive morality. Meetings are being held all over the country, new societies are being formed, books are being published—the inevitable Harold Begbie has, of course, issued a shilling shocker packed with extravagant verbiage—and all sorts of things are being denounced. Music-halls, picture palaces, advertisement hoardings, books, are being attacked in a frenzy of purifying zeal. And with Mr. Begbie as fugleman—his pamphlet was written at the request of the Free Church Council—we are warned that bad as things are, they will become much worse unless something drastic is done. Hence the societies, meetings, books, and general furore in the name of morality and religion.

Putting on one side the immense amount of exaggeration involved in this agitation, it may be admitted there is room and need for improvement. But was there ever a time when there was not? Things are not worse than they were; they are, I believe, better. The tendency is to improvement, not to deterioration. And, after all, it is not fundamentally a question of how bad things are, but of the methods employed to make them better, and of the cause of their being as bad as they are. As things go at present, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that whatever improvement occurs will not happen as the consequence of what is being done by this shrieking community of puritan reformers, but will transpire in spite of their efforts. The utmost effect of their conduct will be to change the form of the particular vice attacked, and that may easily be a change for the worse instead of for the better.

The clergy are, of course, taking an active part in this agitation, and there are several reasons for this. It is a *safe* occupation in this country. Agitation concerning other subjects soon brings a clergyman into conflict with some of his congregation. If the clergy were to make a united attack, say, upon the ground landlords of London, and show that responsibility for overcrowding, with its consequent ill-health and ill-conduct, rests largely with them, there would be trouble. So would a general campaign on the housing question, or on the conditions under which labor is employed. But music hall managers, lessees of dancing academies, variety artistes—we except Harry Lauder—are not, one may assume, great patrons of the Churches, and it is quite safe to attack them. The occupation gives the minimum of risk with the maximum of profit. And where a licence is involved it is tolerably easy for people in position to bring effective pressure to their aid.

And it is safe from another point of view. There is no more elastic word in the English language than "indecent." It may mean anything, from the color of a necktie to positive obscenity. But while it may be applied to anything, it almost invariably suggests *impurity*. And that suggestion does the trick. The man who raises the cry feels himself surrounded with a halo of virtue. Those who listen are afraid, for the most part, to demur, because there is the easy retort that it involves the support of immorality. And the general lack of moral courage is such that once a thing is labelled indecent most people will refuse to have anything to do with its defence. More than that, they are often impelled to take a hand on behalf of the "Moral Crusade" in order to vindicate their reputation—and for other reasons.

These other reasons are important. Those who have watched this agitation, and others of a similar character, cannot have failed to observe that the subject has, for a large number of people, a very strong and a very unhealthy attraction. They attend meetings and they read the literature published because they anticipate revelations of a very peculiar character. The pornographic taste that in some people is gratified by the reading of "suggestive" books, is in other people gratified by hearing these things denounced on the public platform. The gross exaggerations concerning the "White Slave" traffic, so cleverly and so clearly exposed, from official information, by Mrs. Billington Greig, is a case in point. The speakers simply allowed their minds to run riot. A single case became thousands! "I have heard" became "I have known." And the audience was in no mood to cavil at statements, no matter how extravagant. Mr. Harold Begbie follows the same line. He tells of a child of *four years of age* kept in a house of ill-fame for an immoral purpose. The baby was rescued by a lady, but was kidnapped again, and has never been heard of since. Such a statement should either not be made at all, or, if made, should be accompanied by the fullest proof. At least, we should have been told what steps the police took in the matter.

And one great consequence of these agitations—so long as they remain in the hands of this class—is not hard to foresee. People are taught to look for indecency, and to find it, either where it does not exist or where it would remain unnoticed. The Bishop of London boasted the other day that he and other Christians put down the Living Pictures a few years ago. Does that mean that London became purer afterwards? According to the mouthpieces of the present purity crusade, London was never so impure as at present. What did the Bishop and his helpers actually achieve? This: they made the exhibition of living pictures indecent to nearly everybody that saw them. People who went to the music-halls could not help looking for the indecencies the Bishop had so kindly pointed out to them. Whether the exhibitions were indecent before the Bishop's crusade is a matter of opinion. That they were so afterwards is certain. They were made so by the prurient parsonic mind. If the Bishop had been present at the Crucifixion, no doubt his chief complaint would have been that Jesus lacked sufficient clothing to appear before a mixed multitude.

A little while before this we had the row over the nude statuary outside the offices of the British Medical Association. For weeks men and women were incited and invited to go and look at these statues, which were declared to be too indecent to be tolerated in a Christian country. And thousands of Christians went—most of them appeared to suffer gladly—and examined through opera-glasses the "indecent" statuary. The same thing over again. But for the religious crusaders no one would have thought them indecent. But they were made indecent for a time, until these pious hunters had found some fresh and more timid quarry. For the statues were not removed; they were not even draped. The British Medical Association had no licence that was at the mercy of these people, and it treated them with contempt. No one calls these statues indecent now. They have been rescued from indecency by being left alone.

So, also, Mr. Harold Begbie refers to a picture that for some years has shocked his pure soul. It is a commercial advertisement in the shape of a poster "which represents the kiss of a man and woman—a kiss of surrender and abandonment." I don't know the picture, and am not aware of ever having seen it. But it is quite possible that I may look for it now, and try to find the indecency that has shocked so pure a mind. And I will undertake to say that no class of the population will look out more eagerly for this picture than Mr. Begbie's readers. If the publishers of the book—the National Council of Evangelical Churches—wish to raise money, I would advise them to reprint and sell this particular poster as a picture postcard. There is no fear of its having a good sale among their *clientèle*.

There are two types of men that trouble the world. One man runs to uncleanness of action. He is a bad enough type, and the proper subject for police attention. But he is, after all, comparatively harmless. His character marks him as one to be avoided, and generally he is avoided. The other type offers a much more serious problem. It runs to uncleanness of mind. This kind of individual is difficult to shun, and, under the guise of a super-sensitive purity, an air of impurity is spread over the whole of life. Nothing is safe from him, and his purity of mind is such that a woman's ankles or an undraped statue throws him into a perfect quiver of unexpressed sensualism. At a meeting the other day some of the speakers took it into their heads to advocate the suppression of certain books. Among others, the *Decameron* of Boccaccio. What is it that has made the *Decameron* a pornographic work? The vast majority of readers who came to the book without any such suggestion would not find it so. The truth is that the *Decameron* is a pornographic book chiefly because the unclean Puritans have for years advertised it as such. I only had the pleasure of hearing the late M. D. Conway on two or three occasions. But on one of these he earned my admiration by advising everyone of his audience to read the *Decameron*. To give that advice in England argued courage.

For myself, I question whether people are ever made worse by reading any book; or if they are, then I should place the demoralisation caused by so-called "good" books as much greater than that by books classed as bad. In reading, as in life, what one gets out of a book is mainly what one puts into it. A natural taste for the vicious and for the depraved will poison a book as it will poison social intercourse. And the remedy in either case is not suppression, but education. Not the policeman, but the tutor. Or, if one has to attribute evil to the reading of a book, then a conclusive case could be made out for the statement that no book in the world is responsible for so much, and so widespread, harm as the Christian's fetish—the Bible.

I am happy to conclude with something from a Bishop. At one of these "purity" meetings Bishop Boyd Carpenter said that the real cure was not to

suppress literature, but to elevate public opinion. That is the whole truth in a nutshell. Do that, and the work is accomplished. Without that, nothing is of avail. But to do that the work must be taken out of the hands of journalists and parsons who fatten on the tastes they denounce. We are dealing with a public opinion that has been demoralised by Christian training and Christian tradition. It has narrowed the very conception of morality until it has come to mean little else than sexual relationships. How to overcome the essential ill-health of the Puritan mind is the vital problem. In his book on *Woman* the Rev. Principal Donaldson relates the well-known story of Phrynne, whose lawyer won her case by suddenly exhibiting her nude body to the jury. But he properly reminds his readers that this was no appeal to their sensual passions. On the contrary, it was an appeal to their highest artistic instincts. What would have happened at any time had something of the same kind been tried before a Christian jury? Which would it have appealed to in their case—the artistic or the sensual? On the answer to that question hinges one's judgment of the real influence of Christian Puritanism on human life.

C. COHEN.

The Genesis of the New Spirit.

Shelley, Godwin, and their Circle. By H. N. Brailsford. (Home University Press.) 1913.

SOME great Freethinkers have been once more brought to the notice of the general reader by the publication of Mr. H. N. Brailsford's book, *Shelley, Godwin, and their Circle;* and their admirers have reason to be grateful for this illuminative volume which has been issued in the "Home University Series" by the famous firm of Williams & Norgate.

