

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIV.—No. 48

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1914

PRICE TWOPENCE

No disguise can long conceal love where it is or feign it where it is not.—ROCHEFOUCAULD.

About Atheism.

ATHEISTS are the last people in the world to resent criticism. Experience would have inured them to it, even if principle had not taught them to recognise its justice. But criticism, if it is to be justified, and certainly if it is to be helpful, must be intelligent. The critic must understand what he is criticising, and this, unfortunately, is what few critics of Atheism ever trouble to do. A brief glance at the literature of Atheism shows that no small part of the work of Atheists has been to remove misunderstandings, some of them almost deliberate. Very seldom indeed does a religionist fight the Atheism of Atheists, it is more generally an Atheism that does not exist out of the pulpit. Where Atheism is fairly present a reply to adverse criticism is easy—sometimes it is not even needed. There is an illustration of this in the case of the famous seventeenth century scholar, Ralph Cudworth. His *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, intended as a refutation of Atheism, is probably one of the most scholarly works on Atheism ever issued. But Cudworth took care to understand the Atheism he was criticising, and not only to understand it, but to set its arguments down with fairness. The consequence was that the Christian world met the work—or as much of it as was published—with abuse. And the author grew so disgusted with its reception that the remainder of what was intended to be a defence of Theism never saw the light. The general opinion was well summed up by Dryden, who said that the author “has raised such strong objections against the being of a God and Providence, that many think he has not answered them.” And the famous Earl of Shaftesbury says that Cudworth was “accused of giving the upper hand to the Atheists for having only stated their reasons and those of their adversaries fairly together.”

I was reminded of this case of Cudworth's by coming across the following sentence in Canon Ainger's life of Charles Lamb:—

“He went through a phase of Atheism—probably out of sheer curiosity.”

These words, it should be said, do not refer to Lamb, but to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was a schoolfellow with Lamb. And unless one knew to the contrary, one would be inclined to class it with Lamb's own observation on Coleridge's love of German metaphysics, that it was due to his sense of humor. But Canon Ainger is quite serious over the matter. Coleridge went through a phase of Atheism, says the Canon, and he explains it as due to sheer curiosity.

Now, so far as Coleridge himself is concerned, it is extremely unlikely that he ever was an Atheist—in any genuine sense of the term. He himself refers to his “infidelity,” and this may be what Canon Ainger had in mind. But it is very probable that this “infidelity” never went beyond what would be called Deism. He rejected the Biblical stories, and was very likely influenced by the better class Deistic authors.

Other people may have called him an Atheist, but that is only to be expected so long as Atheism is a term of abuse, and so long as Christians count abuse as argument.

Coleridge himself says that it is—

“for telling unwelcome truths that I have been called an Atheist. It is for these opinions that William Smith assured the Archbishop of Canterbury that I was (what half the clergy are in their lives) an Atheist. Little do these men know what Atheism is. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart enough to be an Atheist. I repeat it. Not one man in ten thousand has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be an Atheist. And were I not a Christian, and that only in the sense in which I am a Christian, I would be an Atheist with Spinoza.”

I am not, however, concerned at present with any discussion of Coleridge's religious opinions. I am using Canon Ainger's words as an illustration of a common phase of mind as regards Atheism and religious disbelief in general. Atheism, it is assumed, is a phase of mind that may be passed through, or even deliberately adopted, much as one might select a motor-car or a suit of clothes. Some people, disgusted with religion, “try” Atheism, and then give it up when they see what an inferior thing it is; or they pass through it, as Canon Ainger says Coleridge passed through it, as though Atheism were a species of intellectual complaint to which bright intellects are susceptible. *Bright intellects*, be it observed; for it is easy to see that it is never the foolish ones that catch this complaint. It is always the more brilliant minds. The fools are quite safe. Stupidity is the true anti-toxin against Atheism. In spite of the Bible, the fool does not say in his heart “There is no God.” Quite the contrary; he proclaims God, and then goes on his knees and thanks God for his stupidity.

Now, anyone who thinks that a man can become an Atheist, as Canon Ainger says Coleridge did, out of sheer curiosity, is—to put it quite plainly—a fool. However wise he may be in relation to other matters, in relation to this one he is foolish. He does not know what Atheism is, and he has, for the time being at least, forgotten the normal laws of mental life. How can one adopt a frame of mind from mere curiosity? One may go anywhere or examine anything out of curiosity; one may even feel a curious interest in one's own mental twists and changes. But by what means can one pass through a mental phase, whether of hope or fear, depression or exaltation, because one is curious about it. A man may realise that he is what the world calls an Atheist or a Theist, and he may be curious as to the causes that have made him the one or the other; but that is all. Mental states are not *adopted*; they are not even consciously selected. They arise; they are a part of growth; they express what we are at a given time. Their causes and their consequences are alike matters of history.

The idea of anyone becoming an Atheist from sheer curiosity is delicious. Curious about what? About the reasons that lead one to profess Atheism? They are to be studied by anyone who cares to read Atheistic arguments. Is it to find out what Atheism is? Well, Atheists are not formed into a secret society. They are only too ready to explain Atheism to anyone who cares to listen, and writings on the subject are not unobtainable. Is it curiosity to find

out what are an Atheist's feelings? There may be something in this, and one can conceive a fervent believer in Deity genuinely puzzled to realise how people can get on without God. But, then, judging by all appearances, the Atheist is not greatly unlike other people. He looks the same as others, he acts the same as others, and, apparently, feels the same as others. And if anyone wishes to realise an Atheist's mental condition, there is only one way in which this may be done. That is by becoming an Atheist. We are not so curious about Theists, for the reason that most of us have passed through that phase of mind. It represents a stage in our development. But one cannot take up with Atheism out of curiosity. I can attend a religious service, and may even go through a religious ceremony, because I am curious about them. But there is no method by which one can acquire a conviction save by appreciating the proofs on which that conviction rests.

It is naturally agreeable to Christian prejudice to assume that Atheism is no more than a mere transient frame of mind to which all are subject, but from which really well-balanced minds soon recover. It removes it from the category of serious forces that have to be reckoned with, and at the same time gives the believer a comfortable feeling of superiority. But genuine Atheists never do "recover." A man who is really an Atheist is never reconverted—that is while he remains mentally healthy. The change is all on the one side, and all in the one direction. Nothing is, indeed, more amusing than finding religious people attributing the Atheism of this or that one to false views of the Bible, or to the revulsion brought about by contact with undesirable Christians. The truth is that Atheism is very seldom, if ever, brought about by these means. They may cause a man to leave one sect and join another. They may give weight to one religious doctrine against another religious doctrine; but that is all. If every believer was a wholly admirable person, if every religious doctrine were as clear as daylight, and if all Christians were agreed as to what was the correct view of the Bible, these things would leave the Atheist quite unaffected, and they would be quite powerless to prevent the growth of Atheism. That rests on causes that are part and parcel of human civilisation.

Look at the matter historically. Quite apart from the desirability or undesirability of Atheism, the whole trend of the world's mental growth is in the direction of Atheism. Bacon's often quoted saying that a little philosophy leads to Atheism, but greater depth in philosophy brings men back to religion, will not withstand examination. It is quite the other way about. It is a little philosophy that leads to religion, a greater depth in philosophy brings one out of it. Religion is not the final philosophy of nature, it is the earliest. It is true that religion is the product of reason, but it is reason in its crudest and least informed state. Had man been incapable of reason the gods would never have existed; and provided he keeps on reasoning the gods will one day cease to exist. All history and experience proves this. The very universality of religion proves it. For religion is only universal in the sense that no tribe or nation is known without possessing some kind of superstition. And then exactly in proportion as a people advance in genuine culture, we find religion losing its hold on the human mind. One would never expect to find Atheism amongst savages. Amongst civilised people it has ceased to excite comment.

The essential fact about Atheism is that it represents growth—growth in the individual and growth in the race. That is why a man cannot become an Atheist and then revert to religion. One may exist without knowledge or perception of certain truths, but once this knowledge is ours, how are we going to divest ourselves of it? So one may easily remain a believer in God—the majority do so remain, but once a man sees the fallacy of the God idea, understands its origin, and appreciates its history, how is he ever going to bring himself back to his previous mental condition? It simply cannot be done. Yet it is this

fact of growth that is of vital significance in connection with Atheism, and it is the one fact that the Theist declines to recognise. Perhaps one ought to say he dare not. For its recognition involves the admission that the belief in gods is a passing phase in history, analogous to the belief in fairies in the history of the individual. It is in the infancy of the race that the gods are born, to the infancy of the race they properly belong; and that is a truth which is not vitally affected by the fact that in many cases this period of infancy is a very prolonged one.

G. COHEN.

What of Christendom?

IN Anglo-Saxon, *cristnian* signifies to make a Christian, from *cristen*, a Christian. Our English verb *christen* bears precisely the same meaning. In the Catholic and Anglican Churches Baptismal Regeneration is held to be a fundamental dogma, and to be regenerated is to be born into Christ, or to be made a Christian. Tertullian says: "We fishes are born in water, conformable to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, in the early Church "fishes" denoted Christian disciples, "fish" being then used as a symbol of the Redeemer for the simple reason that the first letters in the Greek words for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" make up the Greek term for "fish." To be born in water, then—that is, to be baptised—was to become Christians by a supernatural act. Even among Nonconformists to Christen has practically an identical signification, though in common parlance it often means merely to give a name, to demonstrate—as, for example, when Bishop Burnet says, "Christen the thing what you will." It naturally follows that by *Christendom* is to be understood either Christian citizenship, as such, or a group of countries inhabited by Christians. Shakespeare employs it in the former sense when he makes Duke Arthur exclaim, in answer to Hubert:—

"By my christendom,
So I were out of prison, and kept sheep,
I should be as merry as the day is long."

It is in the second acceptation, however, that the word is generally taken. By Christendom is meant the United Christian Kingdom—the cluster of kingdoms over which Christ rules. The Rev. Edward Shillito, in an article in the *Christian World* for November 19, is candid enough to admit that "devotion to Christendom means little to-day," which signifies that loyalty to the Emperor Christ is almost entirely a thing of the past. Once upon a time loyalty to Christendom was an all-consuming passion, burning fiercely in all Christian hearts. Mr. Shillito describes it thus:—

"It was a motive powerful enough to stir the hearts of kings, statesmen, thinkers, poets, and all the master-minds of Europe. The Crusades testified to the reality of Christendom. The long struggles with the Moors were prompted by the faith that there was something distinctive and vital for which all Christian peoples were content to die."

