

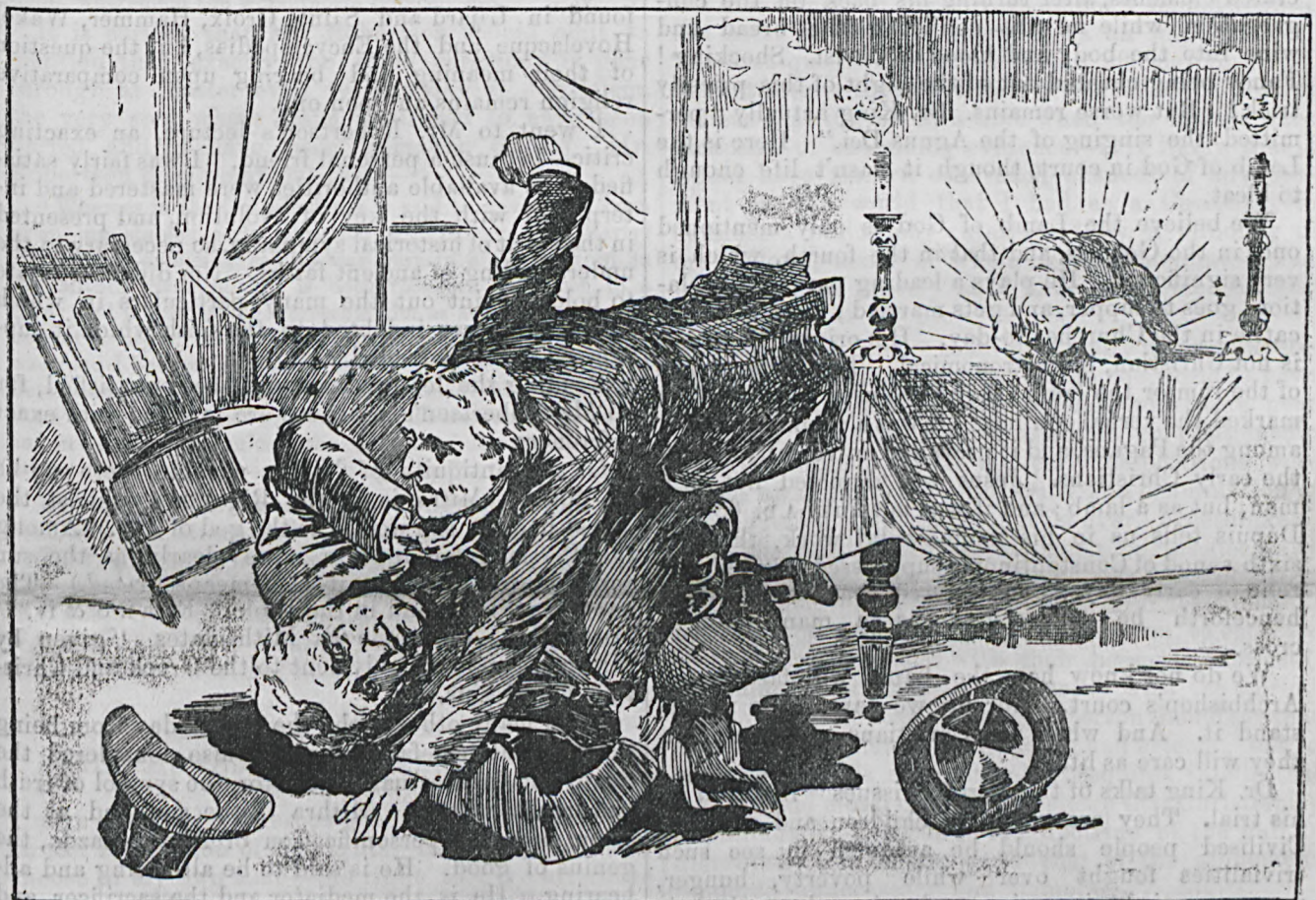
# The Freethinker

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ARCHBISHOP BENSON VERSUS BISHOP KING.  
Stakes—THE LAMB AND CANDLES.

## THE EPISCOPAL SCUFFLE.

Our cartoon represents a fight between Archbishop Benson and Bishop King, of whom our artist has made very good portraits. The altar candles and the Agnus Dei, or Lamb of God, are watching the mill. They are the objects of the contest, and they seem to enjoy the sport.

The Bishop of Lincoln is being tried before the Archbishop of Canterbury and his episcopal colleagues for some horrid crimes. Dr. King is said to be a very estimable gentleman, but he is guilty of ritual enormities which throw into the shade the performances of Jack the Ripper. Never since the days of James II. has the archiepiscopal court sat to try such a desperate offender.

The charges against Dr. King are many, and we will take them one by one, so that our readers may understand the nature of this awful struggle, which is convulsing the Church and putting about a hundred thousand pounds into the lawyers' pockets.

First, he is charged with having "used lighted candles on the communion table, such candles not being required for the purpose of giving light." This is called Ritualism, Popery, and so forth, by the Evan-

gelicals. But it appears from Wheatly that *two lights* upon the altar were enjoined by Edward VI., and ratified by Parliament under Elizabeth. They fell into disuse, apparently, during the Puritan times, being laid on the altar only when necessary to give light, and not as representing "the light which Christ's gospel brought into the world." Candles may be burnt, according to the Evangelicals, but only when required. To burn them in daylight is rank Popery. Bishop King, however, claims to burn them at pleasure. Such is the awful question at issue. The Church is in arms about it; yet, in our opinion, grocers and tallow-chandlers are the only persons for whom it can have any rational interest.

Why do Christians burn candles at all in their churches, even in broad daylight? The answer is simple. They borrowed the practice, ever so many centuries ago, from the East, where religious rites were performed in dark places, or after sunset. There is generally a material meaning in such things when you get to the bottom.

Bishop King's next crime is mixing water with the sacramental wine. In Edward the Sixth's first Liturgy, the minister was directed, on putting the wine into the chalice, to "put thereto a little pure

and clean water." But this was thrown out when the Liturgy was revised. Mixing water with the wine is said to have been a Jewish custom. St. Cyprian said it typified the blood and water which flowed from the Saviour's side on the Cross. For our part, we suspect that two different superstitions became amalgamated—the water of baptism and the blood of the covenant. Anyhow, the Evangelicals object to Dr. King's diluting the communion wine. They prefer the Blood of Christ neat, and communion port will not stand water.

Such a quarrel could not arise in the Catholic Church. The laymen of that body are allowed to eat God, but not to drink him. The clergy keep the drinking to themselves.

Dr. King is further accused of elevating the consecrated elements, after turning his back on the congregation while he was conjuring the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Shocking! Fancy being cheated out of the sight of this priestly trick! But worse remains. Dr. King actually "permitted the singing of the Agnus Dei." Here is the Lamb of God in court, though it hasn't life enough to bleat.

We believe the Lamb of God is only mentioned once in the Gospels, and that in the fourth, which is very significant. He plays a leading part in Revelation, goes to supper, and gets married; just like God's cattle in the Churches to-day. His origin, however, is not Christian, but astronomical. The zodiacal sign of the ram or the lamb (they were used indifferently) marked the vernal equinox. It was a common symbol among the Pagans, and it prevailed universally among the early Christians. Jesus was depicted not as a man, but as a lamb; and it was not until A.D. 680, as Dupuis tells us in his monumental work, that the sixth synod of Constantinople suppressed this tell-tale relic of early days, and ordered that Jesus should henceforth be represented as a man upon a cross.

We do not know how the Lamb will fare in the Archbishop's court. Nor do we care. We understand it. And when the Christians understand it, they will care as little.

Dr. King talks of the "grave issues" involved in his trial. They are worthy of children and savages. Civilised people should be ashamed to see such trivialities fought over while poverty, hunger, ignorance, injustice, vice, and crime demand their attention. Here are the clergy fighting over candles and other trumpery, in face of the great problems of civilisation. Could anything show more conclusively that they belong to the barbarous and childish past?

The Archbishop opened his court with prayer, but Dr. King says the Lord has arranged the trial as "a special opportunity for suffering." Well, the clergy must be lapped in epicurean luxury, if such a crumpled rose-leaf is sent to disturb their repose.

In conclusion we would point out that Dr. King is prosecuted under the Public Worship Regulation Act, which was passed by a Jew; and his accusers are four laymen—Mr. Read, an auctioneer; Mr. Brown, a solicitor; Mr. Wilson, a foreman; and Mr. Marshall, a gardener. What a splendid illustration of the truth that the Church of England is a creation of law, and as much a political institution as any other part of the public service. When the time arrives, and it is rapidly approaching, the people who make the laws will know how to deal with the Church. They will abolish it outright, and devote its revenues to the physical, mental, and moral improvement of the masses; and we are very much mistaken if more good will not be achieved in this way in a single generation than the Church has done in three hundred years.