The great poet and his guide, philosopher, and friend, William Godwin, died so long ago that one would have thought that the facts concerning their lives were well known to every lover of literature. Yet Christian writers have ever been loth to admit Shelley's Freethought, and Godwin has been treated with the scantiest courtesy, and his action presented in the worst possible light. Being religious themselves, orthodox critics have pretended that men of genius cannot be Freethinkers; and so they tell lies, and strain their faculties to disprove what these men asserted all through their lives.

The fact has so often been ignored, but Shelley was in the direct line of succession of the great Freethinkers. He really belonged to an order of writers of which Rousseau and Voltaire are the best-known representatives. They all wrote, not merely for artistic, but for propagandist ends, to impress their ideas upon others by force of eloquence. In the last analysis they are alike in their Freethought. Shelley did not originate the philosophy in his poetry; he merely adopted it directly from Godwin and indirectly from the great French iconoclasts. As Mr. Brailsford points out acutely, "Godwin in short explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin." It would be no paradox to add that Godwin formed Shelley's mind, and that *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas* were the greatest of Godwin's works. With the proud record of half a century's work for Freethought, William Godwin could at least claim that he had done a man's part in purging the veins of men of the subtle poisons which dwarf them.

Literature was not merely a pastime to Shelley and Godwin, and Shelley in particular was ever a pioneer. From the days of *Queen Mab* to his latest poem, he was fighting for Liberty. Except that the later works strike deeper notes than those he had used with such exuberant resonance in his youth, there is no change. He died, so to speak, sword in hand, and his epitaph is in our hearts.

Yet there is another man who has, and deserves, a place in this most interesting volume; a man who has written his name for all time to see, and that is Thomas Paine. In a generation of brave men, he was the boldest and noblest. No wrong found him indifferent; and he used his pen not only for the democracy which might reward him, but for animals and slaves. Poverty never left him, yet he made fortunes and gave them to the cause he loved. The *Age of Reason* was the bravest thing he did, for it threatened his name with an immortality of lying abuse. "Where Liberty is, there is my country," said Franklin; and Paine's magnificent answer was, "Where is not Liberty, there is mine." It is the watchword of the soldiers of Freethought, the marching music that sent Paine himself forth as a knight-errant, that sent Lafayette to America, and Byron to Greece, and inspired so many poets from Shelley to Swinburne.

Full justice is done to these men in Mr. Brailsford's admirable book. He starts with an account of the effect of the French Revolution in England, and shows clearly and distinctly the connection between the French and the English Freethinkers; and one of the most delightful chapters deals with the work of Mary Woolstonecraft.

It is greatly to Mr. Brailsford's credit that he does not slur over Shelley's Freethought. He tells us plainly that Shelley was an Atheist, and adds: "Like Godwin, he felt that the God of orthodoxy was a tyrant, and he revolted against Him, because He condemned the world which He had made." And, again, he points out that "Nothing could be more absurd than to call Shelley a Pantheist. Pantheism is the creed of conservatism and resignation, but Shelley felt the world as struggle and revolt." After this tribute, it is the more to be regretted that Mr. Brailsford allows himself to lapse into writing of "Tom" Paine instead of Thomas Paine, a palpable form of insolence. The obvious admiration of Mr. Brailsford for the great Freethinker does not minimise the offence, for the effect upon the popular mind is to range Paine among men who are patronised—a perfectly intolerable suggestion.

The scope of Mr. Brailsford's volume is very wide, for one may regard the period from Paine to Shelley as the beginning of the new era. Out of the charnel-vault of Kingcraft and Priestcraft, Rousseau and the other great French Freethinkers saw in vision the ideal society of the future. Of this new evangel Paine was the prophet and Shelley was the poet. It was precisely because their hearts were aflame with human sympathy that their works have vital and permanent effect. They both devoted themselves to the idea of the perfectibility of human nature. It is the very mainspring of their prose and poetry. In the *Rights of Man* and the *Age of Reason*, no less than in the *Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*, its expression glows with the solemn and majestic inspiration of prophecy. Liberty is yet to be won; may it be our task to hasten the coming of that glorious day when the world will be one country and to do good will be the only religion.

MIMNERMUS.

MIRACLES.

Of all the modes of evidence which ever were invented to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of miracle, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. For, in the first place, whenever recourse is had to show for the purpose of procuring that belief (for a miracle, under any idea of the word, is a show), it implies a lameness or a weakness in the doctrine which is preached. And, in the second place, it is degrading the Almighty into the character of a showman, playing tricks to amuse and make the people stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence which can be set up; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter who says that he saw it; and, therefore, the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie.—*Thomas Paine.*

Acid Drops.

The following appeared in the *Daily Citizen* of Thursday, November 20:—

> "Refusal by the chairman of the Bench to take the word of a man who said he did not believe in God led to the adjournment of a case of alleged trespassing in search of game at Morpeth Police Court yesterday.
>
> The defendant, a Longhurst miner named William Snowball, elected to give evidence, but refused to be sworn on the Testament, saying he was a Secularist.
>
> Captain Mitford (the chairman): Don't you believe in God?
>
> The Defendant: I don't know what God is.
>
> Captain Mitford: Miserable man! I refuse to take the word of a man who does not believe in God.
>
> Mr. Shaw (solicitor for the defendant): Do your worships think he is not capable of speaking the truth?
>
> Captain Mitford: I don't believe him.
>
> Mr. Shaw: Snowball does not believe in the Testament.
>
> Captain Mitford: No man is capable of speaking the truth who is such a fool as not to believe in God.
>
> Mr. Shaw indignantly objected to the position taken up by the Bench, and asked for the case to be adjourned until the next court.
>
> Captain Mitford: The case will be adjourned. We cannot believe the word of a man like that."

One expects to meet insufferable fools on the magistrates' bench in country places, and Captain Mitford evidently belongs to a well-known species. But what was the clerk of the court doing that he did not tell this impudent bigot that the witness was entitled to affirm, and on the very ground on which he was rejected and insulted, namely, that he had no religious belief?

Captain Mitford's dictum is that "No man is capable of speaking the truth who is such a fool as not to believe in God." We always thought it was rather rogues than fools who were incapable of telling the truth. Rogues, of course, are usually Christians. And the fact is not surprising. There is a personage called the father of lies in the Bible. It is the clergy's old friend the Devil. Yet he would be a most eligible witness in Captain Mitford's court. *He* is not a fool—*he* is not an Atheist, never was, and never will be—*he* has a most satisfactory belief in God. He would suit Captain Mitford down to the ground.

Bradlaugh's "Oaths Act" is some twenty-seven years old and apparently it hasn't reached Morpeth yet. We have again and again suggested that the Lord Chancellor should circularise the Police and other courts on this matter. Nothing, however, has been done. Lord Chancellors are high and mighty persons; far too big for their boots, and far too lazy for their salary—which is £10,000 a year.

Jim Larkin may be all right from other points of view, but he talks too much about "God" for our taste. At the Albert Hall meeting he brought in "the living God." Perhaps it was only sonorous verbiage. We hope it was. For the help that "God" (living or dead) has rendered the strikers at Dublin is easily measured. Mr. Larkin seems grateful for very small mercies.

We have heard that God doesn't understand Welsh. At least an old Englishwoman is reported to have said so when she heard the prayers going on in a Welsh chapel. It now appears that there are other languages not understood by the same personage. There was a gipsy funeral at St. Mary's Cemetery, Ilford, recently, and the short service included the pouring of wine over the coffin. A Catholic priest asked the parents why they did not attend mass. "We can only pray in Romany," the father replied, "and God does not understand the language."

There is a great Protestant eruption in the town of Hawick just now. The leader of the Protestant mob is Mr. James Macdonald, who titles himself "pastor." He has been having packed "houses" at all his meetings—at which he takes "silver collections." The "pastor" denies that he is married, but admits having had an illegitimate daughter when he was younger. Two local ministers investigated his career, and afterwards issued a pamphlet denouncing him as unworthy to represent any good cause. They suggest that if he isn't married he ought to be. It must be said that the Roman Catholics of the town have behaved like intelligent and law-abiding citizens; against abuse hurled at them from every quarter, they have not retaliated, and the rabid clamoring of the vulgar mob they have treated with silent contempt. At the commencement of the eruption, the fight was between the Protestants and the Romanists. Now, as can be seen from the leaflet, the camp of the Protestants is divided. "After 1900 years' profession of the gospel of love your neighbor as yourself, Christendom is an armed camp."

Mr. Thomas Hardy, whose humaneness is known to all his readers, is not often moved to public speech outside his novels. But he has been so moved lately by the opposition offered on Wareham Town Council to a proposal to establish a system of painless slaughtering of animals for food. In a letter to the *Dorset County Chronicle* he says: "I regret to see that the excellent movement for the painless slaughtering of animals for food should be obstructed in any way. The movement is belated enough already in not having been reached until after twenty centuries of what is supposed to be a humane religion." The sting of Mr. Hardy's letter is in the tail. The sarcasm should make the Christians blush—if they have a blush left in stock, which seems rather doubtful.

