

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.

ON "CREATION."

To the Bishop of Carlisle.

MY LORD,—It seems strange that I should have to address you, for the sake of courtesy, in such exalted language. Your Lord and Savior bade his disciples to call no man Master, and Lord is a still loftier title. Yet you are legally entitled to this designation, and you are a lord in reality as well as in name. You have a seat, when you like to occupy it, in the House of Peers; you reside in a palace; and, besides your "pickings," the extent of which I have no means of ascertaining, you enjoy a settled income of £4,500 a year. I know not how to reconcile these things with your profession as a minister of the gospel of poverty and renunciation; but I presume your powers of casuistry are equal to the task; and, after all, as theology is full of mysteries, it is not unnatural that there should be mysteries in the character and conduct of theologians.

You have been good enough, my lord, to write a curious little volume on "Creation." It is the first of a series entitled "Helps to Belief," which naturally attracted my attention. I happen to require as much help to belief as any man I know, and accordingly I invested ninepence in a copy of your production. Unfortunately it has not recompensed me for the outlay. My unbelief is rather confirmed than shaken, and I am farther off than ever from the repose which is to be found on the pillow of faith. I have, however, read your volume with great care, and I venture to offer a few remarks upon it.

Let me first congratulate you on an admission. You say—

The very difficulty, so to speak, with regard to the theological view of the opening of the book of Genesis is, that theologians will not consent to regard the document as a lesson addressed merely to the infancy of humanity, will not allow it to be regarded as a childish thing to be put aside by the human race in its manhood.

Your language is skilfully guarded; it might be read in either of two opposite ways; yet I interpret you as I would a Sibylline oracle, and take the most favorable meaning. Regarded in that light, your description of the Creation story is admirable; it does credit to your candor and intelligence, as well as your style. I thank you for the phrase. "A childish thing" is the finest commentary on the first chapter of Genesis. The very epithet "childish" is supremely felicitous. What is childlike in infancy is childish in manhood; what was excusable in an age of ignorance and barbarism is contemptible in an age of science and civilisation.

Let me next indicate a few points on which I have the honor to agree with you. "Creation," you state, "begins and ends with the formula 'God said.'" Yes, my lord, that is the alpha and omega of the mystery. In the language of Hamlet it is "words, words, words." Logomachies, in theology and metaphysics, pass current for realities; but the first

attempt to define them in consciousness exposes their vacuity. "God said let there be light, and there was light:" is the statement of Genesis; similarly the Hindu scriptures declare that "Brahma said let there be worlds, and there were worlds"—and the one text is as true as the other.

You affirm that Genesis makes "no pretension to being a scientific history." The discovery is rather late in the day, for your Church has, during the better part of two thousand years, insisted on the contrary doctrine; and from the days of Galileo until now it has persecuted to the full extent of its power the scientific men who, in the words of Professor Huxley, have refused to degrade nature to the level of primitive Judaism. Nevertheless, as you disclaim this "pretension," it may for the moment be dismissed. You appear to admit that Genesis is not "a scientific history," and the admission shows you are fully aware that Hebrew mythology can no longer be opposed, as a divine truth, to the teachings of Evolution.

You assert that such "truths" as the Incarnation and the creation of man in God's image "belong to a high ethereal region to which it is impossible for either philosophy or science to rise." One half of this sentence, my lord, is perfectly true. Philosophy and science cannot breathe in the attenuated atmosphere of faith, nor are they able to see through the clouds of mystery. The very language you employ when you speak as a theologian is foreign to them. "Creation," you exclaim, is a mystery, heaven and earth are mysteries, but through all these there shines the light of a living God—He, too, a mystery." How one mystery illuminates another mystery is a curious problem which philosophy and science will gladly leave to the "high ethereal" intellect of the pulpit. They may accept your statement, however, without feeling that it amounts to a revelation; for to the eyes of reason a mystery is nothing but ignorance or self-contradiction. A galvanic battery is a mystery to the savage, the telephone is a mystery to country clergymen, and the origin of life is still a mystery to biologists. On the other hand, the Trinity is a mystery to the arithmetician, and Almighty Goodness and Wisdom is a mystery to those who see and feel the existence of evil. In the one case, the mystery is an unexplained fact; in the other case, it is a contradiction between a fact and a theory. Mystery, in short, is mist; sometimes cloud, and sometimes smoke. The cloud is ignorance, and the smoke is theology.

Persons who deal in mystery, my lord, are apt to contract a taint of insincerity. I am sorry to see you referring to Moses as the author of Genesis, and still more to see you referring to "some ancient documents" which he used in its composition. Surely your lordship is aware that no single scrap of the Old Testament can be carried beyond the tenth century before Christ, which is several hundred years from

the supposed date of Moses; surely your lordship is aware that every scholar in Europe would laugh at the statement that Jewish "documents" existed at the time of the Exodus.

You display the art of a professional pleader, my lord, in dealing with Professor Haeckel's remarks on Genesis. While rejecting it as a "divine revelation," this great Evolutionist says it "contrasts favorably with the confused mythology of Creation current amongst most of the other ancient nations." You subsequently allude to this as "a striking tribute to its scientific character." Nay more, you convert *most* into *all*, and exclaim "From Moses to Linnaeus! A tremendous step: and before Moses no one."

Without dilating on your perversion of Haeckel, I would ask you, my lord, whether you are ignorant of the fact that the Creation story in the first chapter of Genesis was borrowed from the mythology of Babylon, as the story of the Fall in the second and third chapters was borrowed from the mythology of Persia? Should you be ignorant, your ignorance is inexcusable; should you not be ignorant, your pretence of ignorance is unpardonable.

You deal at considerable length with the word "create," but you evade every difficulty it raises. You rush off to the Greek, the Sanscrit, and so forth: but you never refer to the Hebrew, which is the original language of "inspiration." The Hebrew *bara* does not express absolute creation out of nothing, for such a metaphysical absurdity never entered into the heads of the ancient Jews. For this reason, perhaps, you journeyed north, south, east, and west, instead of staying at home, and consulted every language but the one containing "the oracles of God." You do not wish to be precise. You "define creation as the embodiment of thought in an objective form," which leaves the matter indeterminate. An artist embodies his conceptions by means of pre-existing materials. Do you imply the same of God? If you do, you assume the eternity of matter; if you do not, you assume creation out of nothing. This is the doctrine upheld by your Church, and you should plainly avow or disclaim it. Bishop Pearson, whose *Exposition of the Creed* is still a standard work in your colleges, gives forth no uncertain sound. "Antecedently to all things beside," he says, "there was at first nothing but God, who produced most part of the world merely out of nothing, and the rest out of that which was formerly made of nothing." You, my lord, express yourself more obscurely. You state that the material universe—in contradistinction, I presume, to the immaterial universe—points to "some kind of origin." And you add that "the existing *cosmos* testifies in a thousand ways to a pre-existent *chaos*, out of which *cosmos* has grown; according to modern language it has been *evolved*; God created the *chaos* and evolved the *cosmos*."

This is what your lordship proffers as a help to belief! Why did you not adduce one of those "thousand" testimonies to *chaos*? Can you really conceive *chaos*—a universal confusion, in which things happen at random, and nothing is anything? Do you know of a single Evolutionist who teaches that matter once existed without its properties? Are not the properties of matter the same in a comet as in a planet? Do you know so little of the nebular hypothesis as to suppose that Professor Tyndall's "fiery cloud," of which worlds are formed, is the primitive substance of *chaos*?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

A medical man once prescribed quinine for a patient who was a staunch Protestant. The latter, however, refused to take his physic because, being taken from Jesuits' bark, it would assuredly not have the divine blessing. He reached glory sooner than he had expected.

CHRISTIANITY SLOWLY ROTTING.

A CENTURY ago the hearts of lovers of freedom and progress beat high with the hope that a new era was dawning on humankind. The days of superstition, bigotry, and oppression, it was thought were numbered. The rising tide of liberty and rationalism would carry all before it, and the great question was what should take the place of the old and doomed institutions. Looking back we can see how largely the hopes of the enthusiasts were illusive. Much, nay immense progress has been made, but they did not sufficiently consider the dead weight of the past; the tendency of human thoughts and affairs, however roughly shaken, to settle down again into the old and well worn grooves. They thought the enemy's territory was conquered because a few daring leaders had scoured the country and seized the prominent fortresses. They forgot that the masses of the people were as little affected by the wit and arguments of men like Voltaire and Paine as sheep are disturbed when their companions are carried off to the slaughter.