G. W. FOOTE.

## MITHRAISM.\*

"A knowledge of the ideas embodied in the Mithraic system is as essential to the due understanding of Christianity, as it is valuable for throwing light on the moral and religious notions anciently prevalent among Asiatic people generally."—C. S. Wake's *Evolution of Morality*, vol. ii., p. 348.

My first thought on observing that Mr. John M. Robertson was set down for a lecture on Mithraism, in a course on "The Faiths of the World," at South Place Chapel, was "He is a bold fellow." For the subject is as obscure as it is important. Here was a faith as widely extended as the Roman Empire, and descended from hoary antiquity, yet which remains almost unknown, and concerning which scholars have offered the most varied interpretations.

The chief facts concerning Mithraism may be found in Lejard and Sainte Croix, Hammer, Wake, Hovelacque and the Encyclopedias, but the question of their meaning and bearing upon comparative religion remains an open one.

I went to Mr. Robertson's lecture, an exacting critic—because a personal friend. I was fairly satisfied—the available authorities were mastered and interpreted with the key of evolution, and presented in the spirit of historical sympathy, so necessary to the understanding of ancient faiths. Nor did he hesitate to boldly point out the many particulars in which Christianity was indebted to the faith which it suppressed and superseded.

Reading the lecture I am still better satisfied, for all Mr. Robertson's positions are fortified with exact references.

Of the antiquity of Mithra worship there can be no doubt. Mitra is in the Rig-Veda (almost the oldest book in the world) as the god of day. Among the Persians he appears more clearly as the sun (mhr means *sun*, but it also means *friend*.) The name may be found in the Bible. Ezra i. 8 & iv. 7. Mithredath, the same as Mithridates, "given by Mithras," and is equivalent to the Greek and Christian Theodosius.

As in many other faiths the god of day from being the physical benefactor, became also considered the moral and intellectual benefactor, the symbol of truth and righteousness. Mithra is the son, and at the same time the personification of Ahura-Mazda, the genius of good. He is said to be all-seeing and all-hearing. He is the mediator and the sacrificer, and he becomes the judge of the dead.

"Mithra, like Christ the Incarnate Son of God, is not only the Creator and Sustainer (subordinate, however, to Ormuzd) of the world; but he is the Mediator, the Savior of fallen man, the pattern for his guidance and his friend in need and distress. But, further, Mithra does not merely intercede for man, he offers the atoning sacrifice, the bull, which, in one aspect, is typical of himself, as, in the teachings of Christ's disciples, the lamb is symbolical of the founder of Christianity. Even the mysteries of the Persian cult were not unparalleled in the Christian Church"†

On the monuments Mithras is usually represented as a beautiful youth, kneeling on a bull, into whose neck he plunges a short sword, while a dog, a lion, and a serpent lick the blood, and beneath is a scorpion. There can be little doubt that this bore a zodiacal interpretation. Mr. Robertson gives a four-fold meaning to the bull, yet he omits the *moral* one which, in my opinion, was the accepted one when Mithraism spread through the Roman Empire. In my view the bull represents *lust*, the animal nature, which the ideal youth sacrifices and tramples over.‡

Mithraism was essentially a moral system of purification. The initiates went through a series of grades, each representing a higher stage. It was a kind of

\* *Time*, April, 1889. London, Swan, Sonnenschein & Co.

† *Evolution of Morality* vol. ii., p. 361.

‡ Those who question this interpretation should note the position of the scorpion in the Mithraic monuments.

freemasonry, a chief feature being the partaking of communion, bread and a cup of water.\* Justin Martyr, the early Christian Father, ascribes this anticipation of Christian Communion to the work of demons.

This was not the only particular in which Mithraism resembled Christianity. Mr. Robertson points out that Sunday was the Lord's day long before the Christian era; that Christmas also is a solar festival of unknown antiquity, which formed a part of the worship of Mithras, and that he was also specially worshipped at the vernal equinox, when the sun returns to his summer strength.

"The worshippers, Firmicus tells us, lay a stone image by night on a bier and liturgically mourn for it; this image representing the dead god. This symbolical corpse is then placed in the tomb, and after a time is withdrawn from the tomb, whereupon the worshippers rejoice," etc.

It is curious that Mr. Robertson should omit to mention that exactly the same ceremony is gone through at Easter even to this day at Jerusalem, the very spot where Jesus is alleged to have been buried and to have risen from the dead.† Mr. Robertson does point out that:—

"Whereas in the Gospels Jesus is said to have been born in an inn stable; early Christian writers, as Justin Martyr and Origen explicitly say he was born in a cave. Now, in the Mithra myth Mithra is both rockborn and born in a cave; and a later saying represents him as also supernaturally born of a virgin. And it is remarkable that, whereas a cave was (and I believe is) shown as the birth-place of Jesus at Bethlehem, St. Jerome actually complained that in his day the Pagans celebrated the worship of Thammuz, (= Adonis), and presumably, therefore, the festival of the birth of the same—Christmas Day—at that very cave."

Upon the many particulars confirming the view that the Christian God was largely modelled upon the old sun god I have not space to dwell. If such circumstances as those already indicated do not leave the gospel stories under suspicion of being entirely legendary, I must confess myself incompetent to determine the worth of historical evidence.

J. M. WHEELER.

### THE HONESTY OF FREETHOUGHT.

I HAVE received numerous letters congratulating me on the restoration of my rights—the right to do as I choose in my own time—the right to give utterance to my opinions on the most vital of all subjects. One of these epistles came from a young man who says that he was once an "Agnostic," but now has returned "to the dear old fold"—of Christianity. Why he has returned, whether he has seen the error of his way, or merely accepted Agnosticism without sufficiently understanding its meaning, or the intellectual foundation upon which it rests, there is no evidence to show, and he does not deign to explain; but he vouchsafes to me in lieu of such explanation the important information that he is in "favor of the fullest liberty for all, because of his Christianity." "One of the results of carrying out Christ's teachings," he says, "would be that liberty which we all so much love." But how any Christian can be expected to favor intellectual freedom in face of the alleged declaration of Jesus, "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" is one of those fine examples of religious inconsistency, of which only men with more humanity than faith can be guilty.

My backsliding Agnostic friend proceeds to ask me several interesting questions. In the first place he inquires whether in my letter to you where I said

\* Mr. Lillie, in his *Buddhism in Christendom*, argues that water was the early Christian communion, but after all bread and wine are the natural offerings to the sun.

† Almost identical festivals were held at the worship of Osiris in Egypt and of Adonis in Syria and Greece.

that I should "do my best to eradicate superstition," I meant Christianity. Secondly, he asks whether I "truly, honestly, sincerely, and fully believe that Christianity is a superstition;" and as though at least to demonstrate that when he was an Agnostic he did not believe Christianity to be false, he continues: "Do you, a level-headed man"—I hope this does not mean flat-headed!—"with powers of discernment and acuteness, as well as intellect and perception (as though one could have intellect without perception), fully believe that the system of philosophy that has produced a Bright, a Gladstone, a Martineau, that produced Milton, Shakespeare, Longfellow, Beecher, Theodore Parker, etc., and many equally grand, is a superstition? Do you, I say, truly believe that? Is it your conviction?" In the first place let me say that if I were not convinced of the earnestness of my correspondent I should regard the latter part of the question as an impertinence. The first question I answer in the affirmative. If I did not believe that Christianity was false, if I did not believe that it grew at a time when the masses were incapable of examining evidence—is it likely that I would have thrown over such chances of advancement in the world that I had as a Christian, to embrace a philosophy entertained by a minority of my fellows, many of whom were calumniated and persecuted as fiercely as I have been for the last twelve years of my life.

If I did not believe that Christianity was a superstition, I should have been the last in the world to have relinquished it, since all the friends who were near and dear to me by ties of affection or relationship were Christians, and all my early associations were bound up in the creed—the study and examination of which has led me to abandon it for ever. Freethinkers, of all the men in the world, must be intellectually honest. They have everything to lose by becoming Freethinkers—except truth—and how few, indeed, have the courage, I might say the heroism, to embrace truth when it conflicts with their personal interests, or against their chances of success with the world! It is conceivable that a dishonest person should say that he was a Christian to gain favors and esteem; but to say that one is a Freethinker requires intellectual honesty and moral courage. I believe that Christianity is a superstition because the doctrine of the Fall is disproved by science—and that of the atonement rendered unnecessary and immoral.

The Fall is the foundation stone of the Christian faith, it is the prologue to a mythical drama, of which the atonement is the epilogue. Take away the Fall and the *raison d'être* of the Christian faith is gone for ever. I have no patience to argue whether Christianity produces a Bright or a Gladstone. Many as palpable a superstition has counted amongst its believers very illustrious men.