The Middlesex Licensing Committee have prohibited all picture shows on Sundays. They have no legal right to do anything of the kind. Why don't the picture show managers defy this usurpation?

The Archbishop of Canterbury presided at a convention last week for the closing of publichouses on Sunday, and was supported by two bishops, a Jewish rabbi, and representatives of the Salvation Army and other fancy religions. The Archbishop based part of his appeal on behalf of the 300,000 people engaged in publichouses. We shall believe in his Grace's disinterestedness for the working classes when he sees that organists, choir boys, vergers, and church cleaners are paid adequate wages.

The bishops are engineering a crusade against the music-halls, and seem to be as zealous as the old-time Puritans. How is it that these prelates are so much less sensitive when they read the lurid pages of the Old Testament?

The clergy are making a great outcry against the tango and other popular dances. Perhaps they prefer David's famous dance. It was an active performance, and the man after God's own heart wasn't hampered with much clothes.

The Bishop of Bristol has been appealing for sympathy—and contributions—for the "poor" clergy. He says that, unlike the rest of the world, when he wakes on Sunday there is no day of rest for him. On the contrary, his Sunday is "the most onerous, the most trying of all the days of the week." Shame! The public should insist on the clergyman having his day of rest—and let him take it on Sunday. When Sabbatarianism is the question, the clergy ought to set a good example.

I believe, says the Bishop, as an inducement to subscribe, that no clergyman should receive less than £200 a year, that if all care and financial anxiety were removed from the clergy they would do their work better and with a lighter heart. We do not doubt it for a moment, but the statement holds good no more for the clergy than for other people. *Everyone* would go about his or her work if the financial anxiety of making ends meet were removed. The statement is really a truism; and we do not see why public appeals should be made on behalf of the clergy more than on behalf of all other people. We believe in a "living wage" for everyone, but other people do not first of all make a talk about their being "called" to their vocation, and then appeal to the charity of the general public to raise their wages. Besides, the proper people to raise the salary to £200 a year are the better-paid clergy. Let the bishops set the example of "shelling out."

Commenting on the latest "blasphemy" case, the *Christian World* says:—

> "No man has a right, whether talking on religion or on any other question in public, deliberately to use language that deeply hurts the feelings of the average listener. If a Christian speaker used unpardonably vulgar and violently provocative language, calculated to cause a breach of the peace, against a denomination other than his own, or against agnostics or atheists, he would have no reason to complain if the law stopped him."

We are sorry to say this superficially fair comment rings very hollow. In the first place, the *Freethinker* must not hurt the feelings of his listeners. The *Christian* must be so violent as to threaten an immediate breach of the peace before action is justified. And we would like to know whether the *Christian World* has ever even heard of a Christian speaker being threatened by the police because he

used vulgar and abusive language concerning non-Christians? Week by week in the London parks some of the vilest abuse and slander is showered upon Freethinkers by paid Christian speakers. When have the police interfered? Would any magistrate grant a warrant against such a speaker if a Freethinker applied for one? The notion is so absurd that no one would dream of making such an application. It is neither the abusive nor the provocative language that is objected to. It is the attack on Christianity that is resented; and the *Christian World* knows that as well as we do. And the peculiar feature of the present situation is the aggravated cowardice of the Christian world. Once upon a time Christians had at least the courage to attack the leaders. Now they dare not fly higher than the rank and file.

Bishop Welldon's letter in the *Manchester Guardian* on the Stewart case is characteristic of the writer. He has apparently but one objection to "blasphemy" prosecutions, and that is that the victim is apt to regard himself, and to be regarded by others, as "a martyr for his religious opinions." In other words, Christianity stands to lose more than "Infidelity" from such prosecutions. Were it the other way about Bishop Welldon would find no fault with them. It is not a question of principle, but a question of profit and loss.

We quite follow Bishop Welldon's conclusion. "Christianity," he says, "is not unable to defend itself against all reasonable attacks, and persons who attack Christianity with the poisoned weapons of indecency should be punished, not as infidels, but as evil-doers." Quite so. It is Bishop Welldon's religion that must not be attacked except with the greatest care and solemnity. It is Bishop Welldon's religion, in attacking which a disputant who commits the slightest indiscretion is in danger of imprisonment. It is Bishop Welldon and his fellow-religionists who are to decide what is indiscreet and even what is "indecent." The Christians are the upper-dog in this game all along. They complain, they prosecute, they try, they give the verdict, they sentence, and they imprison. The "infidel's" role is to grin if he can and bear it as he must.

What is "indecency" in the discussion of Christianity? We challenge Bishop Welldon to give a straight answer to this question. Taking the word in its natural sense, we challenge him to find any "indecency" whatever in the words alleged to have been uttered by this Wolverhampton "blasphemer." The word "indecency" is a trick word. It is used in one sense with a hope, and indeed a knowledge, that it will be understood in another. You may say that a man's conduct at a dinner-table was positively indecent, and lead people to think that he was filthy in act or speech, whereas all he really did was to eat peas with a knife.

When a man's honor and liberty are at stake, Bishop Welldon, you should speak of him with some degree of accuracy—that is, honesty. We do not appeal to you as a Christian. That would be a waste of words. We appeal to you as a human being. It is you, sir, and not the "blasphemer" in prison, who has used "poisoned weapons." At the worst he has only used the common language of the man in the street. You have used words so as to cover a crime with a lie.

We are pleased to see the following from Mr. H. W. Massingham in reference to the many free speech prosecutions of recent years:—

> "The Larkin trial was no worse than the Crowsley trial, or the Bowman trial, or the Mann trial, or the blasphemy prosecutions. These things seem right enough to officials, advised by officials; they seem wrong to the man who breathes the comparatively free air of the street. He knows that if he is a Liberal or a Labor man, or even an average good-tempered Briton, with a Christian bias, that the men who talk 'blasphemy' are not the worst, but sometimes the best of citizens."

Mr. Massingham has been a long time coming to it, but it is something that he has at last arrived. We warned the public, at the first of the "blasphemy" trials, that there was more in the matter than what merely affected Freethinkers; and the present Government, thanks probably to its Nonconformist leaven, has all along been seeing how far it could curtail the most dreaded enemy of all governments—Free Speech. Some of those who stood idly by while Freethinkers were being prosecuted, because they did not agree with the opinions persecuted, have now reaped their reward in the persecution of opinions with which they had some sort of sympathy. We hope that by now these people will have fully realised the folly of their conduct, and bear the lesson in mind on future occasions. Freedom is the proper concern of all, and all should rally when it is attacked in any direction.

It is very difficult for a Christian to do justice to another religion—sometimes impossible. Professor Margoliouth has at times written very sympathetically of Mohammedanism, but he has just fallen into a very serious blunder. Writing an account of Mohammedanism for the benefit of the *Church Family Newspaper*, he points out that the Mohammedan identifies the State with his Church, and finds it difficult to separate religion from politics. In neither of these particulars does Mohammedanism differ much from Christian practice; but the remarkable statement follows that the Balkan States, when attacking the Ottoman Empire, were believed to be engaged on Crusades. Now, as a matter of fact, the Turks deliberately refrained from any appeal to religious feeling during the war. It was not they who believed the attack to be a Crusade, it was the Christians themselves who called it so. More than that, the constant appeal to the country was to Christian feeling as against Mohammedan domination. The Cross against the Crescent was the great rallying cry, and the whole of the religious press of the country openly, and indirectly, exulted in the prospect of the Turks being driven out of Constantinople and Santa Sophia reconverted to Christian worship. It is really very soon—too soon—to write that the religious feeling in the Balkan War was imported by Mohammedans.

The *Catholic Times* is highly indignant because the French Government gave the railway servants who were killed in the recent disaster what it calls a "Pagan funeral." The Government did not, of course, prevent the relatives of the men taking the bodies and giving them a religious funeral; and as this was not done, one must assume that those chiefly concerned were content. The Government did all it could properly be expected to do. It saw to the funeral; there were wreaths of flowers sent; and the Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber, with other Ministers, delivered addresses. Nothing else was possible or proper. The State did not employ these men as Catholics, but as citizens, and as citizens killed in the discharge of their duty it paid them civic honor. Suppose some of these men had been Jews. Would the *Catholic Times* advise that the representatives of the Government should have arranged a Jewish funeral? The French Government acted in a perfectly dignified manner; although one need not expect Catholics to appreciate a policy that aims at remaining neutral towards all forms of religious opinion. Neutrality is, to them, only another name for persecution.

The same journal points out that "it would not be easy to find in Europe another city where the toiling classes frequent the churches so regularly and in such large numbers." Perhaps not; but if reports are to be trusted, it would not be easy to find another city in Europe where the conditions under which people live are so utterly demoralising. Perhaps there is a very close connection between the two things. For our part, we believe there is; and we also believe that one result of the present trouble will be that a great many will have this connection brought home to them.