It is an old proverb that creaking doors bang long upon their hinges. Threatened men and threatened institutions are apt to last out their time. The extinction of a religion or even its transformation, is not the work of a day. Paganism is not extinct even yet in Christian lands. But though the too sanguine anticipations of past reformers have been disappointed, there is no cause for despondency. Progress is slow but it is sure, and all the surer for being slow. Freethought is winning. This may be seen by any one who observes the whole set of the winding stream of human thought, which looked at from any isolated position, may seem to flow in one direction, while regarded from another standpoint, it appears to flow in a directly opposite course.

But take some distance of time. Compare the present day with the ages of Faith. The whole aspect is changed. The belief in miracles, the agency of devils, and the whole supernatural atmosphere in which our ancestors lived has gone or is fast vanishing into thin air. Prayer is defended only for its subjective value. Who now expects daily bread because he prays for it? The belief in the superiority of faith over conduct is reversed. Character is considered more than creed. To doubt is no longer a sign of guilt. It is this life and not any problematical future one, which arouses attention and sympathy. Supernaturalism has climbed down, relinquishing piece by piece its most cherished possessions and now rests only on "the narrow ledge of Theism." A genuine Christian, one who really believes that God was born of a virgin in Palestine, and that he died to save us after we are dead from eternal damnation for sins committed before we were born; one who accepts and attempts to follow out the literal injunctions of his Savior—is almost as rare as the dodo, and as fitted for a museum of curiosities. And yet with accommodations, hypocrisies, and much pretence at believing that they believe, Christians can absolutely yet say, "Our religion was never more flourishing," and point to actual income and expenditure in proof of their assertion.

Man, defined as "a rational animal" should rather be characterised as an animal capable of being rational. The Age of Reason which dawned in the eighteenth century has to expand a deal ere it reaches its perfect day. Freethought yet needs much work and energy, and those who bestow this cannot expect to see the full result in their lifetime. The conclusions of science and criticism are gradually spreading to the masses, but there remains a vast body of indifferents always more accessible on the side of inherited superstitious instincts than on that of reason.

Some "Agnostics" talk as though Christianity had given notice of its own funeral. We invite them to

consider the fact that in England alone some hundred thousand clergy, ministers, missionaries and Salvation Army officers are directly interested in its maintenance and propagation. True, their influence, like that of their creeds is declining. People are learning that every inch of progress has been done despite the interested antagonism of the black-coated tribe. But backed up by powerful and wealthy organisations, and the prestige of the past, they cannot be underestimated with impunity. There will be a prolonged and severe struggle ere the national church endowments are devoted to the cause of education.

Men are beginning to think for themselves. When they once apply the same independent judgment to religion which they bring to business, a great step has been gained. But until women are also taught to think for themselves the work of Freethought will have to be repeated in each generation. As an esteemed veteran lady of the Freethought cause, Mrs. Ernestine Rose, says, "The Churches have been built on the necks of women, and the priests can smile as long as they have the devotion of the mothers of the next generation." The clergy are getting used to seeing their churches mainly filled by women. On the whole, the "intermediate sex" as priests have been well-called, probably prefer bonnets which criticise each other to hats which criticise them, especially if the absent husbands sons and brothers can be depended on for subscriptions. There are signs, however, that the long dominion of priestcraft over women is weakening. When women do perceive how much they have been kept in bondage by religion and the church, none are more enthusiastic in their freethought than they. Our work of leavening the masses with freethought is not a light one, but it is one which is becoming far easier than it was. Looking back with gratitude to those who have fought and suffered in the past we can look forward to the future with encouragement and confidence. J. M. WHEELER.

A FEW DEFINITIONS.

Parson.—A man who preaches about heaven, but who looks upon his own departure for that blissful abode as the worst of misfortunes. Also he is a man who lives well in one sense by professing to teach men to live well in another sense.

Christian Witness.—An individual of whom truth and consistency cannot reasonably be expected unless he first insults and defies his God by taking an oath on the book in which that alleged omnipotent being has solemnly and emphatically prohibited all forms of swearing.

Modern Christians.—People who occasionally try to think that they believe the Bible, but who seldom succeed in believing as much of it as they reject.

Peculiar People.—People who really succeed in believing the Bible, and who hence honestly endeavor to obey it as far as their limited capacities will allow them.

Church.—A structure whose "heaven-pointing spire" gravitates, as the substantial fact, very heavily and solidly in exactly the opposite direction.

Bishop.—A spiritual shepherd who receives thousands of pounds yearly to preach against riches, and who always feels called by the Holy Ghost to take the most lucrative and dignified post he can get.

Archbishop.—A man who has £15,000 a year, and palaces, carriages, flunkies, and cumbrous ceremonial, to lift him to a lofty eminence of simplicity and moral grandeur, from which he can with due force and dignity denounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.

Pomps and vanities of this wicked world.—Inspired view: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Pomps and vanities of—we beg pardon, we should say, eternal glories of—the heavenly city.—Golden

thrones, and crowns, and lyres, and harps, and trumpets, silver palms, gorgeous trumpets, glass walls bespangled with the contents of forty thousand jeweller's shops, snow-white wings to fly with, scarlet robes dyed in the blood of the Lamb, splendid processions and ceremonials, abundant singing and shouting, and so forth *ad lib.*

Established Church.—An institution for teaching people practical honesty by forcibly taking millions of their money from them against their will. An institution for discouraging hypocrisy on the part of the many thousands who share this sanctified plunder, by stringently exacting of them an outward profession of belief in a fixed set of tenets. An institution for encouraging national truthfulness, genuine research, and outspoken sincerity by heavy punishments on change of opinion among those it employs, and by supporting with its general teaching, influence, and organization, the infliction of penalties, disabilities, and restrictions on those who persist in rejecting its antiquated set of doctrines. An institution for inculcating practical justice, equality, and fraternity, by retaining a special supremacy over all other sects, together with a special share in the legislative powers and dignity denied to all other religious bodies.

Lord.—An object of adoration to Englishmen, who dearly love a lord, and much more therefore a lord of lords.

Blasphemy.—The virtue for which Christ suffered death.

Miracles.—Impossible wants that never happened and are strongly vouched for by absent witnesses.

Christian.—A man who thinks so meanly and despicably of himself as to expect to be infinitely happy for ever in heaven while the majority of his fellow creatures lie groaning in hell.

Gospel.—The "good tidings" of eternal damnation to all but a few.

Damnation.—A shocking word when uttered by unconsecrated lips in unconsecrated places. Otherwise a highly moral and thoroughly Christian expression of a peculiarly persuasive nature, seeing that it implies personal subjection to an elevated and well-sustained temperature of presumably at least 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Inspiration.—A doctrine that shows signs of its approaching expiration.

Toleration.—Having to refrain from burning people alive for their opinions.

Perfect Toleration.—Laws that protect the feelings of Christians by trampling on the feelings and rights of their opponents. Laws that enforce payment of tithes for land, for certain sea fisheries, and for special crops, in order to support a form of religion distasteful to the majority of those who have to pay for it. Laws that compel Dissenters and Freethinkers to pay vicar's rates, "composition" rates, and other obnoxious imposts for the support of the Church, although Church rates are supposed to be abolished. Laws which, at the expense of the whole community, exempt edifices for the propagation of religious falsehood from all rates and taxes, but which do not so exempt hospitals, alms-houses, schools, lecture halls, and institutions for the propagation of useful truth.

Truth, as it is in God.—Telling Adam he shall die on a certain day whereas he lives for hundreds of years afterwards. Telling men that the Judgment Day and the destruction of the world by fire should happen speedily and within the lifetime of some of those then present, whereas these long-expected events are now nearly two thousand years overdue. The six days creation story, which convicts geology and modern science generally of fraud on the largest scale. The stories of Jonah and the whale, Balaam's ass, the talking serpent, and so forth.

Divine Justice.—Burning all men alive for ever because Adam ate an apple.