But I deny that either Shakespeare or Theodore Parker can be regarded in the light of Christians, and I undertake to quote heretical sentences from both of these writers that would certainly shock any ordinary Christian congregation. And if great names are to be taken as the evidence of the truth of any doctrine—the truth of every absurd theory that ever engaged human attention or was swallowed by the open mouth of credulity might be easily demonstrated. Mr. Gladstone, early in his political career is said to have defended the institution of slavery. Would that prove slavery just or moral?

Mr. Bright was always against warfare, but does that show that Christianity taught peace? If so, what did Jesus mean when he said, "But those my enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me?" Was that the doctrine of perpetual peace? The truth is, modern civilization made Mr. Bright what he was, and made Mr. Gladstone the Grand Old Man he has developed into—not Christianity.

Christianity to-day is but a name. It has no distinct meaning. I have known men, clergymen of the Church of England, who acknowledging that the story of the fall is a myth, that the Bible miracles are incredible, that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, and that Darwin was a better authority on biology than any of the Biblical writers, nevertheless regarded themselves as good Christians, and refused to relinquish a name that age and associations had rendered respectable.

Freethinkers cannot act thus dishonestly. They prefer to define themselves in terms that can be understood, and they would rather bear the obloquy and condemnation of their fellows than subscribe to principles in which they have no belief, and which in their judgment are neither calculated to promote the intellectual or moral advancement of mankind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## ACID DROPS.

While Stanley is traversing Africa, aided by "the resources of civilisation," Mohammedanism is steadily winning its way by preaching and persuasion. El Senoussi, the famous Sheikh, has had a career something like that of the Great Prophet, and his missionaries have spread the reformed Islam until he has become a power to be reckoned with. Christianity seems to have no future in the Dark Continent. South Africa will be Christian, for it is colonised from Europe; but the native populations of the rest of Africa prefer the Crescent to the Cross.

On the whole they are right. Mohammedanism simply abolishes drunkenness and prostitution, the two great evils of Christendom; and although it permits polygamy, like the Bible, the cultured Mohammedans look down upon it and explain it away. There does not appear to be very much theological disputation in Islam, and the Africans will thus be spared the perpetual quarreling which has disgraced Christianity.

A full-blooded Maori rejoicing in the name of Nganah, of Te-Ante-Pah, has been giving his opinion (not a complimentary one) of missionaries as a class. He thus expresses himself: "Missionary very good man, yes, very good man—for himself. He hold one hand up to the sky; you look up. Then he collar your land, your crop, your horse, cow, and pig with the other. Oh, missionary very good man."

Nganah is not without facts bearing out his opinion of the missionaries. Dr. Morison, the historian of the London Missionary Society, tells us how they "purchased thirteen thousand acres for forty-eight axes." Mr. Terry, in his work on New Zealand (p. 73), says: "In many cases the natives were quite unconscious of what they had conveyed by these ready-made deeds; tracts of land larger than counties in England were sold or conveyed for comparatively a trifle on half a sheet of note paper."

Mr. Bryne says:—"These purchases were made at first for a little more than a nominal consideration; a few beads, a musket, some blankets and a little powder and ball, were sufficient to purchase tracts which were measured in the language of the missionaries by miles." The Rev. Henry Williams, chairman of the Church Mission of New Zealand, for instance, claimed eleven thousand and subsequently twenty-two thousand acres. Of course he became a bishop in the colony.

The Church of England missionaries, says a writer in 1860, "claimed two hundred and sixteen thousand acres of land," and the arts by which the reverend disciples of Jesus had appropriated them are sufficiently revealed by the fact that the judicial award compelled them to resign one hundred and fifty thousand acres. The missionaries have always held that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and that he has bestowed it upon his saints.

Our friend, the Rev. W. Sharman, of Preston, has had to trounce a scurrilous fellow called Jamieson, who issued a monstrosly silly and libellous placard in order to get an audience to hear him lecture. Robert Jamieson sang small in court, and Mr. Sharman magnanimously withdrew the charge in view of the apology.

A comical squabble took place in an East End chapel last Sunday. It appears that there has been a dispute for some time between the Rev. W. H. Massey, the pastor of the Congregational Hall, Midland Street, Ratcliff Highway, and the Congregational Union who have appointed the Rev. Mr. Mackay to conduct the service. On the opening of the door, both ministers rushed in and with their adherents raced for the platform.

Mr. Mackay took up his position at the preacher's desk, and immediately gave out a hymn. Mr. Massey did the same, and for an hour both continued giving out hymns, praying and preaching. When Mr. Mackay announced a hymn, Mr. Massey did the same; when Mr. Mackay prayed, so did Mr. Massey; when Mr. Mackay proceeded to expound a portion of Scripture, Mr. Massey started a short sermon. While this was going on, one of Mr. Massey's sons three times seized hold of Mr. Mackay and endeavoured to remove him from the place he considered his father should occupy. Mr. Mackay resisted by holding on to the railing in the front of the platform. In the body of the hall several fights also took place between Mr. Massey's friends and those who side with the Congregational Union.

In the evening the proceedings were of the same disorderly character, and charges for assault were brought before the magistrate, who refused to adjudicate in the matter. So unless the law steps in the great question of who is to preach the gospel of peace must be settled by an appeal to the god of battles.

Albert Edward went to Leicester for the races. The church bells rang to greet him, and he was welcomed by the mayor, who is a church deacon. Who dares to say, after this, that religion is not the most holy and elevating influence?

A story is told of a well-known preacher, who went to a barber and said: "Now, I want you to cut my hair as short as you would like a sermon." On rising from his chair and ruefully surveying his bald and shining head, he was constrained to observe that the barber wanted no sermon at all.

Here is a story from Benares.—At Mirzapore the native congregation at one time was positively reduced to a single individual, a lad of 15. In course of time the news spread that "the congregation of Mirzapore is growing." The lad of 15 had become a youth of 18! Next, Christian India was thrilled by the report that "the congregation at Mirzapore had doubled." The young man of 19 had taken to him a wife!

Lent is a period of mortification, and the marriage fees are temporarily raised at St. Savior's, Pimlico. The ordinary fee for splicing is 12s. 6d., but 25s. is exacted during Lent. It is better to marry than to burn, said the elegant St. Paul, but, according to the parson of St. Savior's, there are seasons when burning is better than marriage.

"Well, well!" said Mr. Jarphly. "Well, what?" asked his wife. "I am just reading of the missionaries' attempt to introduce the Bible in China, my dear," replied Mr. Jarphly. "What is strange about that?" inquired Mrs. Jarphly. "Oh! nothing particular, only I've seen it in calf, and in Russia leather, and in cloth, and I thought I would like to see it in China," and he innocently scratched his nose.

Canon Liddon preached at St. Paul's on Sunday afternoon to a big congregation. His theme was the sufferings of Christ, and he threw as much light upon it as he had, which was none at all. He wound up by saying that we must accept the mystery of sin in a spirit of faith as "a problem beyond the reach of our finite understandings."

Very likely it is beyond the reach of Christian understandings, but the Evolutionist sees no more mystery in evil than in good. The mystery, in short, is one of the believer's own making. He says twice two are five, and finding that they make four in practice, he calls it a mystery.

Such a courtier as Canon Liddon could not conclude without a loyal reference to the death of the Duchess of Cambridge, an old lady who lived to the great age of ninety-two, and was supported handsomely by the British taxpayer. Many women died in the same week, some of whom were, to say the least of it, quite as honorable as any royal duchess, while others had doubtless labored to support their children. Canon Liddon had no word for these. All his sympathy was reserved for the royal-blooded old lady, who lived in clover, and died after an uncommonly long quartering on the public purse.

The Scarborough Wesleyans have had a field-day. Their re-opening service included a sermon by the Rev. E. Lloyd Jones, of Darlington. This gentleman thinks the Bible is like secular literature in having writers of the first, second, third, and contemptible orders. Mr. Jones should sit on the next Revision Committee and clear out the contemptible portions of Scripture. It will make a big hole in the Blessed Book.

Mr. Jones delivered himself also on the subject of "infidelity," which he regards as declining. The Wesleyans applauded his remarks, but both preacher and congregation are mistaken. Freethought is spreading rapidly among the people, although Freethought organisation is such uphill work. Our literature is far more extensively circulated than it was twenty years ago, and Freethought articles now find their way into the most "respectable" magazines.

We are asked a question by the *Signal*, edited by the Rev. G. Coates. Our Christian contemporary wants to know who is the Mother Nature to whom Ingersoll prays. Well, we guess she is a metaphor, like Father Time. Whoever she is, Ingersoll does not pray to her. "Pagan Bob's" prayers do not go beyond wishing, and that is a weakness incident to humanity. However, it is a more amiable weakness than consigning your opponents to hell.