Fifteen tons of Bibles were sent out in two days lately from the famous House in Queen Victoria-street. It was a great weight. But theological literature is generally heavy.

Canon O. P. Wardell-Yerburgh, vicar of Tewkesbury, went hunting with the Ledbury hounds. He had better have resembled Jacob than Esau. It was his last hunt. He was taken ill on the way home and died in a cottage to which he was carried. His complaint is said to have been "overwork." Some people will be apt to think it was "overriding."

Rev. C. G. Duperier, Eyre Lodge, Portobello, left £7,753. Poor clergy!

Rev. Benjamin Watkins, vicar of Little Aston, Staffordshire, left £11,230. Oh those "poor clergy"!

Rev. Robert Jackson, of Buckingham-place, Clifton, left £30,735. "Woe unto you rich!" Quite so. The reverend gentleman took the risk.

"It is a great error of modern times to mistake erudition for education," says Mr. M. E. Sadler. It is a mistake much fostered by the clergy of all denominations.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that he never envies young men. Are they becoming scarce in the Church?

Mr. E. O'Donnell, lecturing at Chelsea recently, proclaimed his belief in a future life for the "animal creation." In which case we hope that fleas and bugs will be self-supporting.

The Rev. F. Dormer Pierce, of Southend-on-Sea, has raised an outcry about a theatrical poster, which he considers harmful to the young people. Yet he belongs to a profession which forces Biblical nastiness into the hands of little children. Some of these clergymen will get into trouble. They denounce pictures and peformances until people fancy there must be something really spicy in them; but they turn out to be by no means indecent, and the pious patrons are proportionately disappointed, and full of moral indignation at being deceived.

The near approach of the merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows reminds us of the close association of godliness with gluttony. Pudding and piety seems to be the recipe for the great festival.

John Belsham, aged thirty-four, residing in Hackney, was a printer. After being confined to his room for eight weeks suffering from consumption of the throat, he was told on November 14 that he could not live through the day. His wife brought in a clergyman and Holy Communion was celebrated at the house. Soon afterwards he was found with his throat cut. Such is the bracing and consoling effect of religion! It may be, however, that the poor fellow thought that, being prepared for heaven, he might as well go there at once, and thus avoid the many a slip which the proverb says is met between the cup and the lip. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Suicide by cut throat"—which was short and sweet. It left all other questions open.

Ten towns have been wrecked by earthquake in Peru. Over 200 persons were killed in one town—Abancay. More credit to "Providence"!

The new super-Dreadnought, the *Iron Duke*, went faster than was expected on her trial trip. Make-believe gave way to real earnest. The great battleship, warned by "wireless," raced for all she was worth to the relief of a burning steamer, the *Scotsdyke*. She arrived just in time to save everybody on board. It was done so nicely, neatly, and calmly that the pet dog was the first to enter the life-boat. *Après vous, monsieur!* The *Iron Duke* will never do a better deed than she did that day.

Monsignor Benson says he saw seven miracles at Lourdes one afternoon. Very likely. Some people always see what they want to. But did other people see them too? Ay, there's the rub.

"There have of recent years been some black deeds done in China, but it is pleasant to note that Mr. Ernest H. Wilson, V.M.H., whose book, *A Naturalist in Western China*, has just been published (Methuen, 30s. net), bears testimony in his Preface to the kind treatment which he always received in the course of his various travels in the Middle Kingdom. He has made four different expeditions to the country, covering in all nearly eleven years, but in all his wanderings he has been singularly fortunate. 'The Chinese,' he says, 'treated me always with kindly courtesy and respect. I was in interior China during the Boxer outbreak and the Russo-Japanese war, and visited places shortly before or after anti-foreign riots, but never experienced any incivility meriting the name.' This testimony from such a quarter is very interesting."—*Westminster Gazette* (Nov. 19).

There is an increasing scarcity of choir boys, and at a Harrow church women have replaced the boys. If this state of affairs continues, there will not be any male persons in the churches with the exception of the parsons. And did not Sidney Smith say that they were a third sex?

The Sunday School Union has a musical instrument department, and they supply articles on the easy payment system. Probably this is to prepare the scholars for the heavenly choir.

Rev. W. J. Cunningham Pike, of Chelsea Congregational Church, explains that the walls of Jericho did not fall down flat, but sank into the earth until the top of the walls were flush with the ground, so that "Rahab and her house" (that is, her brothel) were comfortably on the ground floor, and very accessible, we presume, to business visitors. Some people will say they understand it now. Others will say that all lunatics are not in asylums.

Rev. Thomas Ghent, curate of St. Andrew's, Stockwell, could not induce a special jury to give him a verdict and damages in his action for slander against Mr. Arthur Fitzgerald, a police-sergeant. It was alleged that the man of God had been too familiar with the man in blue's wife. After nine days' trial the jury disagreed. The reverend gentleman is either fortunate or unfortunate. We don't know which.

"Vanoc" in the *Referee* finds that the saddest event of 1913 is "the silence of the clergy on things that count." By this he means that they are silent on the most important social problems. But why should they be otherwise? All social problems pertain to this world. All religious problems pertain to another world. Why should not the clergy attend to their own problems? You reply that these problems are no longer of any importance. Very well, then; let the clergy engage in some better occupation. Their opinion on secular problems is of no more value, and often less, than the opinion of laymen.

Our old friend Mr. J. Barry—an N. S. S. vice-president and a member of the board of directors of the Secular Society, Ltd.—wonders why the Tory sporting paper referred to in last week's "Acid Drops" thinks it witty to remark that the Bradlaugh statue at Northampton is situated near a public lavatory. Mr. Barry points out that the late King Edward's statue on the best spot that could be selected on Tooting Broadway is similarly situated. And in this case the lavatory preceded the statue. So that the insult, if it is an insult, was absolutely premeditated.

Harry Lauder's motto should be "This way to the stars!" He was in the pulpit again last Sunday—at Anerley Congregational Church. It was the afternoon meeting for men, but the ladies were admitted "on this occasion only" to the galleries, the men being on the ground floor, so that the place must have looked a good deal like a Jews' synagogue. Harry has only one subject, "Pit Ponies." But he opened the ball with "Annie Laurie," and he finished with, not the "Rock of Ages" but "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep." Some of his hearers, perhaps, felt like that on the Saturday night. Of course we exclude the ladies.

Soon after the death of Ingersoll we remember reading some pious vulgarity from the pen of a professional Christian about the bearing of the women of the Ingersoll household when they had to part for ever from the body of the dear husband, the dear father, the dear head of the family. That was what you might expect, the wretched bigot said, in the bereavement of "infidels." The body is all, and they cling to it with wonderful tenacity, and at the final parting they refuse to be comforted. Whereas a Christian's thoughts are all about the soul on these occasions, and they accept the balm of consolation. Mrs. Ingersoll had to be led away from her husband's corpse when they took it to the crematorium. Well, was that never done for a bereaved Christian man? Let us see.

We have lately been reading again the Life of Edmund Burke. A man of genius, a great writer, the assailant of the French Revolution, the champion of Church and State, the apologist of Christianity. Burke stood as the representative of religion, not only for England, but for the whole of Europe. Now, Burke was wrapped up in his only son, for whose future he had formed the highest expectations. The young man was his father's pride, joy, and hope. But he was cut off in the bloom of his promise, and Burke abandoned himself to the very desperation of sorrow. His was "a grief that would not be comforted." Let us hear his biographer:—

> "The grief of Burke was appalling. He would now sit in that unnatural calmness of despair, which is yet more terrific than the most stormy displays of passion, and now bursting into a frenzy of grief, would rush into the chamber where his son lay, and throwing himself on the body, call in accents of the most fearful anguish for 'the hope of his age, the stay of his life, the only comfort of his declining and now joyless years.'"

Burke was a Christian, Mrs. Ingersoll is a Freethinker. Both acted alike in a sudden bereavement. Why? Because both were human, both natural, both sincere, and both loved. The orthodox ruffian referred to in the previous paragraph resembled them in none of these things. Therefore he did not understand.

A Yankee millionaire has raised a costly monument to "the memory of Adam, the first man." We hope the "grand old gardener" is duly grateful.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

December 7 and 14, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £252 5s. 1d. Received since:—W. J. Conroy, 10s.; B. N. Kotaka (India), 3s.: R. Young, 10s.; (Mrs.) A. Brooks, 2s. 6d.; S. Valentine Caunter, £1 1s.; D. J. D., £5.

W. J. CONROY.—You wish us "good health and general happiness." Thanks. But the two things are practically identical in our case. We live, and want to live, for "the best of causes."