Divine Mercy.—Excusing a few from this awful punishment because they believe something or other.

Christian Justice and Mercy and Truth.—Humble imitations of the divine attributes of the same name: all alike being vicarious or substitutional as their fundamental principle.

Christian Charity.—A quality so superior to human charity as to have nothing in common with it, just as theological justice and mercy and truth have nothing in common with merely human justice and mercy and truth.

The Golden Rule (practical version adopted by Christians generally).—Do unto others as you would have others done unto.

Fair Play.—Exempting unbelievers from civil rights and compensating them with the compulsory privilege of paying all rates and taxes, especially those for the support of religion.

Persecution, of the most intolerant and unreasonable kind.—Compelling poor harmless, innocent, Christians to endure the existence of avowed opponents.

W. P. BALL.

ACID DROPS.

The Wesleyans are still circulating that silly falsehood about the "infidel lecturer" who was floored by an ignorant old woman. It is printed in big type by the Radnor Street Tract Society, Manchester. No name, date, or place is given. But what does that matter? If the story is "comforting," especially to "babes," its truth is a very minor consideration.

Father Ignatius is preaching again in London. On Sunday last he had a fair congregation in the Westminster Town Hall who paid a shilling and half-a-crown for seats. The Father's orthodoxy is still unimpeachable. He prayed for the conversion of some persons who doubt the doctrine of eternal punishments, and remarked that the denial of that doctrine meant, in the long run, the rejection of Christianity. We agree with him. Abolish hell, or cool it off, or shut up the emigration office on this side, and Christianity becomes an idle tale.

A correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who does not like Mrs. Besant's intolerance of Christianity, suggests that the clergy should prove that "some good thing can come out of Nazareth after all" by openly denouncing every member of their churches who holds shares in "sweating" companies, and by refusing them the sacrament. This gentleman would do well to read Ruskin's old challenge to the Bishop of Peterborough. "Whose sins," he asked, "did you ever denounce if the man was known to have over three hundred a year?"

Father Agostino, the famous Italian preacher, blessed King Humbert in a farewell sermon at San Carlo; and as the Pope's sentiment is "Damn King Humbert" there is considerable irritation in the Vatican circles. Christian charity is a wonderful thing.

There are some rare old theological fossils at large that ought to be properly ticketed in museums. The Archdeacon of Montgomery, for instance, is a frightful piece of antiquity. Speaking at Oswestry, he complained of the caricaturing of holy things which distinguished the anti-tithe agitation. However, he was happy to know that some of the most conspicuous culprits had suffered from "visitations." One agitator, the chairman of the first anti-tithe meeting, had died suddenly; another lost his wife while on trial; a third lost two horses on the same day; a fourth shot himself by accident, and bled to death; while in one parish no less than five deaths of "an uncommon character" had occurred among the agitators and their accomplices. How awful, to be sure! After this warning the clergy should be able to collect their tithes in peace. Even the tithe pig will probably recognise his duty, and walk to the parson's house without an invitation.

The venerable Archdeacon felt that he was liable to be laughed at by the ungodly, but he did his duty—in the

interest of tithes—and said he was not afraid of being called superstitious. We congratulate him on his courage. The spirit of the martyrs is not extinct. The noble Thomas is willing, if need be, to seal with his blood the divine right of the clergy to ten per cent. of other people's property.

Canon Wilberforce gives his testimony to the efficacy of what is called faith healing, but from the nature of the case it is impossible to say how much his individual experience is worth. What is evidence to him is no evidence to another person unless it is corroborated by independent witnesses. He does not state the nature of his "internal ailment." Perhaps it was as much like what he thought it as Joanna Southcote's dropsy was like the new Messiah she expected to give birth to.

Faith-healing is easy to talk about, but if it be real the clergy and elders should perform upon the sick, and the costly medical profession should be abolished. In our opinion the craze is but a survival of the old antagonism between the priest and the doctor, theology and science, soul-ology and medicine; and the priest has been on the losing side ever since the antagonism began.

Mrs. Alexander Tulliner, of Frankfort, Ky. claims to have been cured of paralysis by "faith, electricity, and good bourbon whisky." The proportions in which the ingredients were taken is not mentioned.

What is blasphemy? Some members of the House of Commons have been telling Mr. Bradlaugh it is—well, to cut it short, the *Freethinker*. But Mr. Spurgeon's definition is less narrow. South Place Institute has tablets inscribed with the names of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Jesus Christ, and Mr. Spurgeon calls it a "blasphemous association."

Christians are good hands at finding excuses from discussion, but the Bishop of Peterborough beats the record. He declines to discuss with Professor Huxley on the ground that "In sight of Gethsemane and Calvary a fencing match seems to me out of place." In other words, the clergy are to take millions of money on the supposition that the Resurrection happened, and they are to shirk proving it because it was preceded by the Crucifixion! One scarcely knows whether to call it impudence or imbecility, or a mixture of both.

According to the *Echo*, Cleveland Hall, which the Wesleyans have just taken over for their West End Mission, was "built some thirty years since by Secularists." We believe, however, that the statement is untrue. Before the Hall of Science was erected Cleveland Hall was used by Secularists, but its being built by them is quite a different matter.

Why doesn't the *Detriot Free Press* stick to its comic business? Why does it go out of its way to print sensational nonsense about Ingersoll? What silliness it is to ask the question, "Was a man ever the worse for believing that which is to itself harmless or beneficent?" These epithets beg the question in a manner which is worthy of a Sunday-school teacher. Ingersoll attacks false beliefs because they are *not* "harmless or beneficent."

Lord Halsbury (late Sir Hardinge Giffard) has joined the British and Foreign Bible Society. With him is Lord Brassey. But what do they want of two "brassies"?

Twenty-one clergymen of the Church of England hold shares in one Manchester brewery company. Query—Are they also members of the Church of England Temperance Society?

Another bible crank has been arrested for brawling at St. Paul's Cathedral. He justified himself by referring to the 1st verse of the 10th chapter of St. John and the magistrate ordered an inquiry to be made into his state of mind. Any comment would be superfluous.

The season of the merry May meetings, or, as it is more profanely known, "the harlots' harvest," is in full swing, and the Strand in the neighborhood of Exeter Hall is as full of blackbeetles as a baker's scullery.

Considerable jubilation has been expressed at the missionary meetings that the exposure of the futility of missions has not diminished their exchequers. Well, Solomon has spoken of the difficulty of dealing with fools, of which class, we take it, subscribers to missions for the heathen are largely composed. With the pious and well-meaning, who are not entirely fools, it takes some time for such indictments as those of Canon Taylor and Mr. Caine to have much effect, but as year by year the vast expenditure is not followed by any nearer approximation to the world becoming Christian, we expect that even Christians may tire of pouring water into a sieve.

Magnificent nonsense was talked at the annual meeting of the Religious Tract Society. The Bishop of Bedford being absent through illness, the chair was taken by Mr. George Williams of Young Men's Christian Association fame, who told the meeting that Satan would in the future carry on his deep designs through the printing press. As if he hadn't been always doing so in the opinion of the godly!

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, who moved the adoption of the report, "went for" infidel literature, and horrified his audience by telling them that "tons of it every week were going to India and the colonies." We wish it were true; but it isn't; it is only a little dodge to make the pious subscribers shell out.

Mr. Sydney Gedge was the next speaker. He is a member of Parliament, a lawyer who has bled the London School Board heavily, and a fine specimen of the *genus* bigot. On this occasion he was in the historical vein. Reading, he said, was on the increase everywhere. "Even the unchangeable Turks," he added, "had changed since the time they had destroyed the library at Alexandria." A sentence as full of error as an egg is full of meat. First, the only Alexandrian library of which there is any authentic record was destroyed by the Christians. Second, the fabulous library said to have been destroyed subsequently, was destroyed (that is, it *wasn't* destroyed) by the Arabs. Third, the Turks were not heard of in Europe or Africa till several centuries later, after the subversal of the Saracenic empire.

Mr. Gedge's history is like the science of the French lexicographer, who defined a crab as a red fish that walks backwards. On being asked his opinion of the definition, the great naturalist Cuvier said: "Well, the crab is not a fish, it is not red, and it does not walk backwards. With those exceptions, your definition is admirable."