"If any friend imagines that the growth of error in the Nonconformist churches has come to a pause he is sadly mistaken," laments Mr. Spurgeon. He comes back from Mentone and finds that hell is cooling fast, while the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb as a sin-eradicator is becoming more subject to suspicion. No matter; the pure and undiluted Gospel can still be heard—at any rate, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The Rev. Dr. Reynolds, in his new book on John the Baptist, asks how do unbelievers account for the fact that no miracles are ascribed to that person in the Gospels. Very simply. The Gospels were not written by John the Baptist's followers. He had followers, who are mentioned in Acts xix., 2 as not having "so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." These "Christians of St. John," or Soubbras, as they are called, still exist in Asia Minor, and they ascribe mightier miracles to John the Baptist than to Jesus Christ. By the way, Dr. Reynolds might explain why his God had to go and be dipped by his cousin, a sinful man.

Dr. Buckley, the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, has been taking a tour through Spain and has come to the conclusion that Roman Catholic Christianity exerts no influence for good upon the morality of the people. This is a pregnant admission. The Mother Church, which alone represents Christianity among the majority, has no moralising influence; rather the reverse, for the priests, he says, are notoriously profligate. If he would look with unprejudiced eyes he might see the same phenomena in Protestant countries. Certainly, the Protestant dogmas of salvation from sin through the blood of the Lamb, justification by faith, etc., have no more tendency to produce moral conduct than the dogmas of Catholicism. But Protestantism has the leaven of private judgment which promotes Freethought, and with it civilisation and good conduct.

The Rev. Isaac F. Rowe, president of the Anglo-Indian Evangelisation Society at Bombay, is convinced with one year's stay in Assam that coolies there are far better off than the poor in England, and that the former have no grounds of complaint. Christian missionaries, comments the *Calcutta National Guardian*, are out of date in India, and the sooner they pack off with their institutions and their ideas, and sometimes their very honest opinions, the better for the country, and, paradoxical though the remark be, for their religion too.

In a dime museum in Chicago there is a snakeskin pasted upon a framed parchment, attached to which are large red scales, accompanied by hieroglyphics which only the scholars are able to decipher, and above all this the startling inscription: "Skin of the serpent that tempted Eve in the garden of paradise. It was killed by Adam the following day after the treason. Adam hit it with a club, of which traces are still left. This skin was part of the inheritance of Adam, and was preserved in his family in Asia. The genuineness is attested by the doctors of divinity whose seals are attached."

The Rev. Amos Sell, a married man, in charge of the Lutheran Church at Rowesburg, U.S.A., has been arrested, to be confronted with a girl and her baby, of which she alleges him to be the father.

Col. Ingersoll, one of a committee to raise money for the benefit of the Confederate Soldiers' Home at Austin, Texas, has himself subscribed a large cheque. A Christian named G. D. Mackay sent the following letter to the committee: "I would feel my sympathies drawn to an object so worthy as this, but the promoters must be blind to the plainest sign of the times when from the Christian people of New York they expect contributions to this cause—and they will get little help from any other—while heading their enterprise with the greatest enemy of Jesus Christ this country has ever seen, namely, Col. Robert G. Ingersoll. Nothing will be blessed by his touch, and it is regretted that the work is to be even colored by his assistance, far more, begun and directed. Very respectfully." Mr. G. D. Mackay is a nice specimen of the Christian bigot. He is, however, probably not far wrong in his estimate of his fellow-Christians. They will not join in any good work unless themselves can "boss the show."

Out at Ballarat, they have a Garibaldi Sunday School. Garibaldi was an Atheist and wrote "Man made God in his own image." But the Christians are trying to appropriate him. Some day we shall have Robert Owen Sunday Schools and Ingersoll Bible Classes.

The secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association, a body of out-of-work clericals with a sprinkling of shop-keepers and old women, announces that 680 clergymen and ministers in and around London have signed a protest against the Sunday opening of the People's Palace. We are only surprised that he does not announce that the clergy and ministers are unanimous in protesting against any opposition to their trade privileges. No doubt a good petition could be got up from the candle-makers protesting against any introduction of the electric light.

A sketchy article on "Old Scotch Ways" in the *Daily News*, which we expect comes from the pen of Mr. Andrew Lang, says "the Kirk Sessions Register is the history of a vigorous attempt to make religion act as a moral police force." The result seems to have been a reign of Puritan terror inefficacious for any real good. In 1559 Knox commanded priests under pain of death to desist from their blasphemous mass. Mr. Lang says: "This was a strong measure for a truly liberal theologian like Knox, whom we also find denouncing a witch. 'Knox dealt against her from the pulpit, "sche being set upe at a pillar befr him," and she was burned, "as per usual."' Mr. Lang asks, "Why did the reformed religion burn so many more witches than the unreformed?" The answer, which he does not give, is that it paid more attention to the Bible with its injunction "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Sprenger computes that during the Christian epoch over nine millions of persons, mostly poor women, were put to death in accordance with this divine command.

Talmage has been trying his hand at his old task of smoothing over some rugged places in the Bible. He trots out the usual stale defences of the old book, avoiding, of course, the really difficult places. On Genesis, he says: "In the beginning—there you can roll in ten million years if you want to," as though it was legitimate to separate these first words from all that follow. Then we have the old yarn of a day being with God as a thousand years, when the day of Genesis is defined as evening and morning.

The legend of Noah and the Deluge, Talmage says, is "the story of an eye-witness." He says the ark was "a magnificent ship, nearly as large as the Great Eastern." All the more curious it had but one single window. If Noah collected all the animals, we think he must also have been a nose witness.

"Another hard thing to understand," he continued, "was the story that the sun and moon stood still to allow Joshua to complete his victory. Infidel scientists declare this an impossibility. But Dr. Talmage said that if God had strength and wisdom to make the clock of the universe, the great machinery of the worlds, had he not strength enough and wisdom enough to start it and stop it, and start it again and stop it again?" This is the old Catholic argument. Once swallow creation, and how can you stick at transubstantiation?

Then, said the Jabernacle orator, "There is the Bible statement that a whale swallowed Jonah and ejected him upon the dry land in three days. There is a cavity in the mouth of the common whale large enough for a man to live in. Besides that, the Bible says nothing about a whale. It says, 'The Lord prepared a great fish,' and there are scientists who tell us that there were sea monsters in those days that make the modern whale seem very insignificant. I suppose this sea monster that took care of Jonah may have been one that could have easily taken down a prophet, and he could have lived there three days if he had kept in motion so as to keep the gastric juices from taking hold of him and destroying him, and at the end of three days the monster would naturally be sick enough to regurgitate Jonah." So concluded Talmage. "All the strange things in the Bible can be explained if you wish to have them explained." Not a doubt of it.

Dr. Parker is an "original" man. He says it does not matter if there is only one convert to Christianity in India. The missionaries must go on, and leave the result to the Lord. Presently the argument will be raised that missions are more necessary in proportion to their inefficiency, and that the best test of success is the absence of converts.

Poor Mr. Caine has raised a hornet's nest. Telling the truth about religion is a risky thing. The sects are making a dead set at him, and he may reckon on being relegated to the shade until he has learnt to pour the oil of flattery on every pious enterprise. Churches and chapels can't afford to have the missionary business exposed.

Sir Monier Williams has published his Duff Lectures on Buddhism, in a big and pretentious volume. In an appendix he challenges the frequent statement that there are more adherents of Buddhism than of any other religion. We are no admirers of the "majority" argument, but as the question often arises in controversy with Christians, it is worth going into a little.

The difference of calculation in the number of Buddhists (and the computation Sir Monier Williams differs from that of Mr. T. W. Rhys Davids by some hundreds of millions) arises from the refusal of the former to include the Chinese. In China three religions are recognised by the State, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and the Chinese usually are as tolerant as their State and profess themselves indifferently as of either religion. If asked, Are you a Confucian? the answer will be Yes; and if Are you a Buddhist? the answer will equally be in the affirmative. Of course it is misleading to count the Chinese two or three times over, and it is not easy to determine exactly how many worship at the Buddhist Temples, and not at the Taoist, and *vice versa*, since most of them will go to the

one for the one purpose, and also to the other for another purpose. Certainly the great mass of the Chinese are Buddhists, those who ought not to be reckoned are chiefly the educated classes who are Confucians pure and simple, but even these recognise Buddhism as one of the State religions. Sir Monier Williams ought to remember that in the statistics of Christianity the whole inhabitants of Christian countries are classed as Christians, though it may be but a minority of them, regularly attend any form of Christian worship.