D. DAWSON.—The extract you send us from Dr. C. W. Saleeby in the Harmsworth Self Educator is good (not special) English, but from a ratiocinative point of view it is about worthy of an errand-boy who has just begun attending Sunday-school. His first two sentences are enough to settle his position as a thinker. "Purpose is an attribute of mind," he says. Yes, but what is *mind?* The real question is evaded. "A man's body," he says, "is a machine and so is a motor-car." A man's body is *not* a machine. It evolves from a living germ. Did anybody ever see a motor-car growing from an egg? A motor-car is *put* together; all its parts, too, can be renewed if necessary. Dr. Saleeby might tell us where a man can get a new heart, new kidneys, a new liver, new lungs, or a new head. If the last were possible, we could name a good many people who should make an early application.

FRED COLLINS.—You will see by advertisement and paragraph that we have decided to do so.

E. W. COX.—(1) Our shop manager has written you to the effect that we don't do any outside printing. We wish we did no inside printing either. But we are forced into it by the insecurity of the *Freethinker*, which we will never place at the mercy of others while the Blasphemy Laws exist. (2) There is absolutely no contemporary evidence of the historicity of the Jesus of the Gospels. A passage exists in Josephus, but it is a patent forgery, and as De Quincey said, has "long been abandoned by all men not lunatic." Bishop Warburton called it "a forgery, and a very clumsy forgery too." (3) Glad to hear you distribute two copies of the *Bible Handbook* every week, and hope the fact will encourage others to do similar missionary work for Freethought.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. B.—Your weekly cuttings are always welcome.

G. W. S.—We had already referred to Captain Mitford, the Morpeth magistrate. Thanks all the same. We wonder what Thomas Burt would think of this religious fossil. Perhaps as we do, that he is only fit for a museum of antiquities.

J. BARRY.—We have used your letter as material for an "Acid Drop." Thanks.

T. E. MILLER.—It is as Heine said,—the fool crop is perennial.

H. J. SMITH.—Memorials to the Home Office have only once succeeded in getting the sentence of a prisoner for "blasphemy" remitted, and that was when Mr. Gott's wife died suddenly while he was in Armley Gaol. The memorial effort is really antediluvian. There is now a criminal Court of Appeal, which did not exist in 1883, and an application to that Court is the proper procedure now. We are quite ready to assist in that line of action, or even to take the full responsibility of it, provided we are allowed full control. Neither Mr. Stewart nor any of his friends seems capable of managing it. There is no time for beating about the bush.

R. N. M. N.—We have made use of it. Of course we have to be very cautious. The *Freethinker* would get no mercy in a libel action.

J. B.—We had already written on the matter. Thanks all the same. A question might be put to the Lord Chancellor if Parliament were sitting—if any "noble lord" had the courage to do it. We are keeping fairly well and fit for work.

A. C. WELLS.—They would look funnier in the paper you cut them from than they would in our columns. Force of contrast, you know.

T. M.—We don't print your name in full as it may do you an injury. Pleased to have your letter and the cuttings.

A. HOLLINSON.—See paragraphs. Thanks.

H. J. HASTINGS.—May find it useful.

G. CROOKSON.—Mr. Manning Foster is wrong in calling those alleged verses of Robert Burns's in the *Daily Citizen* "An Unpublished Poem." They have been printed scores of times, in newspapers and separately. They are no more Burns's than they are ours—and we wouldn't own them. They are the work of an imitator. Let any real admirer of Burns read the fourth verse, for instance, and see if he can find any touch of "Rab's" fire, humor, and felicity in it. It is easy to imitate Burns's versification, but not his genius.—With regard to the other matter, you are quite right; we know all the facts.

W. W. KENNETT.—See our front-page article. The value of a "flood of lecturers" depends a lot upon the lecturers. The late methods of defence rather multiply than diminish "blasphemy" prosecutions. Nobody is bound to take our advice, but those who choose to disregard it must take the moral as well as the personal responsibility for the consequences.

J. H. B.—Such cuttings are always handy.

THOMAS FOWLER.—Thanks, though the matter has been dealt with. See "Acid Drop."

CONNIE BROOKS.—"Demagogue" doesn't necessarily mean anything offensive, though as a matter of fact it does in common usage. Don't be hurt about "the dismal doctrines which Bradlaugh taught." Adjectives are handy when arguments cannot be answered.

D. J. D.—Thanks also for your pleasant letter.

J. HALLIDAY.—Professor Loeb's experiments with the eggs of sea-urchins were made in 1890, and may be found fully described in the lectures of the Marine Biological Laboratory (U.S.A.) delivered in 1893. The essence of the experiment consisted in taking the unfecundated eggs of sea-urchins and fertilising them with prepared sea-water. The experiments proved the possibility of substituting physico-chemical agencies for living ones. When placed back in sea-water the chemically fertilised eggs developed into free-swimming larvæ.

MARK MELFORD.—Received. Will have attention as soon as possible.

R. YOUNG.—If all Freethinkers subscribed according to their means there would be plenty of money for all legitimate party objects.

H. BLACK.—Thanks for your trouble. It was good of the *Manchester Guardian* to print those extracts from our defence before Lord Coleridge in 1883.

W. DODD.—We offered help before, and it was rudely repelled. We are not repeating the performance. At the same time, we shall be quite willing to see that those dependent on Mr. Stewart are properly cared for during his imprisonment. Everybody who knows us knows that, we believe.

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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote has been pressed to give his lecture on "Shakespeare's Humanism in the *Merchant of Venice*" at the Queen's (Minor) Hall next Sunday (Dec. 7), and he has agreed to do so. His subject on the following Sunday will be "Shaw Among the Prophets"—in allusion, of course, to "G. B. S.'s" recent religious developments, especially in connection with the City Temple.

Mr. Cohen lectures at the King's Hall, Corporation-street, Birmingham, this evening (Nov. 30) There should be a crowded meeting, and no doubt there will be if the weather behaves decently.

Mr. Foote has promised to pay Glasgow a lecturing visit early in March. It is not so much the lecturing as the travelling that has given him pause hitherto. He has always been glad to see the Glasgow "saints" and they have to all appearance been glad to see him. But he really wishes Glasgow were nearer. He has to leave home at 9.30 a.m. on Saturday to get to Glasgow at 10.30 p.m., and the long journey home again has to be negotiated on Monday. But what is the use of talking? Glasgow won't come nearer. And one has to fall back on the spirit of the old saying that "if the mountain won't go to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain."

We repeat that it is not so much the lecturing in itself that is burdensome in Mr. Foote's case. He got through his lecture in the big Birmingham Town Hall comfortably enough; a few weeks later he lectured in the fine Stratford Town Hall without turning a hair. No doubt the Queen's Hall lectures will be quite successful from that point of view.

The November number of the *Humanitarian*, edited by Mr. H. S. Salt, contains a long and excellent article by Edward Carpenter on "Sport and Agriculture." There is also a firm reply by Mr. Salt to a writer in the *New Age* who contends that care for the lower animals should be dropped in order that all reforming energy may be concentrated on

man. Mr. Salt's reply seems unanswerable. His replies usually are of that character.

The *Manchester Guardian* also published a special article on "The Blasphemy Laws: their Origin and Present Scope" from a legal correspondent. This writer contends, as we did at our trial in 1883, that it is only the "feelings of members of the Church of England that are to this day protected by special and exclusive criminal sanctions." It is the State establishment of religion that is the real ground of the Blasphemy Laws.

Under the heading of "The Blasphemy Laws" the *Manchester Guardian* published the following leaderette on the Stewart case:—

> "Mr. Stewart was sentenced at the Staffordshire Assizes yesterday to three months' imprisonment for blasphemy. A man of the same name was sentenced at Leeds two years ago for the same offence, and the sentence will confirm the doubts so widely expressed then about the wisdom of these blasphemy laws. The summing-up of Mr. Justice Coleridge seems to have been quite admirable in its clearness. The question, he said, was whether the lecture complained of was an honest discussion of the fundamentals of religion—in which case there was no offence,—or whether it was meant merely 'to outrage, insult, or ridicule' the feelings of Christians, 'to scandalise, not to prove false' the doctrines attacked. The jury found for the second alternative, and the prisoner was condemned. Such passages as were cited from the lecture were pointless, vulgar, and irreverent, and amply justified what the Judge said about them. We may agree about that and still regret the legal anomaly which treats lapses from good taste in these matters as a crime. If the blasphemy laws were abolished, there would still be ample protection against the grosser kind of offences. If the lecturer used foul language, he could be prosecuted as hundreds of men are every Monday morning; or, again, if his language was such as to threaten a breach of the peace, the powers of the police are ample. Public decency and religious sensibilities, we think, would actually be safer from offence under the ordinary law than under the special protection of the blasphemy laws."

This is as much as one could expect from an English newspaper, and more than one could expect from most of them.