The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews boasts of an income of £34,813. The bulk of this is spent in providing a living for its agents. The society has been in existence eighty-one years, has spent some millions of money, and is about as near its object as when it started. Its report says, "Our missionaries estimate that there are 3,000 Christian Israelites in the United Kingdom." Knowing that many who are even baptised are often baptised over again in another place for a fresh consideration, we much distrust these round numbers from missionary sources.

The Archbishop of Canterbury in moving the adoption of the report referred to the difficulties and importance of the work. Of the importance there can be no doubt as the existence of the Jews is a standing refutation of the claims of Christianity. The difficulties are equally indisputable, but the Archbishop expressed satisfaction that "the Jews would be a Christian people somewhen." Somewhen is an excellent term. It may stand for the Greek Kalends or the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The Bible Society doesn't share in the general prosperity, but laments a deficit of £13,508 18s. 10d. It finds comfort, however, in the great circulation of the Scriptures by other agencies on the Continent, especially in Italy. We rejoice also, for the Bible is largely revered on the Continent just because it is not known. It will soon become a theme of laughter to the witty Italians.

The Rev. Byron Roe, who has come from the West Coast of Africa, where the evils of the Christian drink

traffic have been called attention to in the House of Lords, says that, if missionary effort is to be successful, it must be carried forward on temperance principles. That is, it must abandon the method of Jesus, who made wine for guests "well drunk."

One would think the London Home Missionary Society had the strongest claims on the support of Christians, yet it has to ask for £15,000 a year increased income, or it will have to withdraw from part of its operations.

Mr. Gladstone has been pondering the divorce question, and, writing to a Canadian author, he says, "Reflection tends to confirm me in the belief that the best basis for law is the indissolubility of Christian marriage." He would allow separation, but not divorce with a right to marry again; so that, just to please Mr. Gladstone's Christian sentiments, a young husband or wife separated from an adulterous partner is to go on living to old age without a home and the comforts and discipline of domestic life. Such is the monstrous absurdity into which a great man is led by his religious prejudices.

Two popular preachers, the Rev. C. A. Berry and Dr. Joseph Parker, have been indulging in a truly Christian altercation. The Rev. Mr. Berry appears to have made some disparaging remarks on Dr. Parker at the Liberation Society's meeting which the showman of the City Temple characterised as a "cowardly and contemptible attack," which has changed his position towards Mr. Berry "from one of friendliness into one of repugnance and distrust." Mr. Berry mildly protests against this "scornful passion and personal bitterness." We are reminded of Voltaire's exclamation to the two scolding fish-fags, "I believe you both."

The rector of Elmswell, Suffolk, says one of his vestry became a churchwarden with a lie on his lips: another he stigmatised as "a cad." Altogether a truly Christian feeling appeared to prevail at the Elmswell vestry meeting.

The examination of the Rev. W. Penfold Cope, the bankrupt Baptist minister, showed that although he had been a minister in receipt of a good salary for the last twenty-three years, his liabilities showed £1,595, while his assets were estimated to produce £208. Asked to explain a statement that his son had no policy on his life, he said: "I was very sore at the way in which I had been examined, and in a moment of ——" Mr. Willis: "You swore what you knew to be untrue." The Bankrupt: "Quite so." Mr. Willis said the bankrupt had been guilty of obtaining credit by false pretences, concealing property, and rash and hazardous speculation.

The whole of this debtor's proceedings, as Mr. Willis remarked, had been of a shameful character. The case of Mrs. Rose illustrated his method. She was an old woman, a widow, infirm in mind and body, who had lent him, as her pastor, all she possessed. When asked to return a portion of it he promised to do so, and at once went off to the North to borrow from someone else. He probably was in hopes that she would die before his return, as she actually did, on finding herself denuded of all she possessed by one whom she had implicitly trusted. Besides collecting the widow's mite in this manner, the bankrupt, like someone else, "carried the bag for the other disciples," and appeared to have helped himself to the contents to such an extent that he had to borrow money to make good his defalcations.

The official solicitor said the most odious feature of the case was the revolting conjunction of "praying and preying" which had been disclosed, and the manner in which the bankrupt had apparently sought to make God himself a partner in his iniquities. Yet this was what he had done when he represented to Mr. Lever that he had been directed, after prayer, to send for him, for the purpose of taking from him his little fortune without prospect or intention of repayment. His Honor, in refusing the bankrupt's discharge, said he did not think Mr. Willis had used language too strong in characterising his conduct. He considered that fraud had been proved, and said he had no

doubt that when the debtor committed perjury with regard to the policy of insurance, he intended to conceal that property. The Rev. Penfold Cope will probably be on the look-out for a new flock to fleece.

Priestly greed has been exemplified in Brazil, where senators have complained that as much as £5 was being charged to the freed slaves for their being allowed to solemnise marriage.

The Rev. E. Gough has put out a book entitled *The Bible True from the Beginning*. He takes a curious way of proving his thesis, for he considers that Adam was not an individual man, but only the designation of a race.

The *Edinburgh Evening News*, referring to the clerical opposition to the Sunday opening of the Botanic Gardens, says: "If the servants of clergymen were interrogated it might be found that no class of domestic are more hard worked on Sunday."

A pleasure which never palls—that of staying away from church.

Mr. Joseph Bennett gave, at the Royal Institution, on Saturday, the first of four lectures on the rise and development of the opera. The first paper was devoted to the mediæval miracle plays, moralities, and masques, and Mr. Bennett gave a highly-amusing account of one of the mystery plays on the subject of the Flood. Noah was endeavoring to induce his wife to enter the ark, but Mrs. Noah replied, "I have my gossips to consult; one foot forward I will not go, so get thee a new wife!" The gossips enter and drink Malmsey, and Ham suggests that they "fetch her in." So Noah and his sons carry Mrs. Noah into the ark, and the father, when he receives a sounding box on the ear from the irate lady, exclaims, "Marry, but this is hot!"

We cull the following item from the "Theatrical News" of the *Sun*:—"The *Tour de Babel* will not be brought out at the Renaissance Theatre till the 14th May. The rôles of Noah, Shem, Ham, Japhet, etc., are highly spoken of. The censor has, it is said, exercised his scissors in the scene where Noah's conduct would pain the Blue Ribbonists.

A horrible case of religious mania is reported from St. Louis. One Monroe Laseter and his wife, who have for some time been fanatical "Sanctificationists," went home from a religious meeting and became possessed of the idea that they must crucify their only child, an eighteen-months old girl, as an offering to God for the world's purification. Laseter told his wife she must act as crucifier. After prayer, the wife seized the child in her arms, squeezed it, and then stripped it naked and drove a spike through each hand, nailing it to a cross. Only religion is capable of warping the human mind to such insane atrocities as these.

The Rev. Charles Wastell Worledge, assistant priest to Mr. Mackonochie at St. Peter's London Docks, whose work has been highly praised by the *Church Times* and other Ritualistic organs, has found his proper place and gone over to Catholicism. We wish all the secret Romanisers would follow suit.

A painful occurrence took place at the Established Church, Auchtermuchty, Fifeshire, recently. William Crichton, the officer, after ringing the bell for the church service, went to church with his wife and daughter, and had just taken a seat—when he was observed in distress and moaning loudly. An alarm was raised, and Dr. M'Donald hastened to Mr. Crichton's assistance, when he was found to be dead. The minister, the Rev. Mr. Hogg "improved the occasion." But not exactly in the same tone he might have taken if his church officer had died in a Freethought hall.

Mr. D. Stocks, the senior deacon of the Catholic Apostolic Church, Orchard Street, Westminster, does not believe in the injunction to resist not evil. He entered the church and discovered a burglar, who had wrenched open the offertory boxes. Instead of giving him his purse also, he engaged in a struggle with the burglar, and held him by

the throat until the arrival of the sacristan. Very good, but very unchristian.

Pascal expressed the geographical character of much of our morality by saying that a river or a mountain range might be the boundary of a vice or a virtue. A bookseller has been fined £20 at Bristol for selling Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a work which Alderman Philipps at the Guildhall pronounced to be "not obscene." The prosecutions our new censorship of the National Vigilance Society are instituting seem likely to lead to a variety of such conflicting judgments; the main result being that the prosecuted works get well advertised and wider read than before.