Mr. Seale Hayne, M.P., wishes to know whether the Bishop of Marlborough Suffragan to the Bishop of London, and holding preferment to the value of £1,400 per annum in the diocese of London, also draws £1,000 per annum as Canon of Exeter Cathedral, and refuses to give up the latter preferment, notwithstanding an engagement to that effect. No doubt, if the clericals could succeed in repealing the Pluralities Act, we should hear of plenty of nice little arrangements similar to that of the Bishop of Marlborough.

The Bishop of Marlborough does not intend to resign his canonry at Exeter, worth £1,000 a year. He intends to stick to both posts, and show how to make the best—for himself—of both worlds. "Blessed be ye poor" is a worn-out text.

The *Catholic Times* says that in the Catholic Church "rich and poor bow at the same altar." Yes, but the rich have all the front seats.

The Zetetic Society, that is, we believe, Mr. John Hampden, publishes several pamphlets with a view of showing the earth is not a sphere. The last one sent to us has a title as long as your arm, beginning the "Science of Facts." Mr. Hampden, however, asks some pertinent questions. Witness the following:—

I. In what part of the Bible is the suggestion made of the earth being a globe, or in motion, or having any sort of connexion with the celestial system?

II. Why are the words "earth" and "world" used over 600 times without any reference to, or suggestion made of, such a curious configuration? Did the Almighty himself, or did any of the sacred historians, know of this peculiar configuration and of the other conditions inseparable from it?

III. If so, were they seeking to mislead or were they, from the Creator downwards, ignorant of such a phenomenon?

Mr. Hampden's idea that we should go to the old Jew-books for instruction in astronomy is only a shade more ridiculous than that of the parson who wishes us to take it as a guide for the conduct of life.

There are more Catholic bishops in the United States to-day than there were priests one hundred years ago, and they are looking forward to the time when they will be supreme in the State.

Religious toleration is rapidly prevailing in Japan. Even prisoners in gao's are not to have Buddhism preached to them any longer unless they desire it. Buddhist morality, however, would do them no harm. It does not, like Christian ethics, sacrifice everything to theology.

Shakespeare was right. The Devil *can* cite Scripture for his own purpose. He, or one of his imps, was prosecuted the other day for profane swearing. The magistrate fined him ten shillings and costs, and he paid up with the remark, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

It is quite refreshing to read the Rev. H. M. Ward's letter in the *London Echo*. He points out that a man may be ever so good, but cannot be a Christian unless he is christened. The rite of baptism was prescribed by Jesus, and practised by his apostles; and it is mere flabbiness to call men Christians who have not entered the fold by the only legitimate gate. There are some sentimental persons who actually declare that Mr. Bradlaugh is a Christian without knowing it.

A simple street arab had been captured and brought into Sunday school. He was of frank and open spirit, and had all the courage of his ignorance. "What do you know about God?" asked the teacher. "Bout God? Nawthen." "But you know the Savior died to save sinners, don't you?" "Naw—Never knowed he was sick."

## MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, April 14, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., at 7, "Come to Jesus."

Thursday, April 18, St. Pancras Reform Club, Prince of Wales Road, N.W., at 8.30, "The Shadow of the Sword."

April 21, Hall of Science; 28, Camberwell.

May 5, Manchester; 12, Milton Hall; 19, Milton Hall; 26, Camberwell.

June 8, N.S.S. Conference; 23, Hall of Science, London; 30, Hall of Science, London.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

R. H. DAVIES.—We are no authority on phrenology, and we don't know anybody who is. Darwin had a bump of veneration "large enough for ten priests," yet he became a pronounced sceptic. Idolatry is a stage of religious worship which cannot be explained in a few sentences. Religion is certainly natural, if by that you mean inevitable in man's salad days. In the same sense slavery and war are natural.

A. P. A. S. (Newcastle).—Such letters to the local press are highly serviceable to the cause. Glad to hear you find the new edition of *Infidel Death-Beds* so useful.

C. E. FORD.—Papers and cuttings always welcome.

DOLPH.—The extracts are rather old-fashioned. Such things are not of much use unless they are especially striking or curious. Thanks all the same.

ESCAPED FROM HELL.—Glad to hear from you as one of our converts. The flight into Egypt was illustrated in one of our early numbers.

C. K. LAPORTE.—We are not registered for transmission abroad, as nothing is gained by it.

H. RICHARDSON, 12 Rutland Street, South Kennington, S.W., will distribute any *Freethought* literature that may be sent him.

W. S. CHARLESWORTH.—We can quite believe that the more the minister explains Swedenborgism the less you understand it. You had better apply to Mr. Forder direct as to the volumes you wish to borrow. Our quotation was perfectly accurate.

FREETHINKER.—The safe rule is to believe nothing you see in Christian papers about either the death or the life of any leading *Freethinker*. The story in the *Church Evangelist* is given on the authority of Dr. Cheever, who was not in a position to know the facts. It is pious tittle-tattle from beginning to end.

C. D.—Glad to hear better news of Liverpool. See "Sugar Plums." Mr. Foote will pay you a visit during his next organising tour, but it will not do to meet in a room on licensed premises.

G. E. D.—We gave our opinion of *Robert Elsmere* long ago. It is poor stuff for *Freethinkers*, but it may help the orthodox out of their faith. Milk for babes—you know the rest.

C. GRAHAM.—We shall have to act on our own judgment. One reader says if we drop the illustrations our circulation will go up, and another says it will go down. Both are quite positive, and we suspect they prophesy from their wishes, not from their information.

J. MCKELVIE.—Lending the *Freethinker* among your Christian friends is an excellent plan. It advertises the paper and brings fresh subscribers.

G. RAWSON.—Jokes received with thanks. We don't understand your question.

H. P.—NUTT'S, in the Strand, is a good place to obtain French works. Mr. Forder might supply you if you send him a list of the volumes you require.

W. H. MORRISH.—Always pleased to hear from you. But we don't attach so much importance to these Sunday societies as some people. They draw off a lot of strength from our party, which furnishes a large proportion of their working members, and they too often act as a wet blanket on all fundamental questions. By the way, the St. James's Hall, at Bristol, has been of very little use to the *Freethought* party.

PROGRESS.—Opinions differ widely as to the illustrations. We are making experiments, for after all eating is the proof of the pudding. Glad to hear you found, on perusal, that your prejudice against the *Freethinker* was unfounded.

JOSEPH GATES.—The *Radical Leader* is dead. We do not know an Indian paper called *Reason*. Do you mean the *Thinker*?

A. G. WADE.—Of course the Church is not supported out of the taxes, but every bit of its property is held on a legal, not a

personal or corporate, tenure; and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who deal with certain parts of it, are appointed by the State. It is hard to say how much the clergy receive, as hitherto they have baffled inquiry.

L. W.—The London Secular Federation's dinner at the Bridge House Hotel begins at 7.30.

INCOG.—Thanks. We have slightly altered.

G. McCLUSKY.—It is excellent news.

JOSEPHUS.—(1) Your friend is romancing. No "infidel" writer admits that the four Gospels were in circulation in A.D. 60.

(2) Every scholar admits the Josephus passage on Christ to be a forgery. (3) According to the Gospels, Jesus couldn't have been in the grave three days, unless he reckoned the night work at overtime rate. (4) We don't know the paper.

PORTHOS.—It is a good job we are not easily upset, or we should feel like the old man in the fable who got into such trouble with his donkey.

RECEIVED.—Brighton Telegraph—South Hampstead Advertiser—Church Reformer—Edinburgh Evening News—Scotsman—Menschenthum—Der Arme Teufel—Ironclad Age—Boston Investigator—Thinker—Western Figaro—Bulletin des Sommaires—Radical—Liberator—New York Morning Journal—Freidenker—Open Court—Neues Freireligioses Sonntagsblatt—Catholic Times—De Dageraad—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Women's Suffrage Journal.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. R. O. SMITH, honorary treasurer of the London Secular Federation, 142 Old Street, E.C., acknowledges the following subscriptions:—T. LeStrange, £1; Mr. Baker, 1s. 6d.; Mr. Haseldine, 2s.; J. H. Ellis, 5s. Further funds are urgently required.

THE London Secular Federation dinner comes off on Monday evening at the Bridge House Hotel, London Bridge, and we want to see a first-rate muster. Camberwell will furnish 40 or 50 diners, and if the other London Branches do as well in proportion the gathering will be a striking success. Mr. G. W. Foote will preside, and there will be five toasts briefly proposed and responded to—The Federation, the N.S.S., the Lecturers, Secular Education, and the Freedom of the Press. The list of speakers includes Messrs. R. Forder, J. M. Wheeler, J. H. Ellis, G. Standing, A. B. Moss, Ernest Parke, and Angus Thomas. After the toasts there will be vocal and instrumental music and recitations—altogether a good evening.