We are pleased to see a column devoted to the new "blasphemy" case in the *Inquirer*—an organ of the Unitarian Church in England. Our contemporary is as fair, we suppose, as any religious paper will ever be on this subject. One thing, of course, it never alludes to, and does not even appear to see; namely, that the "blasphemer" has moral rights of his own, no less than his fellow citizens have. The *Inquirer* argues the question almost entirely from the religious point of view. Prosecutions are bad because they tend to injure Christianity; not because they violate the liberty of the persons who are attacked. Still, it is something, nay, it is a good deal, that the Unitarian organ is in favor of abolishing the Blasphemy Laws altogether. We have pleasure in quoting the following passages:—

> "What we desire to protest against is the revival from time to time of an obsolete crime called blasphemy.....
>
> "In prosecutions for blasphemy it is not what a man says that matters, but the way in which he says it. It would be recognised as intolerable if a scholar of distinction were sent to prison because he arrives at conclusions destructive of the fundamentals of Christianity, and possibly sins against good taste by barbing his criticism with unpleasant sarcasm. But as soon as the same conclusions are translated into the language of the street corner or the secular hall, it is pounced upon by the law as a criminal outrage against the Christian faith. In other words, 'blasphemy' in the modern world is a matter of manners rather than opinions, and as a crime it quite eludes definition. In any case, if the law is set in motion, we should like to ask why the offender is not simply bound over to keep the peace instead of being sent to prison with hard labor?"

Blasphemy as a crime "quite eludes definition." That is true and well said. Yet the same writer says that he is prepared to take the judge's description of the "blasphemer's" coarseness and vulgarity, without a moment's inquiry as to what the man actually said. We are bound to say that this is a shocking blunder. No man's liberty is safe if he may be prosecuted and imprisoned for the use of words as to which the public is not allowed information. We put it to the *Inquirer* seriously. Would this amiable trust in the judge be displayed in the case of any other crime?

In reply to a brief and pointed letter from Mr. Ewart Hopper, of Jarrow-on-Tyne—a well-known Secularist, by the way—on the Stewart case, the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* appends the following note: "We have no sympathy with any prosecution for opinion, and think that these blasphemy cases are a great mistake."

The Protagonist of Greek Materialism.

ALL forms of faith and philosophy are the outcome of evolution. To this rule modern scientific Materialism strictly conforms. In ancient Greece, the materialistic philosophy found its first recorded exponents. Leucippus, the pioneer of the atomic school of Greek philosophy and forerunner of the greater Democritus, was born at Abdera somewhere about 500 B.C. Thirty or forty years later, Democritus first saw the light in the self-same city. Abdera was the wealthy and cultured centre of an Ionian colony on the Thracian coast. The father of Democritus was a man of substance, and we have every reason to believe that his son received an excellent education. His home instruction completed, Democritus travelled widely in the East in search for knowledge, and studied diligently in Egypt for seven years. He returned to his native land rich in information, though poor in pocket, but quickly secured a high reputation for goodness and wisdom. By almost universal consent he was the greatest physical philosopher and the most cultured thinker of his age. Of his voluminous writings, mathematical, physical, ethical, and musical, the merest fragments survive, and these were collected with loving and patient industry by Mullach, and published at Berlin in 1843.

The works of Democritus, according to Diogenes Laertius, were seventy-two in number, and for purity of style, compared favorably with that of Plato:—

> "The absurd epithet, the 'laughing philosopher,' applied to him by some unknown and very superficial thinker, may possibly in some measure have contributed to the fact that for centuries his importance was overlooked.....In the variety of his knowledge, and in the importance of his influence on both Greek and modern speculation he was the Aristotle of the fifth century, while the sanity of his metaphysical theory has led many to regard him as the equal, if not the superior, of Plato." *

The year in which Democritus died is uncertain, but his life was useful and blameless, and it ended at an advanced age. A clever pen-picture of the sage is to be found in Burton's inimitable *Anatomy of Melancholy*. In the Reader's preface of that learned and instructive book, occurs the following quaint passage:—

> "Democritus, as he is described by Hippocrates, and Laertius, was a little, wearish old man, very melancholy by nature, averse from company in his latter dayes, and much given to solitariness, a famous philosopher in his age, coaevous with Socrates, wholly addicted to his studies at the last, and to a private life; writ many excellent works, a great divine, according to the divinity of those times, an expert physician, a politician, an excellent mathematician, as Diacosmus and the rest of his works do witness. He was much delighted with the study of husbandry.....He knew the natures, differences of all beasts, plants, fishes, birds; and as some say, could understand the tunes and voices of them. In a word, he was *omnifariam doctus*, a general scholar, a great student; and, to the end that he might better contemplate, I find it related by some, that he put out his eyes, and was in his old age voluntarily blind, *yet saw more than all Greece besides*.....Such a one was Democritus."

On the authority of Shelley, Liberty spake, and like a sunrise on the sea, Athens arose. But although the intellectual indebtedness of modern Europe to classic Greece is almost incredibly great, and although a free spirit pervaded Attic life, we must remember that the mass of the population, then, as now, was sunk in superstition. And interested parties could always inflame the spirit of religious intolerance against the reformers of the time. Socrates drank the bitter cup of poison and Aristotle fled from Athens when the charge of Atheism threatened his life. The philosopher, Protagoras, was also obliged to flee; and his work upon the gods was publicly burnt. Anaxagoras was arrested and took to flight. Theodorus, and very

* "Democritus," *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

probably Diogenes of Appolonia, were persecuted for their anti-theistic heresies. "And all this happened in humane and enlightened Athens."

Small wonder, then, that Democritus made contemptuous concessions to the superstitions of the hour. Not that these were very great; the wonder really is that they were so small. His system is consistently anti-theistic so far as its science and philosophy are concerned. But while he dismissed the notion of the interference of the gods in the creation and regulation of the universe, he yielded to vulgar prejudice so far as to allow the existence of an order of beings of human form, who were grander, less liable to dissolution, and with greater length of life than ordinary men possess. These divinities dwelt in the upper regions of the air, and the popular faith in their existence was accounted for by Democritus as resulting from a general desire to explain the phenomena of thunder, lightning, and earthquakes. Writes Lange, in his famous *History of Materialism*:—

> "With few great men of antiquity can history have dealt so despitefully as with Democritus. In the distorted picture of unscientific tradition almost nothing appears of him except the name of the 'laughing philosopher,' while figures of incomparably less importance extend themselves at full length. So much the more may we admire the tact with which Bacon, ordinarily no great hero in historical learning, chose exactly Democritus out of all the philosophers of antiquity, and awarded him the premium for true investigation, whilst he considers Aristotle, the philosophical idol of the Middle Ages, only as the originator of an injurious appearance of knowledge.....In Democritus he found a kindred spirit, and judged him across the chasm of two thousand years, much as a man of his own age."

Dr. Spedding, the great Baconian expert, fully subscribed to Lange's estimate, and proved to Professor Tyndall that the mighty Francis looked upon Democritus as a man of weightier metal than either Plato or Aristotle.

In his attitude towards Nature, Democritus displayed an essentially modern mind. Like contemporary men of science, the sage of Abdera never allowed the gods to participate in the laws which govern natural phenomena. Briefly stated, the Atomic Philosophy consists in the following propositions:—

> "1. From nothing comes nothing. Nothing that exists can be destroyed. All changes are due to the combination and separation of molecules.
>
> "2. Nothing happens by chance; every occurrence has its cause, from which it follows by logical necessity. The common notion of chance is merely a cloak for human ignorance.
>
> "3. The sole existing things are atoms and empty space; all else is mere opinion.
>
> "4. The atoms are infinite in number and infinitely various in form; they clash together, and the lateral motions and whirlings which thus arise are the beginnings of worlds.
>
> "5. The varieties of all things depend upon the varieties of their atoms, in number, size, and aggregation.
>
> "6. The soul consists of fine, smooth, round atoms, like those of fire. These are the most mobile of all: they interpenetrate the whole body, and in their motions the phenomena of life arise." *

The first five propositions practically represent the atomic theory of modern physics. A slight change in terminology is almost all that is necessary to bring them into line with the best-established results of the most recent science. The final proposition enunciates the existence of finer atoms which occupy the office of the nervous system, whose functions were unknown to the ancient world. Although they were pictured as individually without sensation, the phenomena of life and mind were regarded as the consequence of the combination of the atoms into groups.

The ethical teachings of Democritus were also of a high order. The acquisition of peace of mind he considered as the chief aim of life. The purest joy and the truest happiness are only to be reached through the exercise of the higher mental activity when this is exerted in the endeavor to understand the world in which we live. The blessedest peace of mind is his whose conduct is exemplary and whose conscience is clear.