In America also they suffer from this puritanism which knows no other way of moral teaching than enforced prohibition. It is there known as Comstockism, from Anthony Comstock, the secretary of a society for the suppression of vice. Anthony is the butt of all the comic papers in America. They say his prudishness actually dreads the approach of night. The bare thought of Eve is too much for him.

Mr. Charles Hill, Secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association publishes a melancholy letter from the reverend sec, of the New York Sabbath Society who says "I am sorry to say that in nearly all our largest cities most of our morning journals now publish a Sunday edition, Here in New York all the papers but one do so. The influence of these Sunday papers is regarded with great anxiety and alarm by thoughtful Christians. No other agency is doing so much to secularise Sunday, perhaps I might say not all the other agencies combined." The work on the Sunday papers is of course all done on the Saturday. The clericals have never found fault with Monday papers because they are set up on Sunday. Could there be any better proof that what they really resent is the press having become a rival to the pulpit.

Scotch piety is horrified at the desecration of the Sabbath by the people of Edinburgh having a healthful sail to Aberdour or an instructive walk in the Botanic Gardens. The Sabbath Association employ persons to stand at Leith Dock gates and warn each person, "Prepare to meet thy God," as though that individual was on the other side of the Forth. Recently half a dozen missionaries paraded the pier, sandwiched between huge flapping boards bearing Scriptural texts. There was a high wind, and when the boards were brought broadside to the breeze, the unfortunate carriers were powerless, and, amid good-humored chaff, rapidly discommoded themselves of the holy extracts of Scripture.

The writer of an article on "Waste," in the *Quarterly Review*, should have turned his attention to the report of the Religious Tract Society. That society boasts the circulation during the past year of 62,696,190 publications, and a total since the first formation of the society of 2,680,086,580. We guess that the chief good from all this printing has accrued to the printers.

The Roman correspondent of the *Tablet* finds that since the Italian poet Carducci wrote his Hymn to Satan (by which he meant the spirit of revolt and freedom) a regular worship of that gentleman, so indispensable to the priestly business, has sprung up. Several papers are said to have taken the name of the Devil; and, oh, horror! even locomotives on the railway have been christened Lucifer. Even in America, we might inform the *Tablet* correspondent, there is a paper called *Lucifer*, and another *Der Arme Teufel*—the poor Devil; and though the one explains that it means the light-bringer, and the other advocates the cause of the poor of this world, both are edited by Free-thinkers, and are therefore doubtless in the service of Satan. Christians, however, should not be surprised at devil-worship. They have long been engaged in worshipping a Devil—only they have dignified him with the name of Jehovah and Almighty God.

"Thy Church feels almost widowed, she yearns, she pines, she cries in her heart for her Lord." So says a writer in the *Christian Commonwealth*. We trust the poor old woman will soon find her hubby.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

May 12, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, N.W., at 7.30: "The Pit and the Upper Circle."
 May 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.

It being contrary to post office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

S. PARKES.—(1) See answer to J. Ross. (2) We shall try to make our pages as useful as possible, but they must be interesting or they will not be read.

QUIZ.—Glad to hear you like "the improvement made in the *Freethinker*." We believe the enlargement gives universal satisfaction. Your plan of sending stamps to Mr. Forder, with the addresses of persons you wish the *Freethinker* to be sent to so that they may receive it on Sunday morning, is a very good one. Other readers might go and do likewise.

R. E. HOLDING.—Thanks for the catalogue, which has been returned.

W. GIBSON.—Of course we don't expect help from those who cannot afford it. Any reader who cannot order an extra copy through his newsagent, can at least lend his own to a friend when he has done with it himself.

CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER.—Shall be glad to hear from you again.
 J. ROSS.—We have read your excellent letter with great interest. Our "personal safety" counts for nothing in the matter. While there was danger, and afterwards when there was a serious risk of it, we printed our Comic Bible Sketches on principle. Nor do we intend to discontinue them now. But, as we have already worked out the leading incidents of the Bible, we shall only give them occasionally, varying them with sketches of a different character.

T. H. FURGCLAND.—The report of the Rev. Mr. Tuckwell's lecture on Norwich 200,000 years ago appeared, we believe, in the *Eastern Evening News* of about a week before our paragraph. Our copy is destroyed, but if you send a stamp to Norwich you can doubtless obtain it from the office of the paper.

J. SAUNDERS.—Cuttings and jokes are always welcome, even though they do not get used just at once.

P. WESTRA.—Bruno portraits sent.

G. ELLIS.—The *Star*, which ought to know, says that the Pope's income in 1888 amounted to £504,000, of which 372,000 came from Peter's Pence and 132,000 for interest of money invested outside Italy. As the expenses of the Vatican are under £340,000 Signor Pecci seems to make a pretty good thing of it. This income was, of course, exclusive of presents, of which His Holiness gets more than he knows what to do with.

J. GRIFFITH.—Mr. E. T. Garner, 8 Heywork Road, Stratford, London, E., says he has a spare copy of the '82 Christmas No. Mr. S. Moss also offers one for half-a-crown.

OUR CIRCULATION FUND.—We have received the following subscriptions:—Oldham Friend, £1; J. W., 2s.; N. Francis, 1s.

C. E. FORD.—Thanks for the papers. You are doing a good work in that way.

C. J. RUSE.—The acknowledgment was posted before Mr. Foote left town.

A. P. A. S.—Always pleased to hear from you or to receive papers.

W. UHLENBURG.—MS. received. Will be considered when Mr. Foote returns to town.

C. K. LAPORTE.—Your communications have all arrived safely and duly.

J. PEARSON.—Received with thanks. We wish all our readers would keep an eye on the local press and send us copies of anything in our way.

M. W. ROBERTS.—Mr. Forder sends the posters. Thanks for your offer to get them displayed. Your good opinion of Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers* is shared by all who have made its acquaintance.

RECEIVED.—The Liberator—Freethought—Secular Thought—Bulletin des Sommaires—Ironclad Age—The Thinker—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—Open Court—Fair Play—Truthseeker—Diamond Fields Advertiser—Brighton Times—The Leeds Times—Boston Investigator—Sussex Times—Evening Post—

Freidenker—Menschenthuns—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags Blatt—Colne and Nelson Times—Edinburgh Evening News—Western Figaro—Chat—Der Arme Teufel—Shropshire Guardian.

SEVERAL correspondents remain unanswered in consequence of Mr. Foote's organising tour in Lancashire.

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.

DESPITE the brilliant summer weather, Mr. Foote had good audiences at Manchester in the morning and afternoon on Sunday. The evening audience was somewhat thinned by the thunderstorm with heavy rain which broke over the city, but the attendance was more numerous than could have been expected. Opposition at all three lectures was offered by Mr. Wise, of the Christian Evidence Society, who came over from Liverpool for the purpose. Mr. Wise is doing good work for Freethought.

ON Monday evening Mr. Foote lectured to a moderate audience in the Temperance Hall, Oldham; Mr. Wise turning up again for two speeches in opposition. A private meeting was afterwards held at the rooms of the Oldham Branch, where Mr. Foote had a chat with the members on Secular business. We hope to see a little more activity displayed in propagating Freethought in Oldham. The Branch has suffered from the absorption of some of its influential members in politics, but there are some good workers left, and if they cooperate vigorously with the younger members the Branch will soon be in a flourishing condition. What is wanted is frequent lectures, good social gatherings, and concerted action on all public matters in which Freethinkers are specially interested.

MR. R. O. SMITH, honorary treasurer of the London Secular Federation, acknowledges the following subscriptions:—E. Truelove, £1; Dick Edwards, £2 2s. Further contributions are needed for the work.

AMONG the members of the London School Board who spoke and voted for justice to Mr. A. B. Moss was Mr. Raphael. This young gentleman remembered the sufferings of his own people at the hands of Christians, and it prompted him to indignation at the outrage on a Freethinking fellow citizen. Since then Mr. Raphael, who is also a member of the London County Council, has become converted from Conservatism and Coercion to Liberalism and Home Rule. He is resigning his seat in order not to retain it dishonestly, and will appeal to the constituency on his altered programme.