We endorse almost every word in that extract, but we politely beg to remind its writer of the fact that to every statement in it there is a staggering counter-statement, which is carefully left out. The Crusades *did* witness to the reality of Christendom, but they witnessed quite as powerfully to the utter rottenness of the moral characters of those engaged in them. Doubtless there were amongst them a few pure-hearted and noble-minded persons, but the bulk of them were drawn from the riffraff of the populations of the West, and did not hesitate to commit the lowest and darkest deeds in the name of the Cross. Their licentiousness was a byword. Hating the Jews with all their hearts, they tortured, slaughtered, and plundered them whenever they had an opportunity. And they ran no spiritual risks by any of the crimes they perpetrated, for the Pope had granted them full indulgences before they started. Has Mr. Shillito forgotten how Pope after Pope

advocated those horrible wars; how Innocent III., his guardian, forced Frederick the Second, when only twenty-one years of age, to assume the cross; how Gregory IX. excommunicated him because he kept putting off his departure for Palestine; how he was excommunicated a second time by the same Pontiff for going there; and how, after securing a favorable peace, and after sailing for Italy, he was excommunicated a third time for returning? A most extraordinary character, an impassioned poet as well as a level-headed lawgiver, a man who could live on terms of friendship and hospitality with non-Christians, which was denounced as conduct unworthy of a Christian, Frederick was hated, despised, and persecuted with great ferocity by the Papacy.

Surely, Mr. Shillito does not think that the treatment of the Moors in Europe reflects any credit upon the Christian Church? Is he not familiar with the story of their forcible conversion to Christianity, their persistent persecution, and of the heartless injustice heaped upon them for so many generations in Spain? The reverend gentleman is quite right as to the motive that animated the Church. It is a notorious fact that the horrible cruelties and oppression practised upon the Jews by Christianity dates from the time that it became the religion of the State under Constantine. It is true that three or four Popes protested against and attempted to check such a shamefully inhuman policy; but, with those few exceptions, the persecution continued with extreme ferocity through many centuries. We have seen that the Jews were massacred by thousands during the mad fury of the Crusades; but we have to confess further that it was the uniform habit of most devout sovereigns, like Theodosius, St. Lewis, and Isabella, of the Council of the Lateran, of Paul IV., and particularly of all religious orders, to put up a wall of absolutely implacable hostility between them and all Christians. It was appointed that they must wear a distinctive garb and dwell in ghettos. Christians were forbidden to have any intercourse whatever with them. Intermarriage with them was the very worst of sins, and there was a time when, if a Christian chose a Jewess for his mistress, he was burnt alive. These are facts with which all students of history are well acquainted. The Jews were a hated and hunted race in a Christendom sweetly governed by the God of all grace and love. Christians were only allowed to utilise them as their bankers, and some doubted whether they ought to be allowed to do even that.

Now this brutally hated, hunted, hooted, and plundered race found an asylum replete with tolerance, kindness, and sympathy amongst the Moors of Spain. Having many points in common, these two peoples were able to appreciate and serve one another. But the friendship thus established was destined to be but short-lived. Soon after the Cross vanquished the Crescent, the Holy Inquisition became supreme in Spain. The edict went forth that the Jews must be expelled from the country at once. They offered 30,000 ducats to remain, but Isabella was not on the market at any quotation, especially when Torquemada was at hand to keep her straight. The Jews gone, the fate of the conquered Moors grew worse and worse, until, a hundred years later, they, too, a full million, shared the doom of the hundred and sixty thousand Jews.

The most amazing fact in this connection is that Mr. Shillito seems to believe that the Jews and Moors were treated so unheroically and with such economic blindness by the Spanish Christians because of something distinctive and vital which, they were convinced, characterised the Christian faith. The expulsion of the Jews under Ferdinand and Isabella, and that of the Moors under Philip III. were, beyond doubt, acts of supreme piety. Ever since 1509, when a revolt, provoked by a breach of the compact entered into on the fall of Granada, was violently suppressed, the vanquished Moors had been shockingly oppressed. They were not allowed to make an open profession of their own religion, and their sufferings were indescribable. Later on, in 1566, they were prohibited

from speaking or writing in Arabic, and from indulging in their traditional habits and ceremonies. Then came the over-pious and dangerously foolish Philip III., whose one object in life was to further his own ends by promoting those of the Catholic Church. In 1609 this ridiculous monarch resolved to make a public exhibition of his orthodoxy by issuing a decree ordering the expulsion of all Moors from the Peninsula within three days. The edict was duly executed, and the ruin of Spain as duly begun. We stoutly maintain that the Mooriscoes were intellectually, morally, agriculturally, and industrially the backbone of the country, and that their departure from it could not have been eventuated in anything but its certain disintegration. And yet Mr. Shillito has the coolness to indicate that this was the way Spain witnessed to the reality of Christendom. He makes his case worse still by his allusion to Mr. Gladstone's championship of the cause of the maltreated Bulgarians in 1876. Identifying Gladstone's motive with that which controlled the Spanish Catholics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this twentieth century preacher says:—

"When with passionate wrath, he pleaded the cause of Bulgarians or Armenians, he never forgot that they were members of the body of Christendom; they had a claim upon him as fellow-heirs of the Christian name, set in the midst of a non-Christian civilisation. They were not of his Church, they might have strayed, as he imagined, from the highways of the Faith, but they were Christians, and, as Christians, were not the same as though they were outside Christ."

Such is Mr. Shillito's conception of Christendom, and it is the genuine idea of it too. There are humanitarians in Christendom, people who love and work for the welfare of the human race, but they are outsiders, and genuine Christians look down upon them and contemptuously dub them Pagans. Thank you so much, Mr. Preacher, you have opened our eyes still more. We now see clearly that the central, all-embracing Christian attribute is *clannishness*. Nothing could be more obvious. What is the root and guiding principle in Foreign Missions? Narrow, selfish, exclusive clannishness. Great fault is found with the Germans just now because they loudly assert their own superiority to all other nations in the world; but does not the British Empire make the same silly claim, and quite as loudly, every time a prominent politician or a pulpiteer opens his mouth? This fault is pre-eminently a Christian fault, not a German or British one merely. Toleration of and fellowship on equal terms with non-Christians have never been and never can be Christian virtues. At one and the same time Christianity preaches self-denial and self-assertion, two mutually destructive qualities. Christianity may be summed up in the solitary word—*Egoism*. Such is Christendom as interpreted by Mr. Shillito.

J. T. LLOYD.

Ambrose Bierce.

"A fellow of infinite est, of most excellent fancy."

—SHAKESPEARE'S *Hamlet*.

A PARAGRAPH has been going the rounds of the press that Mr. Ambrose Bierce, the well-known humorist, who is seventy-two years of age, and who went recently to Mexico for further literary work, is missing, and none of his friends know what has become of him. Mr. Bierce, who is even better known by his pen-name, "Dod Grile," is an American with a large following in his native country, but for some years he resided in England, doing excellent work on the *London Figuro* and *Fun* in their palmy days, and publishing a number of books, which firmly established his reputation on this side of "the herring pond." In the United States his works have been collected in a handsome edition in twelve volumes; but in this country he is represented by stray volumes which are the joy of discriminating lovers of literature.

Why his books are not so popular as those by Mark Twain, Max Adeler, Artemus Ward, and Jerome K. Jerome is a mystery. That he is as funny as either is evident. If his humor is not appreciated by the public to the extent of those others, it may be because he has chosen to expend it largely upon a disrespectful perversion of religion. The proper study of mankind is man, and possibly the only burlesque that causes the wide mouth of the general public to broaden to a grin must also concern nature, and not the alleged supernatural. Ambrose Bierce deserves a place beside the other humorists mainly because his work is of a rarer quality than theirs. Two of his books with the quaint titles *The Fiend's Delight* and *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull* revealed a mordant satire that is without a parallel since the days of Swift, and they were as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat. The title page of *The Fiend's Delight* was ornamented with a drawing showing a devil toasting a plump baby at a large fire, whilst in the body of the work the Christian superstition fared as badly as it did in the lively pages of Colonel Ingersoll. Another extraordinary book was *In the Midst of Life*, a series of powerful short stories largely concerned with military episodes in the American Civil War, and some of his battle pictures are unsurpassed of their kind, whilst others recall the grim realism of Poe or Maupassant. The gems of humor scattered throughout his writings would make the fortune of a comic writer. Here are a few taken at random:—

"I once knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker—as he had need to be."

"The Psalmist never saw the seed of the righteous begging bread. In our day they sometimes request pennies for keeping the street corners in order."

"It is wicked to cheat on Sundays. The law recognises this truth, and shuts up the shops."

"If a jackass were to describe the deity, he would represent him with long ears and a tail. Man's ideal is the higher and truer; he pictures him as somewhat resembling a man."

"Camels and Christians receive their burdens kneeling."

"Most people have no more definite idea of liberty than that it consists in being compelled by law to do as they like."

"People who honor their parents have the comforting promise that their days shall be long in the land. They are not sufficiently numerous to make the life-assurance companies think it worth their while to offer them special rates."

"Everybody professes to know that it would be difficult to find a needle in a haystack, but very few reflect that this is because haystacks seldom contain needles."

"In calling a man a hog, it is the man who gets angry, but it is the hog who is insulted. Men are always taking up the quarrels of others."

"It is to be feared that to most men the sky is but a concave mirror, showing nothing behind, and in looking into which they see only their own distorted images, like the reflection of a face in a spoon. Hence it needs not surprise that they are not very devout worshippers; it is a great wonder they do not openly scoff."

"Benevolence is as purely selfish as greed. No one would do a benevolent action if he knew it would entail remorse."

"The symbol of charity should be a circle. It usually ends exactly where it begins—at home."

"Piety, like small-pox, comes by infection. Robinson Crusoe, however, caught it alone on his island. It is probable that he had it in his blood."

To pick out passages haphazard is not doing justice to a brilliant humorist. Not only does a jest's prosperity lie in the ear of him who hears it, but it has its life in atmosphere of its own, and there are few plants so tender in the transplanting. While the creator of "Mr. Dooley" is welcomed, and the author of *Three Men in a Boat* is passing popular, one cannot help regretting the inadequate appreciation that Ambrose Bierce has won. Of course, all reading people must know his writings; but that the larger public should not have an opportunity of testing what he has written is unsatisfactory.

The function of a laugh-maker is often underestimated. The man who grins at you through a horse-collar, and sets you laughing back at him, does you a vast service. The physiological value of laughter has never been correctly appraised. Although doctors bestow a certain patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the pharmacopœia, no one will dispute that the humorists are the benefactors of society. Yet, with the exception of Moliere, Rabelais, and Dickens, humorous writers are held to be only second-rate artists. The world will not take them seriously. Perhaps it is their own fault for electing to provide mirth for folk who take their pleasures sadly.

MIMNERMUS.

A Chapter of My Autobiography.

THE SECULAR CHARTER.

IN the early days of my acquaintance with the Secular party I used to hear Charles Bradlaugh and George Jacob Holyoake complain that Christian laws deprived Freethinkers of a right enjoyed by all other citizens; namely, of giving or bequeathing money to the Secular movement with full legal security. Those who might imagine that Holyoake's language was less vehement than Bradlaugh's on this subject are very much mistaken. He spoke like a man who had seen his and his friends' property carried off in open daylight and the policeman helping the thief.