BRANCH secretaries and other sellers of tickets should inform Mr. Angus Thomas, 128a Grosvenor Park, Camberwell, S.E., of the number they have disposed of on Sunday. Mr. Thomas will then make final arrangements for the number of covers on the following morning.

THIS week's *Freethinker* will be in the hands of our London readers before the Rossiter-Foote debate takes place at Camberwell on Friday evening, April 12. The Rev. Hugh Chapman takes the chair at 8 o'clock. Tickets should be secured by those who prefer sitting to standing.

MR. WHEELER begins his course of three lectures on the relation of Christianity to Preceding Systems in the minor Hall of Science on Thursday, April 11, at 8.30. Mr. Foote hoped to attend, but he happens to have a public engagement on the first and second Thursdays of the course. There should be a good attendance, as the lectures are sure to be valuable.

THE West Ham Branch opens its new premises on Sunday. Mr. Forder does the christening with a lecture on "The Birth and Boyhood of Jesus Christ," and the lecture will be followed by a musical entertainment. Time, 7 o'clock. Place, 121 Broadway, Plaistow, E. Local *Freethinkers*, please hurry up, and bring your friends.

THE Liverpool Branch, we are glad to hear, is recovering from its recent depression. Several young members have come forward to fill the gap caused by the loss, through death and emigration, of some active veterans; and the financial prospect is also brightening. Mr. Foote will visit Liverpool during his South Lancashire tour in May.

THERE is a strong association formed in Bristol, called "The Bristol Sunday Society," the object of which is to cater for that large and ever-increasing class of persons who find that churches and chapels no longer supply their intellectual needs. They have engaged the large room of St. James's Hall for a series of Sunday lectures by eminent men who will diffuse information on subjects of practical utility. The first lecture of the course was given last Sunday by William Lant Carpenter, Esq., B.A., B.Sc., M.I.E.E., on "The Sun," and the spacious hall was crowded in every corner, although there was a charge made for admission.

PLYMOUTH has had two N.S.S. Branches since 1885. This was one too many, and happily both had the sense to see it. They are now amalgamated, and we hope they will work like Trojans to carry out the hall scheme. Unattached Freethinkers in the district, who would like to assist this project, should communicate with Mr. G. McClusky, 12 Clarence Place, Stonehouse, Devon.

THE Huddersfield Branch sends us its Annual Report. There is a slight balance on the wrong side, but the Committee intends to go on vigorously with the work. Huddersfield is, alas, heavily handicapped by want of suitable premises, a want caused by the bigotry of Sir John Ramsden, the almighty ground-landlord, who will not allow a Secular Hall to be built in the town.

THERE has been another annual tussle over the *Freethinker* at Oakenshaw Colliery. The bigots moved its rejection from the library table, but they were defeated by a majority of eighteen. If they don't leave the matter alone they will end by making the *Freethinker* the most popular journal in the village.

MR. STANDRING'S *Radical* for April contains a portrait of Mr. Mark H. Beaufoy, the new member for Kennington, and a good deal of interesting letterpress, including a continuation of the sketch of Richard Carlile. Mr. Standring is nettled at our saying that the title of his journal is "becoming a misnomer," on account of its giving, and intending to give, more space to Freethought than to politics. We meant no offence; indeed, we are pleased with the change. But fact is fact, after all; and our contemporary feels it, or it would not defend the "misnomer" by the rash assertion that the *Freethinker* "frequently contains articles of a political character." We don't remember a single strictly political article having ever appeared in our columns.

THE Scotch clergy are still lamenting the decreased attendance at their churches. The worst of it is that they are unable to show that, as the churches empty, the prisons fill. Quite the contrary. The truth is, the world is gradually outgrowing the Church. The clergy know well that the more the influence of nature, art, science, and literature, the less attention will be paid to their worn-out dogmas. Hence their constant opposition to the secularisation of the Sabbath.

ANOTHER blow to the Scottish Sabbatarians! The Edinburgh Botanic Gardens has been placed in the charge of the First Commissioner of Works, and will henceforth be, like the gardens at Kew, open on Sundays. When some time ago the working men of Edinburgh petitioned in favor of this right, it was opposed from all the pulpits as a "proposal to violate Divine law." But light is gradually breaking, even upon the gloom of the Scotch "Sawbath."

THE second reading of the Scottish Deceased Wife's Sister Bill has passed by a majority of 184 to 131, despite all the efforts of the Church party. It is now, says the *Daily News*, fifty-four years since the bishops in the House of Lords compounded for the sin of making legitimate a duke whose father had married his deceased wife's sister by condemning all the future issues of such marriages to illegitimacy. That was the condition on which alone the bishops would allow the Duke of Beaufort's Bill to pass; so, to make a duke happy, untold misery has been inflicted on thousands of innocent children.

FIFTEEN years ago Berlin had but 800,000 inhabitants and church accommodation for only 25,000 persons. Since that time the population has doubled, and yet but one church has been built. In one district of the city there is but one church to every 70,000 people, and in another there is but one church to 140,000 people. And although each of these churches has a pastor, with several assistants, the deficiency in the pastoral provision and care of the people is correspondingly great. This state of affairs the Lutheran observer attributes to general Sunday desecration.

*Secular Thought*, of Toronto, Canada, in mentioning *The Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, which it says it has not received, although we certainly sent the first part as soon as issued, says—"In our opinion there is no man in the Freethought movement to-day better suited for the labor required on such an important work than is Mr. Wheeler, who is a scholar and a gentleman of great research and discrimination."

IN Garibaldi's *Memoirs*, an English translation of which is published this month, occurs this opinion of the priests: "The priest is the real scourge of God in Italy. He keeps a cowardly government in the most humiliating degradation, and strengthens himself amidst the corruption and misery of the people. In France he urges that unhappy nation to war, and in Spain, worse still, he spurs on toward civil war the leading bands of fanatics, and is spreading extermination everywhere."

THE *Jewish Chronicle* usually avoids all controversial topics, but in a leading article on Jewish Ethics last week it asserts that "as an ideal capable of realisation, Hillel is the equal, though he was the predecessor, of Jesus."

OUR esteemed Dutch contemporary, *De Dageraad*, of 1 April prints, with acknowledgments, the portraits of Messrs. Lennstrand and Lindkrift from the block we had engraved for these columns. An article on Freethought in Sweden accompanies the portraits.

"FREETHOUGHT is rapidly gaining ground in the army," writes a son of one of our readers from India; "and if we could get the papers regularly they would be very acceptable. There are many gentlemen's sons in the ranks."

A CONSERVATIVE paper, the *Brighton Gazette*, gives the palm to the latter-day Protestants for "bitterness, intolerance, inconsistency and persecution"

IT is not often we read the "Children's Corner" in the New York *Truthseeker*, but we accidentally fell on the following anecdote sent by a child:—"Here is a genuine incident. Little Orland is three years old, very bright and inquisitive. His mother has taught him that 'God is everywhere.' She has taken great care to have this impressed on his mind. I had been away for several days, and on returning stepped suddenly into the room where Orland was playing. He looked up in surprise and asked: 'Where you been?' I answered, 'Oh, everywhere!' His eyes opened wide, snapped, and sparkled, as he asked in a voice of innocent wonder, 'Be-e yo-ou God?'"

## MY NORTHERN TOUR.

ON Friday, March 29, I left London for a lecturing and organising tour in the North of England. Until Thursday morning I made South Shields my centre, having a passion for the sight and smell of the sea, and a strong impression that a little fresh air every morning would assist me in getting through a very heavy week's work.

I went to Newcastle on Saturday afternoon, and assisted at a Conference of the Northumberland and Durham Branches of the N. S. S. It was resolved to form a Northern Secular Federation, somewhat on the lines of the one in London, and I have good reason for believing that the Branches mean business. There is a fine field for an energetic organisation in this populous district.

On Sunday I delivered three lectures in the South Shields Free Library to excellent audiences. The



Branch is very active in this town, and men like Mr. Peacock, Captain Duncan, and Captain Thomson are an honor to the cause. Mr. Peacock is a member of the School Board, and was elected at the top of the poll. My morning and evening lectures were criticised by Mr. Wise of the Christian Evidence Society, who had a commission to follow me round and supply the antidote to my poison.

Monday was a free day; that is I was writing from breakfast till seven in the evening. Then I dressed, and, at the request of my friends, I went to the Gospel Temperance Hall, where Mr. Wise was replying to my Sunday evening lecture. I found Mr. Nicholson, the president of the School Board, in the chair, and Mr. Wise holding forth to a small audience in a big room. When he had done I answered him, and as most of the listeners would not have entered a Secular Hall my visit probably served a useful purpose in showing that an Atheist does not possess hooves and horns.