Do I Blaspheme? by Colonel Ingersoll, has long been out of print. We are preparing a re-issue which will be ready next week in the form of a 32 pp. pamphlet, price twopence.

THE Malthusian League holds its annual meeting at South Place Institute on Monday evening. Mr. Foote will try to be present.

DR. PARKER is alarmed at "the Congregational outlook," and the situation is so grave that he has called a Conference at the City Temple.

THEY have started a Freethought Society in San Francisco, and Professor Herbert Miller has been engaged as permanent lecturer at a salary of one hundred dollars a month.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S *Universal Republic*, has reached us at last. It contains several short articles in Mr. Holyoake's characteristic style, but the general impression is a want of actuality. Mr. Holyoake should come down from the clouds.

THE French Revolution, or rather the opening of the States General, was celebrated in Paris with becoming éclat, despite the absence of all religious ritual and of the Ambassadors of the monarchical powers, who, in a very ridiculous manner, all found that urgent business necessitated their leaving Paris at this particular time. The *Times* remarks that the presence of the Archbishop of Paris

would have added dignity to the occasion. For "dignity" read "absurdity."

THE *Freidenker* of Milwaukee gives a very good notice of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. After remarking on the difficulties of the task, the increasing number of eminent Freethinkers and the many whose names are lost and forgotten it says: "If, therefore, the book does not claim absolute completeness, yet is it a most highly serviceable work, and one which should be in the hands of every Freethinker. The biographical notices are concise and clear."

THE *Freidenker* has commenced to issue a separate illustrated sheet, *Für unsere Jugend*, "for our children." It seems to be a very useful auxiliary to our excellent contemporary.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY gives an interesting account of his early career in the May number of *Our Celebrities*. He says he does not know why he was christened Thomas Henry, but it was "a curious chance that my parents should have fixed for my usual denomination upon the name of that particular Apostle with whom I have always felt most sympathy." Of the principal features of his career Mr. Huxley gives no particulars, but the following is his account of the aims he has had in view:—"To promote the increase of natural knowledge and to forward the application of scientific methods of investigations to all the problems of life to the best of my ability, in the conviction, which has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength, that there is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind, except veracity of thought and of action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is, when the garment of make-believe, by which pious hands have hidden its uglier features, is stripped off. It is with this intent that I have subordinated any reasonable, or unreasonable, ambition for scientific fame which I may have permitted myself to entertain to other ends; to the popularisation of science; to the development and organisation of scientific education; to the endless series of battles and skirmishes over evolution; and to untiring opposition to that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism, which in England, as everywhere else, and to whatever denomination it may belong, is the deadly enemy of science."

THE *Radical* for May gives a not very flattering portrait of Mrs. Sowden, a good report of the London Secular Federation Dinner, and continues its account of Richard Carlile and his shopmen-heroes.

THE subject of Free Education is year by year making progress in the popular mind. It is desirable that Freethinkers should see that the question is linked as closely as possible with Church Disendowment. A portion of tithes was in early times set aside for the poor, and in devoting some share of them to free primary education the spirit of their original institution would be preserved and accommodated to modern exigences.

MR. C. E. FORD again ably replies in the *Sussex Evening Times* to the Secretary of the Calvinistic Protestant Union in the matter of John Calvin. Mr. Ford deserves great credit for the care with which he has presented the Freethought side, and the editor of the *S. E. T.* for his fairness in allowing it to be represented.

My Lyrical Life is the title Mr. Gerald Massey has chosen for the collected edition of his poems, to be shortly published in two volumes.

MISS MATHILDE BLIND'S new work is entitled *The Ascent of Man*. We shall give it further notice when we have seen a copy.

THE astronomers have often shown symptoms of opposition to the long periods of time assigned for the formation of the earth by geologists. Dr. James Croll, however, who ranks high as an authority, in his recent work on *Stellar Evolution and its Relation to Geological Time*, allows that the geologists are right, and that some ninety millions of years must be assigned as a minimum since the earliest known formations.

De Dageraad of May 1st opens with a good article on witches and witch trials, by K. F. Croes, who shows the biblical authority of the persecutions and their support by Luther and Calvin. V. D. E. translates Mr. Bradlaugh's "Humanity's gain from Unbelief," and Conrad van Elborch, reproduces the notice of the Dutch Freethought Martyr, Adriaan Koerbagh, which he supplied to Mr. Wheeler, and which appeared in our issue of March 31st. The "Universal Review" also gives several items from the *Freethinker*, and the compilation of "Bible Contradictions" is continued.

THE Liberation Society professes itself well satisfied with the progress of the Disestablishment Movement, which, according to its report, has materially advanced during the last three years. An enthusiastic meeting was held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle under the presidency of Alfred Illingworth, M.P.

HUXLEY ON "THOSE PIGS."

"OF the Gadarene story, Dr. Wace, with all solemnity and twice over, affirms that he 'believes it.' I am sorry to trouble him further, but what does he mean by 'it'? Because there are two stories, one in 'Mark' and 'Luke,' and the other in 'Matthew.' In the former, which I quoted in my previous paper, there is one possessed man; in the latter there are two. The story is told fully, with the vigorous homely diction and the picturesque details of a piece of folklore, in the second gospel. The immediately antecedent event is the storm on the Lake of Genesareth. The immediately consequent events are the message from the ruler of the synagogue and the healing of the woman with an issue of blood. In the third gospel, the order of events is exactly the same, and there is an extremely close general and verbal correspondence between the narratives of the miracle. Both agree in stating that there was only one possessed man, and that he was the residence of many devils, whose name was 'Legion.'

"In the first gospel, the event which immediately precedes the Gadarene affair is, as before, the storm; the message from the ruler and the healing of the issue are separated from it by the accounts of the healing of a paralytic, of the calling of Matthew, and of a discussion with some Pharisees. Again, while the second gospel speaks of the country of the 'Gadarenes' as the locality of the event, the third gospel has 'Gerasenes,' 'Gergesenes,' and 'Gadarenes' in different ancient MSS.; while the first has 'Gergesenes.'

"The really important points to be noticed, however, in the narrative of the first gospel, are these—that there are two possessed men instead of one; and that while the story is abbreviated by omissions, what there is of it is often verbally identical with the corresponding passages in the other two gospels. The most unabashed of reconcilers cannot well say that one man is the same as two, or two as one; and, though the suggestion really has been made, that two different miracles, agreeing in all essential particulars, except the number of the possessed, were effected immediately after the storm on the lake, I should be sorry to accuse any one of seriously adopting it. Nor will it be pretended that the allegory refuge is accessible in this particular case.

"So, when Dr. Wace says that he believes in the synoptic evangelists' account of the miraculous be-devilment of swine, I may fairly ask which of them does he believe? Does he hold by the one evangelist's story, or by that of the two evangelists? And having made his election, what reasons has he to give for choice? If it is suggested that the witness of two is to be taken against that of one, not only is the testimony dealt with in that common-sense fashion against which theologians of his school protest so warmly; not only is all question of inspiration at an end, but the further inquiry arises, after all, is it the

testimony of two against one? Are the authors of the versions in the second and the third gospels really independent witnesses? In order to answer this question, it is only needful to place the English versions of the two side by side, and compare them carefully. It will then be seen that the coincidences between them, not merely in substance, but in arrangement, and in the use of identical words in the same order, are such, that only two alternatives are conceivable: either one evangelist freely copied from the other, or both based themselves upon a common source, which may either have been a written document, or a definite oral tradition learned by heart. Assuredly, these two testimonies are not those of independent witnesses. Further, when the narrative in the first gospel is compared with that in the other two, the same fact comes out.

"Supposing, then, that Dr. Wace is right in his assumption that Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote the works which we find attributed to them by tradition, what is the value of their agreement, even that something more or less like this particular miracle occurred, since it is demonstrable, either that all depend on some antecedent statement, of the authorship of which nothing is known, or that two are dependent upon the third?