My own prosecution for "Blasphemy" in 1882-8 gave me a special interest in this matter. Robbing a man of his personal rights of free-thought and free-speech was half-way to robbing him of his financial rights. It was because a Freethinker could be kicked with impunity that he could be pillaged with impunity. And as, for my part, I am as little fond as any man is of "wrongs unredressed and insults unavenged," this state of things made a great impression on my mind and filled me with indignation. Natural inferiority must be borne with, but arbitrary inferiority—manufactured by bigotry and insolence—is a thing that no man with a spark of self-respect could put up with for a single moment longer than he could help.

I became a Freethought lecturer and writer myself, and the editor of the *Freethinker* from its first number. It was like no other Freethought paper that had ever been published, and although it contained nothing in the form of revelation, its novelty of character made it more popular than was expected. And it soon got me into trouble. I was so incensed at the treatment of Bradlaugh by the baser sort of Christians, aided by Christians of a more tolerant reputation, that I felt, "Very well, gentlemen, if that is your Christianity, I hate it; moreover, I despise it, and condemn you; and I will inflict upon you as much pain and injury as I can." So the *Freethinker* started with a really fine program, if I may say so, and it kept its promise as far as possible. But ridicule was our speciality. By "our" I mean my dear old friend and colleague, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, as well as myself. All who really knew him would subscribe to the statement that he couldn't be vulgar if he tried—and there was the paper to speak for itself. Articles of my own on Gambetta, Littré, Paul Bert, and Etienne Dolet, appeared in the early numbers; and although time necessarily brings changes, I would not be ashamed to sign them now. Mr. Wheeler and I were extremely unlike each other in many things, but wonderfully alike in many other things; and men who worshiped Shakespeare, revered Darwin, and loved Shelley (as we both did) were not the likeliest to be enamored of vulgarity, although we may occasionally have failed to remember the Master's *mot* about a jest's prosperity.

Well, with good outside help from friends whose names could not be mentioned then and cannot be mentioned now, we simply maddened the Christians—as we tried to do in the circumstance of the time.

We were revenging Freethought a bit—what the man in the street calls “getting our own back.” And the worst of it was that the enemy recognised the learning and ability which (leaving out myself) lay behind the witty attacks of that gallant little band of Freethought soldiers on the Bible and Christianity in particular, but also in general on all the flourishing superstitions of the world.

We maddened the Christians so much that they soon fell upon us with the “Blasphemy” Laws. I was prosecuted as Fiend in Chief, Mr. W. J. Ramsey as Chief Steward, and Mr. H. A. Kemp as Sub-steward—that is to say as Editor, Publisher, and Shopman (he was really a lad). But I am not relating the story of my prosecution and imprisonment at present. I am only indicating the way my mind took with regard to the main subject I am writing about. I suffered my twelve months’ imprisonment under a Christian judge’s sentence, in a Christian gaol, provided with a Christian soul-saver in case I required his services. Christians sometimes ask me to forget it. Never, while Christians love persecution; never, while the “Blasphemy” Laws are unrepealed.

During my imprisonment I thought of many things. Amongst them, of course, was the personal side of the Blasphemy Laws—the danger that every Freethought publicist ran from a Christian jury’s being asked whether his criticism of their faith was absolutely suited to their taste. That danger, from the nature of the case, seemed still destined to a considerable longevity, although its viciousness had been greatly diminished by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge’s judgment at my trial. In spite of all the Common Law decisions of former judges, he insisted that times had changed, that people had grown more tolerant and humane, that differences of opinion on any subject could not now be considered a crime, and that “*if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without a person being guilty of blasphemous libel.*”

Nobody felt the full meaning and weight of these fateful words. Certainly I did not. Lord Coleridge himself did not. He said that he did not then realise the great importance of the trial at which he was presiding. Still, he stuck to his judgment, which I had included in my report of the proceedings; and his independent report of his own speech, except for what may be called repairs and decorations, showed very little difference between the two publications.

I suffered the heaviest punishment inflicted on a Freethinker for a hundred and twenty years. Not by the order of Lord Coleridge, but by the sentence of Mr. Justice North, one of the common ruck of judges and a Roman Catholic at that. It was my singular fortune to be tried for “blasphemy” three times in the course of less than three months. I was brought up from prison to be tried again on what was really the first indictment. I had fallen among thieves, I was bruised and wounded, without so much as the benefit of first aid. And I sat there to be tried again for the same “crime,” answer the same stupid arguments of bigotry, and retort its insolences. When lo! there was a hush in court, and a tall figure, looking so stately in those red robes, walked across the bench with noble dignity, and took the judge’s seat. And it was the Court of the Lord Chief Justice of England! He sat down serenely, rested his forehead on his right hand, and took a good look at me. I think the scrutiny ended in satisfaction. Judge North’s “Foote” changed into Mr. Foote, his Lordship assisted me in protesting against the word “indecent” being applied to my paper, and the “vulgar blasphemer” of a few weeks before had turned into the author of a “very striking and able speech,” as Lord Coleridge told the jury it was—while the *Times* said that the trial “would be historical, chiefly because of the remarkable defence” I had made. So it seems that I was born, as it were, for this particular work.

In the course of time the spark of fire in Lord Coleridge’s speech to the jury at my third trial for “Blasphemy” grew into a great light in my mind.

Was it not possible to make a distinction between *matter* and *manner* in the criticism of Christianity, so that one might be legal though the other were penal? The logic of this distinction had nothing to do with me. Providing that Lord Coleridge’s distinction held good, a Society might be founded on a legal basis of non-Christian intention, and as firm and secure as the Rock of Gibraltar. It would also have to furnish security on the side of expenditure—that is, internally as well as externally. This could be done by something that was a Trust and not a Trust—by something that had all the advantages of a Trust and none of its disadvantages. This was at last worked out through the Memorandum and Articles of a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Hardly anybody thought this plan was feasible. I had to convert even the legal gentlemen who afterwards assisted me. Some of my colleagues, with rather a cynical smile, were ready to encourage me, as far as they felt able to, in attempting the impossible. Some asked why the project had not occurred to Bradlaugh. I replied that no one admired him more than I did, but his death did not leave the world empty. Some (there are always *these* some) predicted still worse things, and pictured me as a sort of millionaire living on the Mediterranean with all the money of my dupes safely invested in good securities for my own advantage. As a matter of fact, money accruing to the Society had to come through the Society’s bankers’ by cheque, endorsed by the Secretary and two Directors, of whom the Chairman was not necessarily to be one. The Society was formed, the Society was registered in 1898, the Society has had thousands of pounds by way of gift and legacy, the Society still exists and fulfils its intended function—and I am not yet living on the Mediterranean. It is ten to one that I shall be cremated at Golder’s Green.

I published the Memorandum of Association of the Society last week. I now give the “Reasons for Joining the Society,” which I published in this journal in September, 1898:—

REASONS FOR JOINING THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED.

First Advantage.—This scheme gets rid of the old difficulty as to giving or bequeathing money, or other property, for Secular purposes. The Secular Society (Limited) is a legally incorporated body. It has all the rights, as far as its Memorandum and Articles go, of an individual citizen. If anything is bequeathed to it, the executors have no alternative but to pay the amount over. That is certain. It does not admit of a moment’s doubt. While the registration stands there is absolutely no room for apprehension on this point. A Freethinker may leave this Society five pounds, or a hundred pounds, or a thousand pounds, with the certitude that all he so leaves will be devoted to the objects set forth in the Memorandum.

Second Advantage.—The Society, like an individual citizen, can act as trustee. Should a Freethinker wish a certain sum of money to be devoted, not to the general objects of the Society, or to any one of them in particular, but to some special object in the same direction, he can so devote it by deed of gift, or in his will, and appoint the Society as trustee for the carrying out of his intentions.

Third Advantage.—While the Society is not nominally a Trust, like the various Christian Churches, it is practically so. Its Memorandum amounts to the same thing as a Trust, because it specifies certain objects to be promoted, generally by the members and particularly by the Directors, and because Article 54 makes it legally impossible for the Society’s funds to be expended in any other way.

Fourth Advantage.—No member, as a member, can derive any profit, direct or indirect, from the Society. The funds of the Society could not, therefore, be voted in any way to its members. Further, there is no danger of the highest interests of the Society being injured by a desire on the part of its members

for a commercial dividend. There is no room for that desire to operate.

Fifth Advantage.—There is no Share Capital; consequently, the danger does not exist of shares passing into indifferent, alien, or hostile hands. This has frequently occurred in the case of ordinary companies, and the result has been ruinous to the objects of the original promoters.

Sixth Advantage.—No temporarily successful faction of discontented members could have the slightest chance of wrecking the Society, for it cannot be voluntarily wound up except by the consent of at least nine-tenths of its members, which involves practical unanimity. The continuity of the Society is thus guaranteed.

Seventh Advantage.—It could be to no one's personal interest to see the Society wound up, because Article 57 provides that on its winding up its property would have to be given to some kindred society, or to a non-sectarian charity. "It shall not be paid or distributed," the Article says, "amongst the members."

Eighth Advantage.—While there is every security for the rights of members, and for full and perfect publicity, the Society's affairs will be conducted in a business-like way by a Board of Directors, who have legal powers and also legal obligations, which could, if necessary, be enforced.

Ninth Advantage.—The Memorandum gives the Society large and varied powers, if only it can obtain the means to exercise them. The whole field of Secular work and organisation could be covered with adequate resources.

Tenth Advantage.—Every member having to be proposed and seconded, and admitted or rejected by the Directors, there is a reasonable guarantee that only proper persons will be admitted to the Society; and, as every member has to pay ten shillings on joining, and five shillings a year afterwards, there is a reasonable guarantee that he will be seriously interested in the Society's welfare.

Eleventh Advantage.—This is an indirect one. Henceforth the leading men in our movement will be freed from unjust suspicion and malicious misrepresentation. If one of them was left anything by a friend, who happened to be a Freethinker, it was always open for jealous persons to say, "Oh, it was meant for the movement, but he has stuck to it himself." Mr. Bradlaugh had several such legacies, at least two of them being substantial ones, and he suffered from these traducers, who took advantage of a Christian law to libel their own leader by means of a falsehood that, from the very nature of it, did not admit of a positive refutation. Other leading Freethinkers have suffered from the same cause. But all that is ended now. If a man wishes to leave money to the movement, he can put the Secular Society, Limited, in his will. What he leaves to an individual, henceforth, can only be meant for that individual. And probably there will always be some who prefer to help a movement by helping those who labor and sacrifice, and perhaps suffer, to carry it forward.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

A CHRISTIAN SON.

The other day a young gentleman, a Presbyterian who had just been converted, came to me and gave me a tract, and he told me he was perfectly happy. Said I, "Do you think a great many people are going to hell?" "Oh, yes." "And you are perfectly happy?" Well, he did not know as he was, quite. "Would you not be happier if they were all going to heaven?" "Oh, yes." "Well, then, you are not perfectly happy?" No, he did not think he was. "When you get to heaven, then you will be perfectly happy?" "Oh, yes." "Now, when we are only going to hell, you are not quite happy; but when we are in hell, and you in heaven, then you will be perfectly happy? You will not be as decent when you get to be an angel as you are now, will you?" "Well," he said, "that was not exactly it." Said I, "Suppose your mother were in hell, would you be happy in heaven then?" "Well," he says, "I suppose God would know the best place for mother." And I thought to myself, then, if I were a woman, I would like to have five or six boys like that.—Colonel R. G. Ingersoll.