More writing on Tuesday, and in the evening to Darlington, where I went to form a new Branch. A lecture was not at first contemplated, but as a room had to be engaged for the meeting it was thought I might as well address those who could be brought together without billing and posting. There was some discussion, the inevitable Mr. Wise taking his share. Amongst the rest was the Rev. E. Lloyd Jones, who rose to speak when he knew I had to drive off to catch my train. I told him I would gladly come down from London and hold a set debate with him. He replied, "I would not waste a couple of hours in discussing the commonplaces of Secularism." "Very well," I rejoined, "let us spend a couple of hours in discussing the commonplaces of Christianity." But he did not bite. Before leaving I spoke to those who stopped to form a Darlington Branch. Happily there were several ladies. A secretary was elected, names were taken, and arrangements made for another meeting. I caught the 9.40 train, and got to South Shields soon after midnight.

Wednesday evening's lecture was at Chester-le-Street, and I had Mr. Peacock's company there and back. There was a moderate audience, as Saturday is the only night for a good meeting in a colliery town. The most promising feature was the number of young men. Mr. Birtley, the active Secretary, took the chair, and the inevitable Mr. Wise kept the discussion going. After that I had a brief chat with some of the members.

On Thursday I travelled to Hull, where I was met at the station by the Secretary, Mr. Naewiger, and the veteran Mr. Billany. There was a good audience in the Temperance Hall, and plenty of discussion after the lecture. Mr. Wise was there of course, and the list of opponents included a Swedenborgian minister and the editor of the *Hull Critic*. The Hull Branch is a new one, formed quite recently by Mr. Naewiger and other young Freethinkers, and I believe it will go ahead. They inquired how many delegates they could send to the annual Conference, and were delighted when I said they could all go if they liked.

Friday morning saw me crossing the Humber, en route for Grimsby, where I was hospitably entertained at the house of Mr. S. Alward. There was a fair audience in the evening at the Secular Hall, and Mr. Wise was a godsend as an opponent. This was his last appearance. He made a plucky fight and earned his wages. He was due on Sunday at Liverpool, where the Christian Evidence Society has stationed him, mainly at the cost of Mr. Samuel Smith, the member for Liverpool and piety, and the most portentous bore in the House of Commons.

I had a chat with the Grimsby members. Their branch is in a languishing condition, and I tried to put a little life into them. I hope I succeeded, but I have my doubts. They want more lectures and

social meetings. Half a dozen of each would do them a world of good.

Seven hours' tedious cross-country travelling brought me to Birmingham on Saturday evening. I lectured three times on Sunday to capital audiences, the veteran Mr. Daniel Baker presiding at two of them. The Baskerville Hall Club and the N. S. S. Branch have amalgamated, and the result is very satisfactory. Birmingham, I take it, will be well represented at the Conference.

I confess to having been fagged and sleepy on Monday morning, when I travelled to London to assist my gallant sub-editor in producing the first twelve-page number of the *Freethinker*.

G. W. FOOTE.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### MR. BLACK'S SECOND REPLY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Resuming my reply to your criticism at the point where your first article ended and your second began, let me point out that while wholesale massacre may, under certain circumstance, be defended, mutilation or the infliction of pain for its own sake never can be. We may defend the Israelites for the slaughter of the Canaanites on the same principle that we think it right to kill wasps, but we cannot defend mutilation of men any more than we can approve of cutting off wasps' wings or legs and then leaving them to live. Jephthah's conduct in the matter of his daughter is recorded without comment, since a man cannot fairly be blamed for an act that he committed in ignorance and against his inclination, under a misguided idea of duty. He was not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (which was not given till after the Incarnation), but was simply nerved to a great act of patriotism by a divinely imparted impulse, which, though translated in the Authorised Version *the* spirit of the Lord, might better be rendered *a* spirit or *an* inspiration of the Lord. Physical bravery is, as you truly point out, common to men of all races and creeds, but it is none the less like all other good natural endowments, a gift from the heavenly Father, who does not confine his bounties to men of any particular land or creed, but causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain on the just and the unjust. I think that few unprejudiced persons who read the incidents related here and there in Scripture about the Amalakitites and Ammonites will be inclined to think them the harmless inoffensive people that you would have us hold them, or to blame Samuel and David for treating them as they had treated others. And with regard to Elijah's conduct, though the worship of Baal was discredited for the moment, subsequent events showed that it was only for the moment, and amply justified his wisdom in promptly taking advantage of the momentary enthusiasm in favor of Jehovah. It is absurd to parallel the extirpation of those who sought to force their false religion on others under pain of death, with the persecution of those who—whether their religious be true or false—use no other weapon to propagate it except moral suasion. The exclusion of diseased and deformed persons "from the congregation" does not mean that they were forbidden to enter the temple or take part in acts of worship; but merely that—for reasons which I pointed out in my pamphlet—they were incapable of holding public offices or marrying Israelitish women. That during the Jewish dispensation slavery and polygamy were gradually mitigated instead of being at once abolished by an exercise of divine omnipotence, is a fact of which we shall only know the reason when we learn why God permits evil to exist at all. The abolition of polygamy where it has taken place is due to the spread of Christianity; and slavery, which, so long as landlordism remains in all its worst features, only lives under another name, will really cease to exist only when men have learnt and put in practice all that is involved in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

You say that I do not square my peculiar ideas of salvation with Matthew xxv. (meaning, I suppose, 31-46 verses), and the Revelation of St. John the Divine. Let me briefly do so. In the former passage, those who have led unselfish useful lives (or as St. Paul in Corinthians I., chap. iii., expresses it, have built on the foundation that

Christ has laid for every man, gold, silver, or precious stones, *i.e.*, good works), are described as receiving a reward, while those who have done the reverse (or in St. Paul's words, have built on the same foundation only straw and stubble), are described as sent into age-long fire, which, however, St. Paul tells us is intended as a means by which they will be saved. The words used in the Revelation to describe the destruction of the Roman Empire, the smoke of whose torment goes up for ever and ever, etc., are taken almost word for word from the similar language and imagery in which the Hebrew prophets depicted the doom that was coming on the Edomites and other enemies of Israel. When our Lord warned his disciples that the old days when most men were willing to give their hospitality were about to end, and a new state of things arise under which they must expect not merely indifference but active persecution, he intended by the words, "He that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one," not to give literal counsel, but to emphasise the fact that they were about to face not merely the discomfort caused by lack of clothes, but the danger to life which is the lot of those who find themselves without means of self-defence, at the mercy of well-armed enemies; and when they took the words literally he said not "they (*i.e.*, the two swords) are enough," but "it is enough," *i.e.*, it is useless to continue the conversation since you do not understand what I mean. The difference is, I contend, far more than a mere geographical one between deserting or putting away a wife, *i.e.*, repudiating the obligation created by the marriage tie, and leaving her at the call of duty while still discharging all those obligations. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, it must be remembered that death was not inflicted by the hand of Peter, but by the direct act of God; and while Peter's lie was calculated to injure his own soul, theirs, if unchecked, would have injured their fellow Christians. You cannot, therefore, parallel it with the murders that you say have been committed by the Church.

You say that revelation is hostile to progress, since it stereotypes the errors of the past. I deny this, since a revelation, if it really be a revelation, from God must reveal truth and not error. I freely grant that there have been pretended revelations—falsely so-called, which have propagated error. But you must not, on that account, confound a true revelation with a sham one, since this is like arguing that good current coin of the realm is valueless because counterfeit imitations of it are.

You say that I regard predestination and damnation as foul ideas. This is not quite correct. I regard predestination to damnation as a foul and false doctrine, which is taught neither by Scripture nor by the Church. As I explained in my pamphlet, when speaking of "election," I believe, as we are taught in the chapters that you cite, and also in article 17, that certain individuals and certain nations are fore-ordained by God to be the channels through which he imparts salvation to others, but neither scripture nor the article teaches that any are pre-destined to be damned or will be finally lost. In conclusion, you find fault with me for holding that our knowledge here is imperfect, and will only be perfect hereafter. You call this "the priest's eternal confidence-trick." But surely there is a difference between things that are contrary to reason and things which are above reason. Even a child, if asked to believe in the goodness of one that he saw torturing another for the avowed purpose of inflicting pain, and for that only, would be right in refusing assent to what was contrary to reason. But if the same child refused to believe in the goodness of a surgeon merely because he saw him inflicting the same or greater pain, although it was done for the patient's future good, he would fall into error through meddling with what was beyond his power of comprehension. So, while we are justified in refusing our assent to anything that we are told about God which is contrary to reason, because palpably at variance with the ideal of goodness which he sets before us, so it is our duty to believe in what is not contrary to reason, but only beyond our present powers of comprehension.—I am, yours faithfully,

J. W. BLACK.

Launcells Vicarage, Stratton, Cornwall.