That such a man as this should have been dubbed the "laughing philosopher" seems supremely ridiculous, if by such a nickname was meant a man to whom nothing was really solemn or profound. The stories which make Democritus a mere dabbler in mystic and secret doctrines are equally absurd. Out of the multitudinous medley of fables and fancies which surround his name, the certainty emerges that his life was devoted to scientific researches which were as serious and practical as they were extensive. Mullach, after a careful study of the whole case, came to the conclusion that Democritus possessed the greatest culture and displayed the deepest philosophical insight of all the pre-Aristotelian thinkers. And he more than hints that the Stagirite sage was materially indebted to the study of Democritus's writings for that wealth of knowledge which has compelled the wonder and admiration of all the modern world.

In more than one respect, the atomic philosopher bears a striking resemblance to our own master-thinker, Herbert Spencer. The philosopher of evolution rated the thinking power far above that of mere erudition. And, in speaking of the Greek sage, Lange justly says, "It is significant that a man of such extensive attainments has said that 'we should strive not after fullness of knowledge, but fullness of understanding.'" And when Democritus refers to his achievements, he appears to attach more importance to his mathematical method, the benefits he had derived from his intercourse with thoughtful men, and the enlarged outlook upon life which a critical study of foreign races and countries helps to confer on the reflective observer, than to all his written works.

The circumstance that the man and his labors have been recognised and vindicated by thinkers of the calibre of Bacon, Lange, Lewes, and Tyndall, and that his pioneer work is now adequately acknowledged by our leading physical philosophers, must not blind us to the fact that for more than two thousand years the star of Democritus was eclipsed by lesser lights. Religious prejudice was doubtless in a great degree responsible for this. But Democritus' distaste for dialectical display, and his constitutional indifference to fame, were certainly contributory causes of the neglect into which he fell. He visited Athens without making his presence known to its numerous philosophers. That he was a scorner of mere word-spinning, an art in which the Sophists excelled, and in which even Socrates and Plato took the keenest delight, is amply evidenced in his works. Democritus was of opinion that truth is more readily extracted from error, than sifted from confusion. One of his moral aphorisms declares that "He who is fond of contradiction and makes many words is incapable of learning anything that is right."

Materialistic views concerning Nature dominated the philosophy of Greece in the fifth century before Christ, when Democritus and Hippocrates were exercising their greatest influence. The immediately succeeding period, which was that of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, was marked by a metaphysical reaction. But from the school of Aristotle proceeded men who returned to more rational modes of thought.

There can be little doubt that the main doctrines of Democritus were adopted by Epicurus, and incorporated with his philosophy; and, in the noble poem of the later Roman, Lucretius, has been preserved for all time the speculations of the two Greek sages, in the form of a stately literary masterpiece.

Thus, in the case of Democritus, we possess a fuller knowledge of his doctrines than of those of many old-time thinkers whose writings have survived in less fragmentary form. It is no longer disputed that the philosophy of Democritus was clear

* Tyndall, *Belfast Address*.

and consecutive. His doctrines followed through logical necessity from his atomistic postulates. Subjected to revision with the expansion of the human understanding, and the extension of knowledge, the leading principles of the ancient Greek Materialist still form the foundation stones of the many-winged mansion of modern physical science.

T. F. PALMER.

The Garden of God.

WE were sitting on an old seat in a garden. A lilac tree, heavily laden with bunches of white flourish, screened us from the sun-rays. Before us, stretching out on a southern declivity, lay the garden, full of flowers of all colors, resplendently dressed in the glory the sunlight gives them. The air was fragrant with their rich breathings, and the only fault of the picture was that it did not belong to us.

Conversation lagged and finally became tedious and dropped off to sleep. Our pipes went quietly, glad to escape from the application of matches, and we slipped into peaceful harmony with the garden.

Being Sunday, it was more or less natural that my thoughts should take to themselves a religious coloring, and that they should choose to go roaming along the bordered walks of a garden was, in the environment, also more or less natural.

Some time before I had read a sermon entitled the Garden of God. Although, like many people, I love gardens, that sermon did not awaken in me any longing to get there. I disposed of both sermon and garden with a grunt of disgust. He was an inefficient assistant gardener, the fellow who wrote that sermon. I wondered why he did not get the sack. His tools were badly made, and his style of showing a visitor round was most deplorable for one who received a training in the part from so marvellous a master gardener as God. The assistant's sermon wearied me before the amen; but the phrase remained in my memory.

And so it was that, on a lovely Sunday forenoon, in ideal surroundings, when the peacefulness and stillness that have characterised the Lord's Day since the very dawning of time, hung like an invisible but golden mantle of divine grace around my soul, my thoughts, after many wanderings, became entangled in some briar bushes growing in the Garden of God.

The Garden of God is, strangely enough, divided into two; and as I slowly walked along the broad, bordered path that separates the parts, I noticed that the older gardeners lived in the old, and the younger ones in the new. In the former the flowers were all of the Scots thistle type, dogmatically assertive, so to speak, and were labelled in a manner to suggest various ideas still to be found in all church catechisms, prayer-books, hymnaries, and permanent things like those. The flowers, undoubtedly, were born in the open, reared in it, and died in it. They were "everlasters," and looked such, if you deliberately disregarded the inevitability of death.

Some young genius from the other side had managed to perform a bit of audacious vandalism, I thought; for above every label was another bearing the words, "of the species, Churchianity."

On the other side of God's Garden the flowers were very tender, very beautiful. Their tints were innumerable. Delicacy of nuance, apparently, had been made a fine art in their cultivation. Langorous odors pervaded the atmosphere. Soil, flowers, colors, air were all ultra-refined. Nothing harshly antagonistic to this excellence of refinement brutalised one's artistic temperament. Everything was exquisitely lovely. Most of the flowers were unnamed, probably because of their novelty. Some varieties had labels, but it was impossible to discover the appellations owing to the number of corrections on the labels. Seemingly the different assistant gardeners had quarrelled over the nomenclature, and, consequently, nothing definite had been decided.

In the old garden, scattered here and there, the eyes found relief in resting upon an unassuming bunch of quietly colored and lowly little flowers; but in the new garden the very delicacy of every kind of flower possessed an assumption that plainly asserted superiority. They forced their refinement upon you till it became intrusion. Their spirituality oppressed you. You began to rebel against the affectation of their elegance and purity. Their charming tenderness nauseated you. They were all too etherealised; and this esemplastic nature of theirs grated on your nerves till you thought the Devil was in it and you asked him peremptorily to keep it and take it home.

Traversing the intricate design of paths that formed the garden plots into grotesque shapes, this riotous objection became more powerful than restraint within me. Heedless of the many assistants effeminately pottering about, I deliberately kicked down a languid rose-tree. Immediately I felt relieved; and proceeded to continue the nerve-enlivening process; but in a second the Philistines were upon me, their emasculation having been roused to the anger of a tigress, and I was unceremoniously pitched into a huge clump of briars that suddenly and mysteriously grew out of the earth to receive me. The atmosphere around me changed in temperature. It was chilly and bracing, lifegiving; and the sweet perfume of the briars was delightfully pleasant and fresh after the erotic sensuality of the hothouse flowers.

Rapidly I disentangled myself from this uncanny growth in the Garden of God, and as rapidly I endeavored to pick out the thorns from my clothing. Then, after pulling off a small branch which I rammed in my pocket, I made a bee-line for escape.

Perhaps the thorn-pricks irritated me; perhaps the sickening spirituality of God's new garden still annoyed my rebellious mind; at any rate, my condemnations of the conjuring tricks of those assistant gardeners were rather bitter as I wended my way up the glen to the hill, where I would be completely purged by the wind. It was all very well for those insipid assistants to prate about the improvement of their flowers over the neglected occupants of the old garden; but the briar bushes they kept in reserve up their wide sleeves, tended, I thought, rather to negate the much-beloved advance in the art of religious horticulture. Besides, I thought, hothouse flowers are rubbishy things at the best; likewise the people who dote on them. There's too much of the nursery about God's modern garden; it requires too much attention, too much care; and the flowers demand too much fondling. This striving after spirituality ——

"Coo-oo-ee! Dinner-time." The voice echoed away up the glen I imagined I was climbing, and forced me to leave the hill-top for the afternoon. We rose from the seat, and, as I knocked the ashes from my pipe, I surprised my companion by saying, "There go the remains of the Garden of God."

ROBERT MORELAND.

SELECTIONS FROM INGERSOLL.

Give me the storm and tempest of thought and action, rather than the dead calm of ignorance and faith.

If the people were a little more ignorant, astrology would flourish; if a little more enlightened, religion would perish.

I want no heaven for which I must give up my reason, no happiness in exchange for my liberty, and no immortality that demands the surrender of my individuality.

Arguments cannot be answered with insults. Kindness is strength. Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. In the examination of great questions every one should be serene, slow-pulsed, and calm. Intelligence is not the foundation of arrogance. Insolence is not logic. Epithets are the arguments of malice.

Across the highway of progress the Church has always been building breastplates of Bibles, tracts, commentaries, prayer-books, creeds, dogmas, and platforms; and at every advance the Christians have gathered behind these heaps of rubbish and shot the poisoned arrows of malice at the soldiers of freedom.