Newman and Paine.

"Rough work, Iconoclasm, but the only way to get at Truth."—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

CARDINAL NEWMAN ought to have been well acquainted with Freethought, for one of his brothers was a Theist, and another was an Atheist, whilst in many pages of own incomparable writing he shows a delicate appreciation of the sceptical objections to orthodoxy. The Cardinal's biographers, however, do not appear to possess much knowledge on the subject. In a sketch of Newman, issued by the Catholic Truth Society, and written by Dr. Barry, it is said that Newman, at the age of fourteen, "read Paine's tracts against the Old Testament, and found pleasure in thinking of the objections they raised." It would be difficult to beat this specimen of "Catholic Truth." Paine wrote no "tracts" against the Old Testament, and his *Age of Reason*, which covers the whole of the Bible, is a substantial volume, and has been on sale for over a century, and has been sold by hundreds of thousands. Many replies have been published, but Paine's book has outlived them all, and may be regarded as a Freethought classic.

There were critics of the Bible, it is true, before Thomas Paine's day, but they were mainly scholars, whose works were not easily understood by ordinary folk. Paine himself, a man of genius, had sprung from the people, and he spoke their tongue and made their thoughts articulate. But boldly as Paine might write, his book would never have been read at all but for the courage of the Freethinkers. In that battle for free speech, Richard Carlile and his wife and friends divided among them about fifty years imprisonment. Daniel Eaton, besides being prosecuted seven times, had the pillory inflicted and £2,500 worth of literature destroyed. Christian apologists, who are never tired of boasting of the tolerance of their intolerant superstition, need to be reminded of these things. Although trials for blasphemy have been numerous, the comparatively enlightened nineteenth century holds the record for the number of blasphemy and free speech prosecutions, and it is extraordinary in how many instances Paine's book has figured. The reason is not far to seek. Paine woke the working classes to intellectual issues, and since Church and State have united in an unholy alliance to strangle Liberty.

M.

PROFESSOR BURY'S CRUSHING ARGUMENT.

Before I came to years of discretion, a well-meaning preceptor supplied me with an argument to prove the supernatural origin of the Christian revelation. It amounted to this: If Christianity had been a human invention, it could not have lasted for nineteen centuries. It so obviously proves too much. For it would establish the divine origin of Buddhism; it would establish the divine origin of Confucianism; and it would establish for Fetishism an origin still more divine. Or, why confine its validity to religions? Roman law, which in its way has had as wonderful a vitality as Christianity, would be entitled to claim superhuman inspiration.—Prof. J. B. Bury, *Litt.D., LL.D.*

HOW JONES WORSHIPS JONES.

Of all conceivable forms of enlightenment the worst is what is called the inner light. Anyone who knows anybody, knows how it would work; anyone who knows anyone from the Higher Thought centre knows how it does work. That Jones shall worship the God within him turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the inner light; let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in his street, but not the God within.—G. K. Chesterton.

BRADLAUGH AND "GEORGE ELIOT."

I well remember that when describing an evening at the Hall of Science, George Henry Lewes observed laughingly to "George Eliot," "I verily believe, Polly," thus he usually called his companion, "that our friend has a sneaking fondness for Mr. Bradlaugh."—Miss Betham Edwards, "Reminiscences."

Acid Drops

We are rather at a loss to see why so many military men in this country should spend so much time denouncing the teaching of some German writers that war is a national necessity. It is only what scores of militarists in our own country have taught for years. It is, indeed, the common teaching of militarists in all countries. Even Lord Roberts said that "Without war, at any rate, without the vigilance and discipline which prepare for that stern emergency, a nation is in risk of running to seed." War, he said, "prevents decadence and effeminacy." This is, we repeat, the common teaching of militarists, it is no more German than British, and no more British than French. And it is wholly false. War does not improve a nation, it degrades it; instead of preventing decadence, it leads to it. If this were not so, it would be nothing short of lunacy to talk of fighting Prussian militarism in order to end war. We ought to take care to perpetuate it as a recurring factor in national life. But the truth is that war takes of the best and leaves the worst. It begins by weeding out the physically fit, and ends by inducing a blunted moral sense. The proof of this is seen in the fact that no militarist nation has ever been able to perpetuate itself. And it is one of the best established truths that troops long in the field tend to demoralisation.

Where these theorists go astray is in confusing the exercise of combative energy with physical fighting. The first is a permanent element in human nature; the second is only one of the forms in which it finds expression. Man is always a fighting animal. Civilisation itself is no more than the story of man's fight with nature and the conservation of the fruits of his many victories. But there is no need that this combative energy of man shall always be expended in physical contest with his fellow-man. That is the uncivilised—or at best the less civilised—aspect of the struggle. The higher and better and more profitable aspect of the struggle lies in the contest of ideas and ideals. The other form becomes less and less so in proportion as humanity becomes susceptible to the sway of ideas. And this contest is also decisive. No one really wishes to stop contests between human beings. What the better minds wish to do is to lift that contest from the lower to the higher stage. The true militarist favors the lower expression of the struggle. That is the real difference between the pacifist and the militarist. And, as a matter of fact, there is no more combative person in existence than the anti-militarist. Only he prefers ideas as being ultimately more powerful and profitable than bullets and bayonets.

The *Church Times* is hoping that some kind of Christian unity may result from the War. But it is to be the kind of unity that exists when a wolf and a lamb are united; for what the *Church Times* wants is that other sects shall become reconciled to them. And the other sects are equally anxious for unity—on the same terms. Meanwhile, it is instructive to observe that religion is the one thing on which people will not and cannot unite. When the War broke out politicians of opposite schools became reconciled, employers and employees declared a truce. Religious parties alone maintained all their divisions and their differences. It may be said that this is because religion is the most valuable of all things. But the truth is that, while social life draws people together, religion makes all the time for division.

Some good stories are included in Sir Melville Macnaghten's *Days of My Years*. One is in connection with the murder of William Terriss, the actor, when Charles Brookfield objected to the highly colored details published in a paper, and wrote to the editor: "Sir,—God, who in his infinite mercy has deprived the negro of his sense of smell, would seem similarly to have deprived the journalist of all sense of decency."

The Unspeakable Prussian is the title of a new book. Surely it must omit reference to the Psalm-smiting and loquacious Kaiser, for he talks like an insurance agent or a revivalist preacher.

A new volume has been issued with the title, *David in Heaven*. We wonder if his celestial amusements are as interesting as his little affair with Bathsheba, or his dancing display before the Ark.

In a biographical note of Lord Strathcona in *T. P.'s Weekly*, it describes the late-lamented peer as belonging to the "catch-as-catch-can Individualist school." This awful

phrase suggests an evangelical mission, a harmonium, and plenty of collection boxes.

The Vicar of St. Peter's, St. Albans, has been solemnly warning people that they should avoid spending on luxuries during the present state of affairs. Such advice is not very helpful, especially as one is not told what is a luxury. There are, of course, hosts of things that most of us could *live* without, but would a life without some of these be worth the living? Are necessities only those things adequate to sustain life—say, enough food, clothing, and shelter? A great many people apparently regard a book as a luxury, and one can, of course, live without books. So with a variety of other things. And the gist of the whole matter lies in the consideration that what is at first a luxury becomes later a necessity, and that, on the whole, it is well that this should be so. For life itself becomes higher in value as luxuries become necessities. Reducing life to what are called its bare necessities would mean little less than the destruction of civilisation. We do not mean that there are no such things as unnecessary luxuries, and some that people would be just as well without. The difficulty lies in discriminating, and the uselessness of advice without discrimination.

Meanwhile, from our point of view, there are some things that we think the nation could get on very well without. People might dispense with their disbursements—or a part of them—for purely religious purposes. The money spent on foreign missions, over three millions annually, might be saved. Now that we have called upon the followers of the religions of India, the Japanese, the Senegalese, and others to come and help in the task of preserving Western civilisation, it might be a graceful act if we desisted from offering them a religious patronage that is unwelcome and impertinent. But this is, of course, not the kind of economy that the Vicar of St. Peter's has in mind. He is thinking of the way in which people might economise in some directions in order to give the money to "Home Missions," and the like. It is really a question of point of view, and the Vicar's is like that of the merchant who sees no more in the War than a chance for him to capture some of Germany's trade.

It was one of life's little ironies that a portrait of the Bishop of London, in full war-paint, should have been exposed in a dealer's window immediately beneath a placard announcing a cheap edition of Stevenson's *Travels With a Donkey*.

In a recent novel, entitled *Sinister Street*, there is a lengthy account of life at the University of Oxford, and it is frankly admitted that the institution has been captured by wealthy prigs and sporting men. This is not exactly a new discovery, for Gibbon, the great historian, described Oxford dons as being "sunk in prejudice and port," and Matthew Arnold has called the University "the home of lost causes." A university which expelled Shelley and canonised General Booth, has reason to boast that it is not for the common herd.

The clergy are boasting of the revival of religion owing to the War; but it is curious that in many leading articles in the press on the death of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, hardly any reference was made to Christianity. Even the *Times* was purely Secularistic in tone, and all the great dailies echoed the same strain. It looks as if the clergy are making capital out of the compulsory attendance of troops at the official services.

It is given on the authority of a clergyman, or we should hardly have credited it. But from the *British Weekly* we learn, on the authority of the Scottish Chaplain with the Expeditionary Force in France, that a "universal question" with our men at the front is, "Do you think they'll be praying for us at home, Sir?" Of course, those who know soldiers intimately, realise that this is precisely the kind of thing they would be anxious about. And it is fortunate that the Scottish Chaplain is there to send home this cheerful message. For the secular correspondents have altogether failed to chronicle such an interesting piece of information.

The clergy of St. Paul's Cathedral have arranged to hold a twenty-hours' watch service on December 16, in preparation for the National Day of Intercession on January 3. This ought to be called a non-stop watch service.

Most of the "authorities" on a future life adopt the policy of "I have evidence," or "I am assured," or "I am convinced," all of which are interesting autobiographical items, but are not of much value otherwise. For it is not somebody else's convictions, but *mine*, that is required; not

something that is evidence to another, but something that is evidence to *me*. Accordingly, we are not greatly affected by the assurance which Sir Oliver Lodge gave a South London audience the other day to the effect that a continued existence after death was a demonstrated truth. "I tell you," said Sir Oliver, "with all the strength of conviction which I can muster that the fact is so, that we do persist, that these people still take an interest in what is going on, that they still help us, and that they are able from time to time to communicate." All this *may* be so; but on the face of it all that these assertions actually prove is that Sir Oliver Lodge believes them to express the truth. This we are not inclined to question. We have never doubted his sincerity or his honesty; but honesty is no protection against blunders—in this connection it sometimes promotes their occurrence.