#### EDITORIAL REJOINDER.

MR. BLACK does not seem to realise that he is discussing with an out-and-out Freethinker, who is against making concessions to anything but logic. He says that wholesale

massacre is sometimes defensible. We deny it, and say that the Jewish wars in Palestine were of unparalleled ferocity. No man can read of them without disgust, unless he has a dogma to maintain at all hazard.

Mutilation, says Mr. Black, is not to be defended; yet he defends David who cut, sawed, and burnt the Ammonites to pieces or ashes.

Jephthah was not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Well, holy or unholy, it was *the* or *a* spirit of the Lord that came upon him; and as *the* or *a* spirit of the Lord did not prevent him from sacrificing his own daughter, either the article was perfectly useless, or the Lord sent too little of it.

All Mr. Black can say for Elijah's massacre of the priests of Baal is that it was tit for tat. But is a revelation needed to reach revenge? Why did Jehovah leave his worshippers on the moral level of the worshippers of "false gods"?

Slavery and polygamy were not abolished by Jehovah. Mr. Black admits it. But he says they were "mitigated," though we suspect he means "regulated." Well, slavery was "mitigated" among other nations as well as the Jews, and far more mercifully. And the polygamy, which Jehovah for some inscrutable reason could not abolish, *was* abolished in the civilisations of Greece and Rome. Zeus and Jupiter were more powerful, or less "inscrutable," than Jehovah.

Mr. Black's argument about the meaning of the text as to selling garments and buying swords is too high for us. Such exegesis makes the Bible, to use Luther's image, a wax nose, which everyone may twist as he pleases. Nor can we follow Mr. Black in his explanation of the murder of Ananias and Sapphira. Whether Peter killed them with the aid of the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Ghost killed them alone, makes little difference to the argument. They were treated in a brutal fashion, and it seems blasphemous to assert that God's jurisprudence is more barbarous than that of any civilised nation.

Mr. Black denies that revelation is hostile to progress. He means his own revelation; we mean all revelation. Millions of women were tortured and killed in obedience to the text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The Jews put their own ignorance into God's mouth, and subsequent ages paid dearly for it. This is a good illustration of how revelation stereotypes the errors of the past.

We dislike mystification, and we ask Mr. Black to speak plainly. He accepts predestination, and he accepts damnation; yet he rejects predestination to damnation. What does he mean? Infinite predestination covers heaven and hell. Omnipotence does or allows everything, and Omniscience foresees everything. If God made heaven and hell, and human beings to tenant them, he knew exactly the roll-call of each establishment before a single house was occupied.

Whether anyone will be "finally lost" is a question on which Mr. Black may indulge his fancies. Jesus, Paul, and the Thirty-nine Articles, seem pretty clear; and if eternal damnation is a false doctrine, it is a great pity that Infinite Wisdom used language which has misled thousands of millions of honest people.

Finally, we contend that whatever is contrary to reason is false, and whatever is above reason (or below it) is unintelligible. Mr. Black defends the unintelligible.

EDITOR.

#### HE LOVED JESUS.

JUST opposite from the East Chicago police station, in Chicago, there were held, three years ago, Salvation Army meetings—for or to what purpose I do not know or care, but wish to relate an incident that occurred. Among others who found "life everlasting" and did not know what to do with it, was an old Swede, a confirmed drunkard and vagrant. One evening at an experience meeting (a place where they show a lamentable lack of experience) he, among others, was called upon to tell of the priceless jewel he had found. He was no orator; his calling forbade that (it was calling at places where beer kegs were left and draining them of the sediment remaining), but what he lacked in oratorical powers and rhetoric he made up for in volume of voice and earnestness. He harangued awhile in his own peculiar style, if not to the instruction of his audience, to their satisfaction. But he wound up with these inspired words: "I kaint talk so good English as some of yo's fellers, but I luv Jesus better dan any God dam man on de Nort Side!"

UNCLE BILL ON THE PREACHERS.

They tell me this, and they tell me that,  
And they tell me everything,  
The road forks here, and the road forks there,  
And the road goes round in a ring.  
They give me wheat, and they give me chaff,  
And they call it the bread of life;  
They claim religion is pleasure and peace,  
They claim it is penance and strife.

They reason from love that God is good,  
From hate—and they make him bad;  
They preach, "His mercy forever endures"—  
They preach that he will get mad;  
They figure and twist and make him one,  
They twist him again—he is three;  
They split his kingdom in two, and yield  
The Devil, the earth, and sea.

They muddle my brain with doubt and dirt,  
And talk of his marvellous light;  
They say I am blind when I cannot see  
A dawn through eternity's night;  
They stand me up in a row and draw  
A crooked line in the dark,  
And tell me to toe the scratch, and say  
I'm damned if I straddle the mark.

They prove the Bible is true, and prove  
It teaches an endless hell;  
They prove it is truer than that, and prove  
That all shall at last be well.  
They say that it says what it does not say,  
And what it does say—deny,  
And, say what you will, if you say they are wrong,  
They say what you say is a lie.

But how in the Devil, or how in the Lord,  
Such mysteries may abound,  
And celestially be all the truer because  
They are not terrestrially sound,  
Is more than my noddle can manage, and so  
I say to the preachers: Go on!  
What God wants of me he can tell it to me,  
As well as he could to St. John.

And I say to the Lord and believe that the Lord  
Has got the good sense to see,  
He needn't to send any drummers around  
When he has any business with me.

MONASTERIES AND MENTAL DISEASES.

(Prof. Andrew D. White, in Popular Science Monthly).

The monasteries were frequent sources of that form of mental disease which was supposed to be caused by bewitchment. From the earliest period it is evident that monastic life tended to develop insanity. Such cases as those of St. Anthony and St. Augustine are typical of its effects upon the strongest minds; but it was especially the convents for women that became the great breeding-beds of this disease. Among the large number of women and girls thus assembled, many of them forced into confinement against their will, for the reason that their families could give them no dower, subjected to the unsatisfied longings, suspicions, bickerings, petty jealousies, envies, and hatreds so notorious in convent life, mental disease was not unlikely to be developed at any moment. Hysteri-

cal excitement in nunneries took shapes sometimes comical, but more generally tragical. Noteworthy is it that the last places where executions for witchcraft took place were mainly in the neighborhood of great nunneries, and the last famous victim—of the hundreds of thousands executed in Germany for this imaginary crime—was Sister Anna Renanta Sanger, sub-prioress of a nunnery near Wurzburg. The same thing was seen among young women exposed to sundry fanatical Protestant preachers: insanity, both temporary and permanent, was thus frequently developed among the Huguenots of France, and has been thus produced in America, from the days of the Salem persecution down to the "camp meetings" of the present time.

A CORRECTION CORRECTED.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—With reference to the statement in the current issue of the *Freethinker*, that I am the "Principal of the Camberwell Free Fine Art Gallery," may I say that there is no such official, and in fact no such institution. Of course the South London Free Art Gallery is the one referred to. Of that the President is Sir Frederick Leighton, and I am the Treasurer. May I add that I am no more a F.R.G.S. than I am a F.R.S. Insertion of this letter will oblige me.—I am, dear Sir,

Your obedient servant, WILLIAM ROSSITER.

D A M N E D !

PENITENT Printer—"I have been such a terrible sinner that I fear there is no salvation for me."

Minister—"Cheer up, my friend. There is hope for even the vilest."

"But I have been such a great sinner. I have worked on Saturdays to get out Sunday papers, putting in type accounts of murders and all manner of crimes, thus helping to spread a wicked influence all over the land."

"But still there is hope for you if you truly repent."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I have often on Sunday afternoons put your sermons in type and thought how full of love they were, and—"

"Are you the fiend who, when I wrote of 'Pale martyrs in their shrouds of fire,' made it read: 'Pale martyrs with their shirts on fire?'"

"I am afraid I am. I—"

"Then I am happy to say that I do not believe the hereafter holds any hope for you."

PROFANE JOKES.

A clergyman was absorbed in thought a few Sundays ago, just before divine service began, when he was approached by the organist, who asked, "What shall I play?" "What kind of a hand have you got?" responded the absent-minded clergyman.

"You should repent before it is too late," remarked the minister. "The greatest consolation one can have is to die happy." "It is well enough for a rich fellow like you to talk that way," returned the sinner, "but if you had to rough it like me, you'd soon find the great consolation was to live happy."

A SMALL boy is rather slow in committing prayers to memory, and requires a good deal of prompting. The other night he began his regular prayer in his regular way: "Now—I—lay me—"—and there he stuck fast. "Down"—said his mother prompting. Whereupon Johnny set off again with great alacrity and fluency—"Down came a blackbird and nipped off her nose!" This fable teaches that the preference of the present generation for secular over sacred literature begins at an early age.

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