Some Little-Known Freethinkers.

V.—Julian Hibbert.

On November 28, 1833, a scene was enacted at the Old Bailey which may serve to measure the distance from that time to this. It was deemed worthy of some prominence in the papers, and is thus reported in the *Annual Register* for that year (p. 159). It was in the case of a young man named Berthold, who was tried for stealing a boa:—

> "The first witness who presented himself for the prisoner gave his name as Julian Hibbert, but, on being tendered the book to be sworn, he said he had no belief in its contents. The Recorder: 'Is it the Old or New Testament?' Witness: 'It does not matter; I have no belief in either. I made the same objection here two years ago, and was rejected' Mr. Phillips: 'Then, sir, why do you come here now?' Witness: 'Because I was subpœnaed.' Mr. Phillips: 'Are you of any creed at all, sir?' Witness: 'No, sir.' Mr. Phillips: 'Are you a Deist?' Witness: 'No, sir.' Mr. Phillips: 'Are you an Atheist?' Witness: 'Yes, sir, I am.' (Strong marks of disapprobation and disgust from all parts of the court followed this declaration.) Mr. Phillips (to witness): 'Go down, sir; I will not ask you a single question.' Witness, with the most perfect *nonchalance*, replied, 'Very well, sir,' and descended from the witness-box amidst loud hisses. Mr. C. Phillips, however, called him back, and, addressing him, said: 'Perhaps, sir, you misunderstand the question, or we have mistaken or misunderstood you; I hope you did not mean to say that you are an Atheist?' Witness: 'Yes, sir, I do.' Mr. Phillips: 'Do you know what an Atheist is?' Witness: 'It is a negative term.' Mr. Phillips: 'What does it mean, sir?' Witness: 'It means a man that does not believe in the existence of a God.' Mr. Phillips: 'And do you mean to say, sir, that you are such a person?' Witness: 'Yes, sir.' (Disapprobation manifested by every individual in court.) Mr. Phillips: 'Witness, I will not disgrace myself by asking you another question.' The witness then retired amidst the strongest manifestation of disgust and execration from all present."

Within two months of this scene, on January 23, 1834, the execrated Atheist was dead. He was but thirty-three years of age. Richard Carlile, who knew him well, and who at that time did not call himself an Atheist, wrote of him in the *Gauntlet*: "Though avowedly an Atheist, he was the best specimen of human nature that I have seen, read, heard, or thought of." Julian Hibbert came of a wealthy family, whose fortune had been made in the West Indies. He was a second son. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, he closely pursued studies all his life. This, possibly, acting on a delicate constitution, may have contributed to his early death.

Hibbert probably was attracted to Freethought by the prosecutions of Richard Carlile and his shopmen. Of Carlile he was a munificent supporter. Learning that a distinguished political prisoner had received a gift of £1,000, he remarked that a Freethinking prisoner should not want he remarked that a Freethinking prisoner should not want equal friends, and gave Carlile a cheque for the same amount. Julian Hibbert also spent nearly £1,000 in fitting up Carlile's shop in Fleet-street. Mr. G. J. Holyoake says: "Mr. Carlile said to us on one occasion, that Mr. Hibbert, from first to last, gave £7,000 in furtherance of his advocacy of free discussion in religion." He contributed "Theological Dialogues" to the *Republican*, and of these articles I possess the original MSS. In some sort also I may, perhaps, consider myself as having inherited his work, inasmuch as he commenced and published in 1826 *A Dictionary of Modern Anti-Superstitionists*, or "an account, arranged alphabetically, of those who, whether called Atheists, Sceptics, Latitudinarians, Religious Reformers, etc., have, during the last ten centuries, contributed towards the diminution of superstition. Compiled by a searcher after truth." He refrained from giving his name through modesty, and the philosophy which loses the individual in his work; for we have seen he was ready enough to expose himself to execration when he thought the interests of justice demanded it. The Dictionary evinced great scholarship and research. It was, however, conceived on too extensive a scale, and in 128 pages, all that was issued, it only reached to the name of Annet.

Julian Hibbert also compiled "Chronological Tables of English Freethinkers," which were published in the *Reasoner* for 1855. In my *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of all Ages and Nations* I have expressed my acknowledgments to Hibbert, whose idea I carried out on a more modest scale, and I only hope that in another fifty years my own work will be superseded by a better. Julian Hibbert set up a private printing-press at No. 1 Fitzroy-place, Kentish Town, and had, at great trouble and expense, special founts of type cast in uncial Greek, with which he was never satisfied. He was, indeed, as Carlile wrote, "as scrupulous and accurate as a classical scholar as he was noble in nature, punctual in morals, and amiable in manners." In his preface to *The Book of the Orphic Hymns*, the first work published in this type, he thus humorously defends his fad, not only as a matter of taste, but also as a matter of religion:—

> "If orthodoxy or heterodoxy (salvation or perdition) depend upon the appearance of part of a single Greek character in the faded writing of some half-a-dozen mutilated old books, surely every true believer ought to devote a considerable portion of his mortal existence to the study of those letters, the right or wrong understanding of which will, no doubt, equally open to him the gates of Heaven or of Hades."

We may be quite sure the book of Orphic hymns, though now valuable, never paid for the type-founding. His next work in uncial Greek was of more general interest, being the treatises of *Plutarch and Theophrastus on Superstition*, which he edited with notes, a life of Plutarch, and learned appendices "On the Supposed Necessity of Deceiving the Vulgar," "Of Persons Falsely entitled Atheists," "Various Definitions of an Important Word"—viz., the word "God," and a catalogue of the principal modern works against Atheism.

In 1831, Julian Hibbert, being in ill-health, gave his press and types to James Watson, who had been his printer. James Watson, while working on Carlile's *Republican*, was attacked by cholera, which terminated in typhus and brain fever. He said:—

> "I owe my life to the late Julian Hibbert. He took me from my lodgings to his own house at Kentish Town, nursed me and doctored me for eight weeks, and made a man of me again. After my recovery Mr. Hibbert got a printing press put up in his house and employed me in composing, under his directions, two volumes, one in Greek and the other in Greek and English" (W. J. Linton, *Memoir*, p. 31).

Hibbert also wrote in, and helped to sustain, Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, taking much interest in the fight for an unstamped free press up to the month of his untimely death. His will was proved, and the personal effects sworn under £8,000 by his executors, two good Freethinkers—William Devonshire Saul, of Aldersgate-street, wine merchant; and J. Brooks, of Oxford-street, bookseller. He directed his body to be given to an anatomical school, and requested that no person should wear mourning for him, or take any further notice of his memory. He bequeathed £492 to Carlile's printers, being the sum Carlile was indebted to them, in place of a legacy. To Henry Hetherington and James Watson he left £500. He had bequeathed a like sum to the Rev. Robert Taylor, but this he revoked by a codicil, in consequence, as he states, of Taylor having married a lady of large fortune.

The obituary notice in the *Annual Register* (p. 217) says: "Hibbert never partook of animal food, but lived in a rigid and abstemious manner. He had some landed property, and the residue of his estates becomes the property of his sister." A portrait of him is extant, and was engraved in the *Reasoner* for July 1, 1855. His face is a very attractive and sweet one, closely resembling that of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.

(The late) J. M. Wheeler.

CONSCIENCE.

Men speak of conscience as an inward guide
Intelligence possessing, to decide
What's right, what's wrong, what's false, and what
is true;
What they ought not, and what they ought to do.
He has done right, 'tis said, who has obeyed it;
Yet conscience is but that which man has made it;
'Tis educated with us, and we find
Its teachings but the echo of the mind.
"Do as your conscience teaches you to do"
Is not the maxim to adhere to.
A better one would be, "Do as you ought";
For conscience only teaches what it's taught.

Carlos.

She attended a spiritist séance
Soon after her poor husband died,
And to find out if he were in heaven
She called on his spirit and cried,
"Oh, John! are you here, John?" "I am, Jane,"
A voice that she knew well replied.

"Dear John, I've a question to ask you.
Say—if you're permitted to tell—
Are you happier now where you are, John,
Than when upon earth you did dwell?"
"Yes, Jane, I am happier far, Jane."
"In heaven, John?" "No, Jane, in hell."

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, W. Davidson, "Christianity and Civilisation."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.45, M. Hope, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

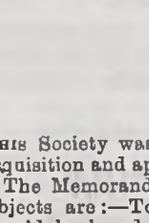
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, C. Cohen, "The Challenge of Unbelief."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (North Saloon, City Hall): 6.30, Alexander Maclaren, "A Plea for Scottish Nationalism."

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Spencer Leigh Hughes, "What is Truth?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Wollen, "What is Christianity?"

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 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. *Why Be Good?* by G. W. Foote. *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.



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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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

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President: G. W. FOOTE.

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

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