Sir Oliver Lodge says that "the survival of existence is scientifically proved by careful scientific investigation," that the evidence is recorded in the volumes of a scientific society—presumably the Psychical Research Society, and that those students "who have given most attention to it have gradually, and in the process of many years, come to agree that the proof has now become crucial." Every statement here admits of serious question. All students of psychical phenomena do not admit that conclusive proof of a future life has been found. Some may believe so, but many remain unconvinced. The survival of personal existence has not been "scientifically" proved—that is, unless we give to the word "scientific" a new and altogether arbitrary meaning. It may be, as Sir Oliver says, that "it is not for everybody to investigate everything," but it is the essence of a scientific investigation that its methods and results may be appreciated by the non-investigator of average ability and adequate education. We have never investigated many things that we take for granted from scientific teachers, but we understand the methods on which these teachers work, the steps of their calculations are there for all to study, and we see that their methods are satisfactory, and their conclusions agreeable to other scientists. But this is not the case with a future life. All those who investigate are not satisfied. Some challenge the "facts." Others admit the facts, but dispute the inferences therefrom. Others come to quite contradictory conclusions. Sir Oliver Lodge is quite justified in putting forward his belief in a future life, but it is *his* belief. He has no right to put forward the belief as scientifically demonstrated.

Sir Oliver Lodge has been protesting against the doctrine that the State is the "summit" of everything—that it is entitled to do what it pleases if it is conducive to its own benefit. We think that Sir Oliver, like many others, is confusing State with Government; but in the main we agree with his protest. But why does Sir Oliver Lodge call this doctrine "practical Atheism"? The first duty of a scientific man is to be exact, and this particular theory has about as necessary a connection with Atheism as Macedon has with Monmouth. Sir Oliver had of course in mind certain German writers, who, curiously enough, call themselves Christians, and who have a perfect right to call themselves such. One is not surprised at the ordinary theologian or journalist calling "practical Atheism" anything with which he disagrees, but it is a pity to find a leading scientific man falling—even momentarily—to the same level.

It is stated that the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches will have an "Intercession Sunday," in which they will follow the lead of the Government Religion in petitioning the Throne of Grace on behalf of the Allies. Pity the sorrows of a poor, old deity!

"God helps only those who help themselves" says the *Daily Mail* in a leading article recently. The sentiment is not original; but some of the *Mail's* pious readers may have demanded their ha'pennies back.

At a Thundersley (Essex) Brotherhood Meeting recently, the subject discussed was "How to Fight the Enemy," and a vocalist sang "A Dream of Paradise." Surely an ironic heaven!

The following exhortation has been written on the wall of a certain golf club-house where soldiers are billeted: "Think of Jonah! He came out all right." If he did, he must have been sicker than the whale.

There must be few thoughtful and unprejudiced observers who are not struck by the almost contemptible part played

by the Christian Churches during the War. Quite powerless to prevent the outbreak of war, since then they have formed an obviously negligible quantity. No one pays any serious attention to what they say or do, and any help given to recruiting men for the Army could just as well have been given by the clergy as private individuals, and by the Churches as secular organisations. To reply that the Churches have supported the Government in pursuing the War is to say nothing. They have almost invariably supported *every* war, and that alone discounts the moral value of their support now. Moreover, the Churches of Germany and Austria have been equally keen in supporting their Governments; which also proves that from Christianity no genuine guidance is possible. The Christian Churches have no common message, and no common teaching, unless it be one of the rankest opportunism. The support of even a politician counts for more than the sanction of the Church, for the reason that one is more likely to get an independent opinion. Right or wrong, the Churches echo the opinion of the moment, in war as in other things.

This aspect of the matter evidently appeals very strongly to the Rev. E. Shillito, who, in the *Christian World*, laments that "Devotion to Christendom means little to-day, although once it was a motive powerful enough to stir the hearts of kings, statesmen, thinkers, poets, and all the master minds of Europe." Even so, it cannot be said that their Christianity made with any greater certainty for unity and peace. No matter how seriously the people of past ages took their religion, it did not prevent their conducting wars with far greater ferocity than even now. Mr. Shillito refers to the case of Mr. Gladstone, who, in pleading the cause of the Bulgarians and the Armenians, never forgot that "they were Christians, and as Christians were not the same as though they were outside Christ." Quite so; but Mr. Shillito overlooks the fact that in this instance there was a non-Christian Power to be attacked, and that will always whet the appetite of followers of the Prince of Peace.

Mr. Shillito asks, "Would it make any difference if half the nations in the arena were not Christian?" Perhaps not; but what difference has it made now that they are Christian? Did it delay their arming against each other for years before war actually broke out? Did it lead to a greater measure of trust between them? Was there a single Christian nation or statesman who depended upon Christianity as affording any guarantee of honorable dealing or of peaceful intention? Everyone knows to the contrary. Everyone knew that, should a critical occasion arise, the profession of a common Christian faith would not lie as a feather's weight in the balance. And everyone recognised also that the voice of the Church in Germany or Austria or England was only, as Mr. Shillito confesses, "a valuable adjunct to the semi-official press," voicing the official case in the language of piety.

The manner in which hatred against everything relating to Germany, Austria, and Turkey is finding expression is ludicrous. Soon we shall have children objecting to "German" sausage or the Christmas "Turkey."

There is a popular belief that the Czar of all the Russias has forbidden the sale of all alcohol throughout the War, but this is not so, for only vodka is barred. Wines and beers are still being drunk, but vodka is the national drink. So spirituous intoxication, no less than spiritual intoxication, is still within reach of the Russian people.

At a recent meeting of the London County Council Education Committee it was stated that nearly six hundred Territorials were attending French classes. They will be able to read M. Anatole France's stories in the original language.

For some years now the Chinese Government has been attempting to deal with the opium traffic—a traffic forced upon China by this country. In the native cities the opium dens have been closed; but now the Rev. Arnold Foster points out that the Municipal Council of the International Settlement outside Shanghai has, while closing the recognised opium dens, largely increased the number of shops licensed for the sale of opium. The Council is made up of Europeans, the majority of whom are British. Under their rule the number of shops licensed to sell opium has increased from 87 in 1907 to 663 in 1914. The sale of the drug is now about twenty times as great as it was seven years ago. The Chinese are compelled to submit to this, but it will not fail to impress them with what Christian morality means in practice.

To Correspondents.

- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.**—Previously acknowledged, £231 13s. Received since:—F. Lucas, £1 1s.; Newcastle Branch, N. S. S., 10s. 6d.; W. H. Hickee, £1 1s.; M. J. Charter, 10s.; Jersey, 10s.; T. T., 2s. 6d.; H. Courlander (S. Africa), 10s. 6d.; W. W., 2s.; Mrs. Borsby, 2s.; J. Wood (Winnipeg), 4s.
- R. CAUDEN.**—The address of the Secretary of the Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S. is Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Henstone-road, Rotton Park, Birmingham. We have noted the other matter. Thanks for cuttings, which are always acceptable.
- F. LUCAS.**—Acknowledged. We are not sure which of the papers received has been sent by you, but you will doubtless be able to trace it from some of the paragraphs in this week's issue.
- W. D.**—Thanks for paper, which we do not see regularly. The use of religious terms has a curious attraction for a certain order of mind, and that is all one can say about it.
- H. G. FARMER.**—Thanks for cutting. The comment is characteristic. It may be useful on some future occasion.
- T. T. (Glasgow).**—Regret delay in acknowledging subscription, which you will see has now been done.
- A. R. WILLIAMS.**—We do not think the *Schoolmaster* is correct in speaking of Mr. R. J. Campbell as having been a *strong supporter* of Secular Education. His help to the cause was never of a very strenuous character; and his decision that often having seen the effect of the German system, he would never again support the "relegation of religion to a subordinate place in the day-schools," shows that he understood neither Secular Education nor the German system. (1) The advocates of Secular Education do not wish to place religion in a subordinate place; they wish to exclude it altogether as a matter with which the State has no concern. (2) The "German system" has more religion in it than has our own; and one would have expected Mr. Campbell to see in this a reason for the exclusion of religion—if he were not a parson. (3) Men of strong principle and whose convictions are well founded do not change in this way because something has occurred with which they disagree. It is the attitude of mere sentimentality.
- A. J. N.**—Sorry we cannot find room.
- G. H. (Liverpool).**—We have had a copy of the leaflet you send. It appears to have been given away broadcast—which is probably the only method by which a circulation could be gained. Its author is scarcely worth any of our contributors bothering with.
- J. ANGE.**—Hope we have got the acknowledgment correct.
- J. W. REPTON.**—Thanks for addresses. Copies will be sent as requested.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED,** office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S** office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- 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. J. T. Lloyd lectures this evening (November 29) in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Admission is free, and we hope to hear that the Leicester folk will avail themselves of the opportunity.

Some excellent passages from an article by Mr. Romain Rolland appeared in the *Daily News* of a recent date. The title of the article from which the passages are taken is "Above the Battlefield." Mr. Rolland asks:—

"Is our civilisation so solid that you do not fear to shake the pillars on which it rests? Can you not see that all falls in upon you if one column be shattered? Could you not have learned to love one another, or if that were impossible, at least to tolerate the great virtues and the great vices of the others? Was it not your duty to attempt—you have never attempted it in sincerity—to settle amicably the questions which divided you—the problem of peoples annexed against their will, the equitable division of productive labor and the riches of the world? Must the stronger for ever darken the others with the shadow of his pride and the others for ever unite to dissipate it? Is there no end to this bloody and

puerile sport, in which the partners change about from century to century—no end, until the whole of humanity is exhausted thereby!"

"The leaders of thought," says Mr. Rolland, "the Church, the Labor parties did not desire war. That may be, but what did they do to prevent it? What are they doing to put an end to it? They are stirring up the bonfire, each one bringing his faggot. The striking feature in this monstrous epic, and one without any precedent, is the unanimity for war in each of the nations engaged."

This is, indeed, the most striking feature of the War, and the one with least promise of good for the future. It is a war for which no one will take the responsibility, and yet each displays a determination for war and for resistance, certainly unsurpassed, and probably unequalled on any previous conflict. Mr. Rolland well says:—

"You Christians will say—and in this you seek consolation for having betrayed your Master's orders—that war exalts the virtue of sacrifice. And it is true that war has the privilege of bringing out the genius of the race in the most commonplace of hearts. It purges away, in its bath of blood, all dross and impurity; it tempers the metal of the soul; of a niggardly peasant, of a timorous citizen it can make a hero of Valmy. But is there no better employment for the devotion of one people than the devastation of another? Can we not sacrifice ourselves without sacrificing our neighbors as well? Many of you, I know, yield your own blood more readily than you shed that of others. But this is, in its essence, a weakness. For you who are undismayed by bullets and shrapnel yet tremble before the dictates of racial frenzy—that Moloch that stands higher than the Church of Christ..... You socialists on both sides claim to be defending liberty against tyranny—French liberty against the Kaiser, German liberty against the Czar. Would you defend one despotism against another? Unite and make war on both."