"Dr. Wace says he believes the Gadarene story; whichever version of it he accepts, therefore, he believes that Jesus said what he is stated in all the versions to have said, and thereby virtually declared that the theory of the nature of the spiritual world involved in the story is true. Now I hold that this theory is false, that it is a monstrous and mischievous fiction; and I unhesitatingly express my disbelief in any assertion that it is true, by whomsoever made. So that, if Dr. Wace is right in his belief, he is also quite right in classing me among the people he calls 'infidels;' and although I cannot fulfil the eccentric expectation of the Bishop of Peterborough, that I shall glory in a title which, from my point of view, it would be simply silly to adopt, I certainly shall rejoice not to be reckoned among the Bishop's 'us Christians' so long as the profession of belief in such stories as the Gadarene pig affair, on the strength of a tradition of unknown origin, alone remain, forms any part of the Christian faith. And, although I have, more than once, repudiated the gift of prophecy, yet I think I may venture to express the anticipation, that if 'Christians' generally are going to follow the line taken by the Bishop of Peterborough and Dr. Wace, it will not be long before all men of common-sense qualify for a place among the 'infidels.'"—*Nineteenth Century*.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that may remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our permanent placards, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (7) Do one of the above, or all of them if you can.

A FORGOTTEN REFORMER.

AMONG the English Jacobins who did so much for liberty in this country at the end of the last century, there is one who as far as I am aware has been overlooked by the writers upon the early English reformers, and who as a pronounced Freethinker and a sufferer for liberty of speech deserves some recognition from those who inherit the tradition of political and religious reform. I allude to Dr. Wm. Hodgson, the first translator into English of D'Holbach's Atheistic work, *The System of Nature*. Of Hodgson, the particulars I have been able to gather for my *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers* are extremely scant and chiefly concern his trial and imprisonment for sedition. Even this is not mentioned in Mr. E. Smith's *Story of the English Jacobins*. Mr. Hodgson's offence was having publicly, in the London Coffee House, proposed the toast of "The French Republic, and may she triumph over all her enemies." Spies and informers then abounding, the proprietor of the place sent for constables. Hodgson was arrested, and on the following morning ordered to give bail for £1000. On the 9th of December, 1793, he was tried at the Old Bailey before Sir John William Rose, the Recorder of London, and after a whole day's trial, prosecuted by the Attorney-General and defending himself, was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, to pay a fine of two hundred pounds, and give security for two years more in four hundred pounds!

While in prison he appeared to have the use of books and freedom to write at will, for it was here he translated the work of D'Holbach (then attributed to Mirabaud), which originally appeared in forty parts at sixpence each.

He also wrote and published a political treatise entitled *The Commonwealth of Reason*, in which he advocated the severance of religion from the State, and other reforms. Hodgson also put forward "Proposals for publishing by Subscription: a Treatise called the Female Citizen, or a historical inquiry into the rights of woman." At the expiry of his term Hodgson was still detained for the fine and bail which he was unable to procure. He stated his grievance to the public in a pamphlet dated Newgate, Feb. 9, 1796. This was published by Daniel Isaac Eaton, who had already been prosecuted for publishing Paine's *Rights of Man* and other advanced political works, and who was afterwards to suffer further for publishing the *Age of Reason*. Whether the pamphlet was instrumental in procuring Hodgson's release or not I am unaware. The furore against the "Republicans and Levellers" had subsided, and he was probably soon after released. The only other glimpse of him is in *The Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1816, in which he is mentioned as having also issued *The Temple of Apollo*, a selection of the best poems from the most admired writers, 1796. He also appears from the British Museum catalogue to have written some educational works on the French language and a life of Napoleon Buonaparte.

It is to be hoped that the *Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by Leslie Stephen,* will include the names of William Hodgson and his co-workers of that time, such as Joseph Gerrald, Thomas Hardy, Stewart Kyd, Maurice Margarot, John Martin, Francis Place, John Richter, and Clio Rickman. To such men—and they were most of them Freethinkers—and those others who then fought and suffered in the struggle for freedom of opinion, is largely due the advances in intelligence and in political justice which has distinguished this country since the era of the great French Revolution. J. M. W.

"Leave off that blessed Yankee-Doodle and sing about Jesus" said Florrie's Mamma. A short time afterwards she was horrified at hearing Florrie singing to her dolly

"Holy Jesus went to town, riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his hat, and called it macaroni.
Holy Jesus, keep it up! Jesus is a dandy.
Mind the music and the dance, and with the girls be handy."

The child had obeyed orders. She left Yankee-Doodle out and replaced him with Jesus.

* I regret to state that this work omits the names of many Freethinkers, such as T. Aikenhead, the last person hanged for blasphemy, H. G. Atkinson, the correspondent of Harriet Martineau, Robert Cooper, author of the *Infidels' Text Book*, etc., James Cranbrook, author of *Credibilia*, the *Founders of Christianity*, and others whose names are included in my work.

THE UNION OF CHRISTENDOM.

ONE often wonders what sort of aspect the world would present if the desire of Christians for Union were realised. We do not ask how long the happy family would dwell together in harmony, though it would be interesting to know how Freethinkers would fare. It may be admitted that a real union of Christians would go a long way towards proving that there is "something" in their religion, and such a remarkable result might almost be looked upon as a demonstration of the possibility of miracles. But, supposing it to be accomplished, how would it affect Freethinkers? Many Christians are anxious to persuade us that Christianity has "turned over a new leaf." They confess with much apparent regret—possibly very real regret—that the old methods of persecution were very unwise and very wicked, and they have altered them completely. But have they? Can they? Is not the spirit of persecution in their religion itself?

At present, Christians do not persecute beyond a certain extent, but as that is just the limit to which they are able to go, we are entitled to conclude that an united Christendom would extend the limit; indeed, we should not be far wrong in assuming that the very desire for union arises from a conviction that the process of shutting the mouths of opponents might then be carried out more effectually. No one, that we are aware of, has as yet seen a sign of a disposition on the part of the Infallible Pope Leo XIII. to tear up the Syllabus; nor on the part of Mr. Spurgeon to abandon his "down grade" denunciations; and we may fairly take such men as Mr. De Leste, Mr. Addison, Col. Sandys, and the very unctuous Mr. Smith, as specimens of what Christian society would blossom into if the desired union were once secured.

But what is the union which Christians profess to desire so heartily? It is the union of hearts apparently, since the union of heads is impracticable; at least, such appears to be the wish of the Rev. Joseph Parker. That somewhat slippery gentleman has, in a letter to a Mr. J. H. Edwards, Aberystwyth, on the suggested union of the Baptist and Congregational bodies, just favored the world with his own particular "ecclesiastical creed," and it is worth "nailing to the counter," as exhibiting the high water mark which this desire for Christian unity has reached.

"I see more and more clearly," says Dr. Parker, "how possible it is to develop the spirit of union without setting up any machinery indicative of identical identity."

Mesopotamia used to be a word to conjure with, but in these days of philosophic criticism there is little doubt that "identical identity" will prove to be a very effective substitute. There is a degree of ambiguity about it which enhances its value immensely. Of course, it goes without saying that Parker's creed is short and pithy. As formulated by himself, it is as follows:—

"Officially..... Absolute independence.
Sympathetically... All possible union."

Mark the "safe side" proclivities of the worthy Doctor: "All possible union"! Without desiring to be too satirical, one cannot resist exclaiming, "blessed are they who expect nothing"—that is, in the way of logic—from a Christian. Dr. Parker is in favor of union with his fellow-Christians, but makes it a *sine qua non* that each body is to have absolute independence "officially." Well, figs may come from thistles some day, and we may admit that, when that day does arrive, the Romanist, for example, will consent to absolute official independence.

It will be urged, perhaps, that the divergence between the Congregationalists and the Baptist is not so great as that between the Papal Leo and the sects; still, the difference between Dr. Parker's Congregationalists and the Baptists as represented by Mr. Edwards appears to involve all the difference between absolute independence and "identical identity"; and, as this latter is an unknown quantity, the divergence may be enormous. We are without any means whatever of judging of its importance. Assuming, however, that this unknown x , this "identical identity," is as infinitesimal in importance as any Christian Unionist could wish it to be, and as microscopic as a very germ, what does this "all possible union" indicate?