This is finely said, even though many may think this is not the time to say it with profit. With these we do not agree. It can never be right for those who see the insensate folly of war to sacrifice the future of the race to the madness of the moment. The duty of speech rests with those who see, now and always.

Miss Kough is lecturing for the Kingston Humanitarian Society this evening (November 29). Her subject is "A Christian War," and the meeting will be held in the Fife Hall, Fife-road, at 7 p.m. Freethinkers in the neighborhood should make a note of the meeting, and make it a point to be present.

There is nothing so difficult to eradicate as superstition. One may keep hammering away at it year after year, only to find at the end that the form only has been affected. And the amount of superstition current in even educated circles is a source of ever-recurring astonishment to students of the more obscure phases of sociology. We were reminded of this by a paragraph we came across the other day, pointing out that there is still in existence a number of followers of Joanna Southcote. Joanna Southcote died just about a hundred years ago, after establishing a religious sect who believed that she would give birth to the Messiah. A large number of people actually accepted the truth of the prophecy, but Joanna died without the marvel coming to pass, and her death was certified as due to dropsy. Still, the majority of her followers clung to the sect she had founded, and after a century it is not yet extinct. Those who ponder a fact of this description, in an age of newspapers and books and education, will cease to wonder at the prevalence of such a superstition as Christianity in earlier ages, and the difficulty of eradicating it once it is firmly established.

THE EVANGELICAL PULPIT.

In the face of physical science, of modern Biblical criticism, and of all the light which history and comparative mythology have of late years thrown on the genesis of religions, the old theory of verbal inspiration, the old methods of Biblical interpretation, and the old pre-scientific conception of a world governed by perpetual acts of supernatural interference, still hold their ground in the Evangelical pulpit. The incursions of erudite science have been met by the barrier of an invincible prejudice—by the belief, sedulously inculcated from childhood, that what are termed orthodox opinions are essential to salvation, and that doubt, and every course of inquiry that leads to doubt, should be avoided as a crime. It is a belief which is not only fatal to habits of intellectual honesty and independence in those who accept it, but is also a serious obstacle in the path of those who do not. The knowledge that many about him will regard any deviation from the traditional cast of opinions as the greatest of calamities and crimes seldom fails, according to the disposition of the inquirer, to drive him into hypocritical concealments, or into extreme and exaggerated bitterness.—*W. E. Lecky.*

Christian Apologetics.

THE REV. Z. B. WOFFENDALE.

SOME time ago mention was made in this journal of the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale having been criticised by the late J. M. Wheeler, when sub-editor of the *Freethinker*. Of this matter I have no knowledge; but, somewhere near the time referred to, chance threw in my way a copy of a Christian Evidence periodical of which the reverend gentleman named was co-editor. In that issue was an article entitled "Agnostic Rationalism," in which the following statements were made: "Agnostic Rationalism is one of the latest and weakest developments of Infidelity.The methods of the Agnostic Rationalist, like those of his Atheist brother, are exceedingly unfair.This is the way in which he foolishly reasons about miracles: he takes the so-called impositions, counterfeits, and impostures of mythological, Pagan, and mediæval times, and treats these fictions as if they bore an exact resemblance to the miracles recorded in the New Testament, and as if they were analogous to the real miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ." Then followed "the evidences" for the genuineness of the last-named miracle.

Being at that time a reader, and occasional contributor, of the *Agnostic Journal*, I wrote an article of three columns upon those "evidences" in that journal—to which the Rev. Woffendale afterwards replied in his own paper. These wonderful "evidences" I now give in the reverend gentleman's own words. He said:—

"The evidences for the truth, genuineness, and reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ are colored down, hidden away, or conveniently ignored by the Agnostic Rationalist, and yet for Christ's Resurrection there is overwhelming testimony. There is first the witness of the honest doubter, Thomas, who would not believe until he saw with his own eyes, heard with his own ears, and touched the risen Christ with his own hands, and who, when this cumulative evidence was given, confessed Christ at once and his divinity. There is the testimony, secondly, of John, whose character for truthfulness no breath of suspicion has ever marred. There is the honest testimony, thirdly, of the Apostles, who were also eye and ear and hand witnesses to his Calvary wounds and risen bodily condition.There is the witness, fourthly, of the Sacraments, the monumental institution of the Lord's Supper, and Christian baptism. And, fifthly, there is the recurrence every week of the commemoration of his Resurrection in the permanent establishment of the Lord's Day. And, sixthly, there is the existence to this day of the Christian Church, which has been founded and built up upon the miracle of Christ's Resurrection.The Agnostic Rationalism which ignores God and denies miracles is but another phase of that pernicious Infidelity which rests upon little knowledge, shallow thinking, and weak reasoning."

The foregoing "arguments" are neither better nor worse than those used by Christian apologists in the present decade. My remarks upon them in the article mentioned—which I give verbatim, though somewhat abbreviated—were as follows:—

1. Without going into the question of the reality of the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ, I will briefly examine the evidence adduced for it by Mr. Woffendale. First, we are told, there is "the witness of the honest doubter, Thomas."But where is this testimony? Did Thomas leave a written statement, attested, say, by two or three persons of proved honesty, affirming his recognition of the resurrected Jesus? No; we have nothing from the hand of Thomas—not a single line. This vaunted testimony turns out to be nothing more than an unauthenticated anecdote related of this apostle in the Fourth Gospel (xx. 26—29)—one, too, of which Matthew, Mark, and Luke appear never to have heard. In other words, we have but the unsupported statement of the writer of the Fourth Gospel—who, without a particle of evidence, is assumed to be the apostle John—that Thomas saw and recognised his risen Master. Hence, in stating that we have the "witness" of Thomas to the resurrection of Jesus, the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale deliberately "misleads the unwary and the less intelligent" of his readers.

2. Next, says the rev. gentleman, there is the testimony of the apostle John, "whose character for truthfulness no

breath of suspicion has ever marred." This statement proves that Mr. Woffendale either knows nothing of, or willfully ignores, the facts most firmly established by Biblical criticism. He has apparently never perceived that the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is a totally different person, both in language and actions, to the Jesus of the Synoptics.Again, we have no evidence that the Fourth Gospel was written within a hundred years of the alleged "Resurrection."We have thus presumptive evidence that the anecdote recorded of "the honest doubter Thomas" is fictitious.Here, again, the rev. gentleman "misleads the unwary."

3. Thirdly, says Mr. Woffendale, "there is the honest testimony of the apostles." Now, the twelve apostles are said to have been: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, another James, Thaddæus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Where are we to look for the "honest testimony" of these? Where are we to look for *any* testimony of these twelve men? There are, it is true, some apocryphal Gospels written in the names of apostles; but these are admitted to be forgeries. Where is the "witness" of Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Thaddæus, Simon, or Judas Iscariot? As a matter of fact, we have *no* testimony which can truthfully be affirmed to be that of apostles.But assuming, for the sake of argument, that the writings attributed to Peter, James, John, Jude, and Matthew were the work of apostles, in not a single one of them does the writer say that he had himself beheld the risen Jesus. Here, once more, the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale "misleads the unwary."

4. Fourthly, says this Christian advocate, "there is the witness of the sacraments—Baptism and the so-called 'Lord's Supper.'" Now, the rev. gentleman ought to know that neither of these "sacraments" was originated by Jesus Christ; the early Christians took them from Paganism. But, assuming that both were actually instituted by Jesus, this fact in no way proves that personage to have been miraculously raised from the dead. Here we have a sample of what Mr. Woffendale asserts to be a characteristic of "pernicious Infidelity"—"shallow thinking and weak reasoning"—though the reverend gentleman's utterances might more correctly be described as random statements made without thinking at all.

5. Fifthly, says our great authority, there is "the permanent establishment of the Lord's Day." Now, it is true that in some second century documents we are told that Christians met by preference on the first day of the week, because on that day their "Lord" had risen from the dead. But this proves nothing more than the existence of stories similar to those at the end of the Gospels. It certainly does not show the alleged resurrection to have been an actual fact.We have thus another example of "shallow thinking and weak reasoning."

6. Sixthly, says Mr. Woffendale, "there is the existence to this day of the Christian Church." A Christian Church, it is true, exists "to this day"; but this Church is not that which is alleged to have been founded by Jesus Christ. The original Jewish Church (that of the Nazarenes) lingered through three or four centuries, and then died a natural death. The existing Gentile Church was founded by Paul, who never beheld Jesus at all, and who simply *believed* the resurrection story.It is therefore untrue that the existing Christian Church was founded on the *reality* of the alleged resurrection of Jesus.Will Mr. Woffendale say that the existence "to this day" of the Mohammedan Church, or that of the Latter Day Saints, proves the genuineness of the revelations alleged to have been made to Mohammed or to Joe Smith? If he cannot, why does he endeavor to "mislead the unwary" of his flock by such "shallow thinking and weak reasoning"?

To some portions of the foregoing criticisms Mr. Woffendale replied in his own paper; but I soon saw that such a discussion was a farce: for his readers read nothing of my reply save a sentence here and there which he quoted for refutation, and this was done in the usual Christian Evidence fashion—by brag and bluster. At the end of the first instalment of his reply he boasted that he had made his Agnostic antagonist "bite the dust, where for the present we leave him." At the end of his second, he said that "the champion Philistine of Agnostic Infidelity has been fairly met, completely unhorsed, and left sprawling." I have only space here to illustrate this gentleman's replies by that relating to his first witness to the resurrection of Jesus—"the honest doubter Thomas."

"Abracadabra's argument (!) is, that as 'we have nothing from the hand of Thomas,' therefore the scene and the event narrated by the writer of the Fourth Gospel concerning Christ and Thomas never took place.

.....In any law court where the laws of evidence rule, such reasoning would be scouted and laughed to scorn.The crooked methods of Abracadabra are as blame-worthy as they are shallow, unscholarly, fallacious, and misleading."

One portion of my reply to the foregoing—I have not space for the whole—reads as follows:—

Let us imagine for a moment a scene in accordance with Mr. Woffendale's notions of evidence. "Call the first witness—John," says the magistrate. Thereupon the apostle named steps jauntily into the witness-box, and states that he saw the risen Jesus on each of the occasions recorded in his book, after the alleged resurrection. "Call the next witness—Thomas," says the magistrate. Thereupon John again enters the witness-box, and reads the little incident he had fabricated about Thomas and the nail-marks. "Call the third witness—Peter," says the magistrate. Then John, for the third time, goes into the witness-box, and reads the little story he had invented about the resurrected Jesus telling Peter to feed his sheep and his lambs (xxi. 15—17). "That will do," says the magistrate; "We have now heard the testimony of three unimpeachable witnesses to the undoubted reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The fact, all will allow, is now firmly established."

This kind of court is known only to the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale; the others, "where the laws of evidence rule," are unanimous in rejecting all hearsay evidence.

The rev. gentleman's answers to my replies numbered 4, 5, and 6, are given in the following sentence:—

"That Christian Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, and the Christian Church have been, and still are, four standing and impregnable monuments to the truth, the fact, and the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

These "monuments," as already shown, yield no testimony to the reality of the alleged Resurrection. Not one of the arguments there advanced has been in the slightest degree shaken. My opponent merely reiterated his former assertions. Everyone with a grain of sense will, of course, see that these "memorials" of the early Christian Church do not touch the historicity of the alleged Resurrection at all. They simply tend to prove that the Gospel resurrection stories were believed—by a later generation of Christians.

ABRACADABRA.

The Condemned Denominational Schools in London.

It is now ten years since, on the destruction of the late London School Board, the L. C. C. became the education authority for London, and took over not only the control and support of the Board Schools but also the support, and a very small part of the management, of the Denominational Schools. These latter schools, in common with other Denominational Schools throughout the country, were henceforth to be known as "Non-Provided Schools."

The Clerical Schools, in which little children were taught, in too many cases by sweated teachers, "the faiths of their fathers," were, according to the supporters of the Denominational system, in a very bad way. Nothing seemed to be sound about them except the "atmosphere." The Government Grants alone did not suffice to meet the "intolerable strain," of which, prior to that great triumph of clericalism, the destruction of the School Boards, ecclesiastical authorities made such piteous complaints. However, Fabian and other politicians assured us, that when once Government Grants were supplemented by rate-aid, the Denominational Schools would soon become equal to the best of the Board Schools which had grown up under public control.

How far that hope has been realised may be seen in a L. C. C. report for May 26 (No. 93), in which, covering some forty pages, are the facts concerning 124 Denominational Schools in London, which have a total accommodation of 54,545 scholars, and which have been condemned by the Board of Education. The report reveals a mean, sordid condition of things to which every Rationalist should help in giving the

fullest publicity. For we have to remember that the ecclesiastical forces behind these schools are powerful by reason of great wealth, patronage, and high political influence. Speaking with an intimate knowledge of education politics, gained as a member of the late London School Board and also as a pronounced Anti-Clerical education propagandist in the Trade Union movement, I say deliberately, that no self-respecting Rationalist can at this time afford to withhold his help, in building up the strong public opinion necessary to compel the Board of Education and the L. C. C. to insist upon the managers of the 124 condemned Denominational Schools fulfilling the obligations from which even the clerical legislation of 1902 and 1903 has not freed them, viz., the provision of suitable school buildings in place of the disgraceful, and in some cases, positively disgusting, schools which, as shown in the official report mentioned above, constitute so foul a disgrace to London.

In thirteen of those schools there are no playgrounds whatever, and no adequate provision can be made for physical exercises and recreation. One of these is the Girls' School of St. Mary Magdalene, Paddington, which, in the *Church Review*, December, 1901, was held up for admiration because of the managers' boast that "many a little Dissenter has been taught the Catholic faith in these walls." (The faith, it will be observed, of other children's fathers!) The report shows that in other schools also, playground accommodation is miserably limited. One reads of more than one case in which the infant classes go by turns for play into tiny yards containing the offices. In one case a boys' urinal is five feet from a classroom window; in another, the offices open direct from an infants' classroom. In one school which rejoices in the name of the Holy Family, "The boys spend the school recreation time in the street, the girls in the corridor or in the offices." These offices are stated to be "too near the school, and an unpleasant smell at times pervades the corridor." Surely a case for a cartoon, with apologies to Raphael! In one case the number of closets work out at one for forty children, and in another at one for sixty.

In one school, the boys, in order to reach their own offices, pass those set apart for the girls, "and the door between the two set of offices cannot be kept locked." Men and women teachers in one school use the same W.C.

A girls' school "on the first floor of another building is approached by a single wooden stairway with numerous turns"—a veritable death-trap in case of panic, through fire, or any other cause. Darkness on account of the close proximity of high buildings is common, and in some cases we find that classrooms are dark because the church is so near.

One reads again and again of structural defects, bad lighting, and bad ventilation. The infant schools are specially deserving of condemnation, and often one's heart goes out in pity—and in shame—for the poor little ones whom we are leaving to pay so high a price for the privilege of being taught—at the public expense—the "faiths of their fathers."

In connection with the report on the condemned schools, mention should be made of the service rendered by Mr. J. King, M.P., who, in June last, by a series of searching questions to the Minister of Education, brought some of the sordid facts of the case to the notice of the House of Commons. Thanks are also due to the quiet but highly effective work done by the National Education Association, an organisation which, in the past, has rendered excellent service in the cause of popular control of education.

It is, however, disappointing to be obliged to state that, although the facts concerning the condemned schools have for many months been widely known in Socialist and Trade Unionist circles, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, the Labor Party Executive, and the London Trades Council have taken no action. The same applies to the various Socialist organisations; for no Socialist

paper, and no Socialist leader has given any lead on the subject.

A significant silence on this scandal also marked two important Education Conferences, each extending over several days, and held at the London University soon after the publication of the official report on the condemned schools. The first, held in May, was under the auspices of the Victoria League; the second, in July, was under the joint auspices of the Theosophical Society, the Education Group of the Fabian Society, and the Ratan Pata Foundation.

The National War Emergency Committee also, formed at the commencement of the War, while declaring that public bodies should set on foot works of public utility as one means of meeting the difficulty of unemployment, has not yet called upon the wealthy ecclesiastical bodies behind the condemned schools to replace them by up-to-date school buildings. However, many earnest members of the rank and file of the organised workers are at work, and in many branches of Trade Unions this great public scandal is being discussed. Ere long, no doubt, the leaders, yielding to pressure from below, will take action; and let us hope that a strong representation will be made to the L. C. C. and the Board of Education, that all municipal and imperial financial support shall be withdrawn from those schools, until the managers are definitely pledged at once to take the necessary steps for rebuilding them and for providing adequate playground accommodation. If the law compels us to tolerate and support Denominational Schools, we can at least see to it that the children are not put off with school buildings of the "cheap and nasty" variety.

M. BRIDGES ADAMS.

The Gardener.

TAKE a map of England. Select half-a-dozen of the areas upon it most sparsely supplied with the names of towns. Of these bare spots choose the barest, and stick a pin right in the middle of it. If you have followed the directions accurately your pointer should now be sticking right into the church spire of the most isolated village in the land.

Clumpton-in-the-Woods (probably so called on account of the fact that it is bounded on three sides by bare hills and on the fourth side by a small group of fir-trees) is the only village in England where a delectable stupidity has not been assailed by town-made "smartness," and where a reputation for being "up to date" is not classified among the virtues. Its inhabitants are as law-abiding as angels. Only a scarcity of pasturage or an epidemic among the stock can agitate the tranquillity which covers them like a garment. Clumpton possesses but one motor-car, and beats all England for the number of its natives who have never been out of the county.

With the owner of the only motor-car—the hamlet's medical attendant—I recently stayed for a week's rest. One warm, sunny afternoon, which certainly belonged to mid-March but had somehow contrived to get itself into early November, I started out for a leisurely walk with the intention of passing through the village and on to the moor beyond. At the end of "The Street"—correctly called "The" street, for there is but one, and incorrectly called "Street," for it is no more like a street than a camel is like a cow—there stood a cottage, old, but with a trim exterior, and surrounded by flower gardens from which the sunshine of a coming June will doubtless call forth a prodigality of perfume and color. Half an acre or so of garden at the side of the dwelling was devoted to the culture of vegetables.

On the side of the road, its work evidently done for the day, stood the vehicle by which the crops from this plot were conveyed for sale to the villagers—a most curiously wrought kind of van, which appeared to have been originally designed for some totally different purpose, and to have had odd little pegs

and shelves superadded as necessity compelled invention to provide additional accommodation. A pair of tarred wooden doors or gates, wide enough to admit this vehicle, formed the entrance to the vegetable garden; and upon these gates, which were closed, the following announcement, written in chalk, attracted my attention:—

"NOW is the time for fruit trees to be pruned and sprayed, they must be attended to if Good Crop Required. Why do we prune, because theres always a lot of bad wood to be cut away same as little children—why do we spraye because trees have ENEMY'S Like Man and its best to kill them whil in there yoth. we do this work by the HOUR. DAY. or WEEK.

Prune and spray
Thats the way
and Dont forget to pray
for Fruit Some Day."

Here followed two chalk drawings, quite up to the standard of the letterpress. They represented young trees, and were described respectively as "pruned" and "not pruned." Underneath the whole appeared the signature of the proprietor.

Over the hedge I could see a man operating upon some gooseberry bushes with a knife. Judging him to be the "we" of the announcement, I determined to make his acquaintance. The chalk advertisement indicated a combination of modern enterprise and native philosophy rarely met with, and very surprising indeed in Clumpton; and its author, I concluded, would be worth knowing. So with that disregard of convention which the countryside expects, I opened the gate and bade him good day.

"You're busy," I said.

"'Ave to be," he replied, laconically.

"But isn't this your slow season?" I asked. "I thought gardeners had their holidays in the winter."

"Always plenty to do in a garden," he replied. "Never need stan' still. If you ain't doin' one thing you be doin' another. There's a sowin' time and a reapin' time, same as in the Kingdom."

I felt sure I was not mistaken. This was the author of the advertisement.

"And this," I said, "is pruning time? What advantage will those trees derive from your labors? Will they bear more fruit next year?"

"There 'ere be young uns," he returned. "Put 'em in last month. And they won't bear no frut 'tall next year. Want to git a firm standin' first. Can't rut and frut too, so I lets 'em rut. If a tree fruts first year all its strength goes, like a baby suckin' at a woman's breast."

I said "I see," though I didn't quite see the analogy he had intended to draw.

"Yours is a skilled profession," I added. "It must take many years to learn what is best for all the various plants you rear."

"Same as in the Kingdom," he replied quickly. "There's only one door, but there's a many ways leadin' to it. And you can't bring 'em all along the same one. Some 'as to be drove, some persuaded, and some carried. Which way did you come into the Kingdom, Mister?"

This unexpected and somewhat inconvenient question was accompanied by an unexpected and inconvenient a look. Until now I had seen the gardener's face only by portions, as he dodged around the bushes, bending at his work. But as he put this question he drew himself upright and looked full at me out of a pair of small, black, deep set, and very penetrating eyes. Shaggy black eyebrows and a beard of the same color contrived between them to leave very little of his face hairless.

I hesitated somewhat to answer his question, and he repeated, still watching me closely:—

"Which way did you come in?"

"Oh, I was driven in," I said, invoking the useful Catholic doctrine of mental reservation to add under my breath—"And I have been persuaded out!"

The gardener ejaculated "Ah!" as he bent again to his task, a little downcast, I thought, at finding me within the fold and so being deprived of a possible

capture. He talked again, however, when, after remarking how stunted and unsightly the pruning left the trees, I added that no doubt his experience and skill were directing him aright in spite of appearances.

"Best to take 'em young," he replied. "They'll be all the better for it arterwards." Then, evidently calling to mind the chalk effort on the gate, he added, "Same as little children. Sunday-school's the place to prune. We cuts 'em and we trims 'em like—like—like—" he hesitated, and finally decided—"like a barber."

It occurred to me that a barber, though operating on the heads of so many others, is quite incapable of attending to his own, and I wondered whether this gardener, evidently at home when working at the juveniles, ever submitted his own spiritual adornments to the trimming and pruning of any experienced craftsman.

I found he would talk freely under a little encouragement. And his conversation was original and instructive. He knew exactly where the pruning-knife should be applied to "little children," and whereabouts in the "Word" the instructions on this matter are laid down. He understood human nature as thoroughly as he understood gardening; and he knew as much about God as Darwin knew about pigeons. Every process employed in his profession—even to the application of "dung" to the growing and fire to the useless—he applied to the life of man, with a view to the production of fruit and the glory of "our Lordun Savior." And he was full of metaphor. His figures were a little cloudy sometimes—as when he declared in reference to the liming of fruit trees that "there's something be'ind everything"—and his intended analogies appeared at times to be not strictly analogous—as when he endeavored to institute a comparison between the inverted pots of hay on dahlia stakes and the Sunday-school treat. But his total lack of self-consciousness was reassuring, and his undeniable conviction atoned for his obscurity.

It was well he was ready to do the talking, for if I had played any other part than that of audience, I doubt if I could have satisfied him that I was really and truly "within the fold." For he was very exacting. He drew rigid lines—good and bad, piety and sin, faith and unbelief, were as clearly differentiated in his mind as roses and cabbages. Beyond putting a few leading questions, therefore, I preferred to listen. I gleaned a few hints for the better cultivation of my garden, and many for the expansion of "the Kingdom." When the time for my departure arrived he was buried in the subject of pansy cuttings—on which theme he was particularly expository, showing in a truly wonderful manner how the life of the pansy illustrates the "Life to Come."

I was wondering how I should break the thread of his metaphysics and get myself away, when a husky voice called from the house—

"Jim!"

Both "Jim" and I turned round. The former's wife (as I judged) was standing in the doorway of the cottage with a ragged girl of some twelve or fourteen years at her side.

"'Ere's Jinny Bell. Bin sent from the sewin' meetin' to know whether you've mended them there 'ymn books yit."

I took this opportunity of wishing my companion good-day, and as I passed out of the gate my eye caught a notice-board nailed about ten feet up the trunk of a tree. Painted in white on a ground of black, I read:—

"Christans meet Hear. every Sabbath, to remember the Lords Death in the Braking Off Bread."

My visit was to terminate before the next "Braking Off Bread," or I should certainly have joined the company of good "Christans" in that sacrament. If the gardener was a fair work-a-day sample, what a rare treat would a gathering of such provide on the "Sabbath"!

R. NORTH.

JESTS FROM THE COLONEL.

A meeting between Knox and Calvin is like a dialogue between a pestilence and a famine, or a conversation between a block and an axe.

Many people are religious when they have dyspepsia. An absolute specific for that disease would be the hardest blow the Church has received.

It is hard to make a lie stand always. A lie will not fit a fact. It will only fit another lie made for the purpose.

A greenback, unless you have the gold behind it, is no more a dollar than a bill-of-fare is a dinner.

Homes make patriots, and few men will shoulder a musket to defend a boarding-house.

In the name of universal benevolence Christians have hated their fellow men.

Hope is the only universal liar who never loses his reputation for veracity.

Keep your word with your own children as you would with your banker.

Show a sanguine man an egg, and instantly the air is full of feathers.

Custom meets us at the cradle and leaves us only at the tomb.

All progress for centuries has consisted in repealing laws.

The infidels of one age have been the saints of the next.

Nothing is so egoistic as ignorance.

—Col. R. G. Ingersoll.

RELIGIOUS IDEALS.

The ideas of religion among the lower classes of men are intimately associated with—if, indeed, they have not originated from—the condition of man during sleep; and especially from dreams. Sleep and death have always been regarded as nearly related to one another. Thus, in classical mythology, Somnus, the god of sleep, and Mors, the god of death, were both fabled to have been the children of Nox, the goddess of night. So, also, the savage would look on death as a kind of sleep, and would expect and hope—hoping on even against hope—to see his friend awake from the one as he had often done from the other. Hence, probably, one reason for the great importance ascribed to the treatment of the body after death.

But what happens to the spirit during sleep? The body lies lifeless, and the savage, not unnaturally, concludes that the spirit has left it. In this he is confirmed by the phenomena of dreams, and, consequently, to the savage, they have a reality and an importance which we can scarcely appreciate. During sleep the spirit appears to desert the body; and, as in our dreams we seem to visit other countries and distant regions while the body remains, as it were, lifeless, the two phenomena were naturally placed side by side, and regarded as the complements one of the other. Hence the savage considers the events in his dreams when he is awake, and hence he naturally feels that he has a spirit which can quit the body, if not when it likes, at least under certain circumstances.—*Sir John Lubbock.*

THE TANGLE OF THE TRINITY.

One God there is from old Judee,
One God alone, not one in three,
Who was, and is, and aye shall be—
The Bible says so.

Three gods there are from old Judee,
Not one alone, but One in three,
Who were, and are, and aye shall be—
God's book says so.

No man can ever live and see
This awful God from old Judee;
The sight the mortal's death would be—
The Bible says so.

In perfect safety men did see
This awful God from old Judee,
And spoke with him, as you with me—
God's book says so.

Affirm, deny, that A is C,
That black is white, that one is three;
You must be right, whate'er it be—
The Bible says so.

—G. L. Mackenzie.

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.

KINGSTON HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7, Miss K. B. Kough, "A Christian War."

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.—MISS E. M. VANCE, N. S. S. Secretary, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.



LATEST N. S. S. BADGE.—A single Pansy flower, size as shown; artistic and neat design in enamel and silver; permanent in color; has been the means of making many pleasant introductions. Brooch or Stud fastening, 6d. Scarf-pin, 8d. Postage in Great Britain 1d. Small reduction on not less than one dozen. Exceptional value.—From Miss E. M. VANCE, General Secretary, N. S. S., 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

General Secretary, N. S. S., 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

THE LATE

CHARLES BRADLAUGH, M.P.

A Statuette Bust,

Modelled by Burvill in 1881. An excellent likeness of the great Freethinker. Highly approved of by his daughter and intimate colleagues. Size, 6½ ins. by 3½ ins. by 4½ ins.

Plaster (Ivory Finish) 3/-
Extra by post (British Isles): One Bust, 1/-; two, 1/6.

THE PIONEER PRESS 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.; or,
Miss E. M. VANCE, Secretary, N. S. S.

All Profits to be devoted to the N. S. S. Benevolent Fund.

America's Freethought Newspaper.

THE TRUTH SEEKER.

FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT, 1873.

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

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

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

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

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

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

Determinism or Free Will?

By C. COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

A clear and able exposition of the subject in the only adequate light—the light of evolution.

CONTENTS.

I. The Question Stated.—II. "Freedom" and "Will."—III. Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice.—IV. Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism.—V. Professor James on "The Dilemma of Determinism."—VI. The Nature and Implications of Responsibility.—VII. Determinism and Character.—VIII. A Problem in Determinism.—IX. Environment.

PRICE ONE SHILLING NET.
(POSTAGE 2d.)

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

THE SECULAR SOCIETY

(LIMITED)

Company Limited by Guarantee.

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

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

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

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

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

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

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President: G. W. FOOTE.

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

Principles and Objects.

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

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

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

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

Membership.

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

Dated this..... day of..... 190.....

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

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

Immediate Practical Objects.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREETHOUGHT PUBLICATIONS.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY. An argument against Free Will and in favor of Moral Causation. By David Hume. 32 pages, price 2d., postage 1d.

THE MORTALITY OF THE SOUL. By David Hume. With an Introduction by G. W. Foote. 16 pages, price 1d., postage ½d.

AN ESSAY ON SUICIDE. By David Hume. With an Historical and Critical Introduction by G. W. Foote. price 1d., postage ½d.

FROM CHRISTIAN PULPIT TO SECULAR PLATFORM. By J. T. Lloyd. A History of his Mental Development. 60 pages, price 1d., postage 1d.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA. By M. M. Mangasarian (Chicago). 16 pages, price 1d., postage ½d.

THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS. By Lord Bacon. A beautiful and suggestive composition. 86 pages, reduced from 1s. to 3d., postage 1d.

A REFUTATION OF DEISM. By Percy Bysshe Shelley. With an Introduction by G. W. Foote. 32 pages, price 1d., postage ½d.

LIFE, DEATH, AND IMMORTALITY. By Percy Bysshe Shelley. 16 pages, price 1d., postage ½d.

FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST. Essays on Human Evolution. By J. M. Wheeler. A Very Valuable Work. 192 pages, price 1s., postage 2½d.

BIBLE STUDIES AND PHALMIC WORSHIP. By J. M. Wheeler. 136 pages, price 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

UTILITARIANISM. By Jeremy Bentham. An Important Work. 32 pages, price 1d., postage ½d.

THE CHURCH CATECHISM EXAMINED. By Jeremy Bentham. With a Biographical Introduction by J. M. Wheeler. A Drastic Work by the great man who, as Macaulay said, "found Jurisprudence a gibberish and left it a Science." 72 pages, price (reduced from 1s.) 3d., postage 1d.

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION. By Ludwig Feuerbach. "All theology is anthropology." Buchner said that "no one has demonstrated and explained the purely human origin of the idea of God better than Ludwig Feuerbach." 78 pages, price 6d., postage 1d.

THE CODE OF NATURE. By Denis Diderot. Powerful and eloquent. 16 pages, price 1d., postage ½d.

GILES' APOSTOLIC RECORDS. Price 3s., postage 5d.

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF FREETHINKERS—Of All Ages and Nations. By Joseph Mazzini Wheeler. 355 pages, price (reduced from 7s. 6d.) 3s., postage 4d.

A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY CONCERNING HUMAN LIBERTY. By Anthony Collins. With Preface and Annotations by G. W. Foote and Biographical Introduction by J. M. Wheeler. One of the strongest defences of Determinism ever written. Cloth, 1s.; paper, 6d., post 1d.

PAMPHLETS BY C. COHEN.

AN OUTLINE OF EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS. Price 6d., postage 1d.

SOCIALISM, ATHEISM, AND CHRISTIANITY. Price 1d., postage ½d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS. Price 1d., postage ½d.

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

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

FOR FREETHINKERS AND ENQUIRING CHRISTIANS.

BY

G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL.

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

WELL PRINTED ON GOOD PAPER AND WELL BOUND.

In Paper Covers, SIXPENCE—Net.

(POSTAGE 1½d.)

In Cloth Covers, ONE SHILLING—Net.

(POSTAGE 2d.)

ONE OF THE MOST USEFUL BOOKS EVER PUBLISHED.

INVALUABLE TO FREETHINKERS ANSWERING CHRISTIANS.

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

PIONEER PAMPHLETS.

Now being issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

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

FORTY PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 13 copies, 3d.; 26 copies 4d. (parcel post)

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

(A Reply to Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace.)

THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: Single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 13 copies, 2½d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

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

THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: Single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 13 copies, 2½d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post)

IN PREPARATION.

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

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

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

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