How true it is that "fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind." This cry for union is nothing more than a cry for a temporary dismissal of certain points of disagreement, in face of a common danger. Mutual sympathy is indeed sorely needed, and yet one of the wildest dreamers of Christian

Union cannot get beyond the desire for as much of it as is "possible." One might ask if Christians have not reached that felicitous condition already? Is not the Archbishop of Canterbury—the Dr. King of Lincoln farce notwithstanding—making "sheeps' eyes" at the "Scarlet Woman," and has not Dr. Rigg been trying to "cut him out"? Are not Mr. Gladstone and his wing of the High Church conspiring with the Dollingers, the Reinkens, and the Old Catholics of Germany generally? Is not Mr. H. P. Hughes trying to patch up a compromise by which the "laity" are to be permitted to come behind the scenes, and be treated as accomplices, as far as it may be considered safe to trust them? Surely these are signs that "all possible union" is already attained. What more do they expect?

Dr. Parker declares that "Congregationalism is losing its power like other denominations;" a confession eminently satisfactory to Freethinkers if it is true. Yet Freethinkers must take heed. It will not do to ignore the fact that this result is largely due to Christian assistance. Whatever may be the case with sectarian denominations, the Roman Church is still vigorously alive. The O. C. R. (Order of Corporate Reunion) is by no means inactive, and though the hatred of both of these bodies towards sectarianism is even more intense than that of Freethinkers, we may be tolerably certain that should these bodies succeed in bringing about their Corporate Reunion, they will endeavor to make short work of Freethought, even though they have, and are, assisting Freethinkers in extinguishing the sects.

Such Christians as Dr. Parker and Mr. Edwards are in sore straits. They have become fully alive to the fact that the old curses which used to be levelled at the old lady at Rome are not so effective as they were, and the Freethinkers whom they have hitherto looked upon and utilised as safe allies in their own struggles for religious liberty, are beginning to ask for something like reciprocity in the contest. The Nonconformists just now are "between the devil and the deep sea," and they cannot quite make up their minds to which side their true policy should lead them. Of course, the "Scarlet Lady" claims to be a Christian, and if they admit that she is so, where is their own *raison d'être*? Ah! but in her bosom lies that "identical identity"—the very essence of it—which Dr. Parker so much dreads—and to his honor be it spoken; while on the other side stands out, clear as the sun at noon-day, liberty of conscience and freedom of thought and speech; and, horror of horrors! there looms in the distance the inevitable corollaries of these—"infidelity." The dilemma is a sad one, and demands more courage than most Nonconformists possess. They are rapidly realising the truth of the old adage, "Misfortune makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows." And they seem to be realising the equally important truth, that the so-called infidels are not such bad fellows after all. They can possess the cardinal virtues at any rate, even though they do not aspire to cardinals' hats and stockings.

J. H. ELLIS.

A PAGAN PROPHECY.

MEN are to-day as thick as flies in a confectioner's shop; in fifty years there will be less to eat, but certainly some millions more mouths. I laugh, I rub my hands! I shall be dead before the red time comes. I laugh at the religionists who say that God provides for those he brings into the world. The French Revolution will compare with the revolution that is to come, that must come, that is inevitable, as a puddle on the roadside compares with the sea. Men will hang like pears on every lamp-post, in every great quarter of London there will be an electric guillotine that will decapitate the rich like hogs in Chicago. Christ, who with his white feet trod out the blood of the ancient world, and promised Universal Peace, shall go out in a cataclysm of blood. The neck of mankind shall be opened, and blood shall cover the face of the earth.—George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man*.

LITTLE Tommy, who has a bald uncle, was very much interested when his mother told him the other day that the hairs of his head were all numbered. "Is that so with everybody?" asked he. "Yes," said his mother. "That is what the Bible says." Tommy pondered for a minute in silence. "Well," said he, finally, "if the Bible says so, I suppose you think it must be so; but I'll bet the angel who does the counting feels mighty glad when he comes to a man with a head like Uncle Jim's."

IS PAGANISM DEAD?

ARCHBISHOP WHATELY, who was a close inquirer into the manners and customs of the peasantry, wrote: "It is a marvel to many, and it seems to them nearly incredible, that the Egyptians should have gone after other gods, and yet the vulgar in most parts of Christendom are actually serving the gods of their ancestors. But they do not call them *gods*, but fairies or bogles, etc., and they do not apply the word *worship* to their veneration of them, nor *sacrifice* to their offerings. And this slight change of name keeps most people ignorant of a fact that is before their eyes."

Mr. Robert Munro, in the current number of *Good Words*, adduces a number of facts to show that even in godly Scotland Paganism is by no means yet extinct. Mr. Munro shows that not only the old Pagan superstitions still exist, but that practices and items of Pagan ritual yet remain. He reckons that out of six hundred holy wells of pre-Christian character, a dozen probably still receive adoration. We are sure he under-estimates the number. It is not so long since the present writer attended, on the 1st of May, the assembly of lads and lassies at Pear-tree Well, Kelvinside, now virtually a part of Glasgow. St. Maelrubha, near Loch Maree, in Ross-shire, has a famous well. "Some years ago, many hundreds of people from all quarters were brought to it before sunrise at stated seasons, but especially at Belteine and Halloween." The patients knelt to a sacred tree, made offerings, and drank of the waters. The tree was studded with bawbees offered to the genii of the place.

Sacrifice lasted long in Scotland. Bulls were offered to St. Cuthbert in Galloway. Probably he succeeded some god worshipped in this fashion. "Not many years ago" cows were sacrificed in Elgin to stay the cattle plague. A human sacrifice for the health of a chief is recorded as having taken place in 1596. The custom of putting aside a portion of the land for the devil to sow his tares in—"the gudeman's croft"—is well known, and remains in many parts. Mr. Munro finds, that in the North cocks are still sacrificed for the cure of epileptic patients. The poor fowl is buried alive, and the demon in the epileptic is expected to be satisfied with the feathered biped as his victim.

One of the worst superstitions is the dread of the dying. A boat was wrecked in the Sound of Mull within the last ten years, and the crew deserted their captain on shore, believing him to be dying. Some bolder Southerner found the man, and he recovered. This craven superstition has also been found among the natives of Australia, where a sick person is sometimes dispatched to appease the *boilyas* or bogies who are supposed to be tormenting him. Another instance of how little religion may be in accordance with morality.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

There is nothing so absurd but may be obtruded upon the vulgar under pretence of religion.—*Bishop South*, "Sermon on Ecclesiastical Policy."

"The five writers to whose genius we owe the first attempt at comprehensive views of history were Bolingbroke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon. Of these the second was but a cold believer in Christianity, if, indeed, he believed in it at all. and the other four were avowed and notorious infidels."—*Buckle*

Parables: Indirect ways of expressing facts, much affected by the godhead in holy writ, doubtless for fear he should speak too plainly to the favored he wishes to instruct.—*D'Holbach's "Portable Theology."*

Every sect is a certificate that God has not plainly revealed his will to man.—*Ingersoll*.

THE BIBLE SCRIBES.—"The biblical writers of history have written the history, not after the model of objective historical investigation, but under the influence of subjective interests, so that they considered and represented the historical reality in accordance with religious theories and motives."—*Dr. Rübigier, Encyclopaedia of Theology*, vol. ii., p. 60; T. Clark's Foreign Theological Library.

"Did God make the baby, pa?" "Yes, Willie." "Well, what does he charge for a little kid like Jimmy?"

An actor in Oliver Doud Byron's company had the weakness of getting rattled easily in his lines, yet he never lost himself so completely as to stick dead. He could always keep talking, even though he went wide of the actual text. On one occasion he had the line, "O merciful providence, how wonderful are thy ways!" He became excited over something and exclaimed: "O God, how peculiar you are!"—*Truthseeker*.

SCRIPTURE TEACHING IN CHURCH SCHOOLS.

THE advocates of Secular Education would be greatly helped, I am sure, were parents but to carefully enquire *how* the Scripture teaching is carried out, for *then* such an outcry and demand for reform would be the result that the Bible teaching in schools would cease altogether. In the first place the amount taught or rather I should say "parrot-learnt" is utterly inadequate to the little children's capabilities. Think of this you mothers who fondly believe your little ones are contentedly hearing pretty bible stories. Think of your seven-year-old being caned if he find himself unable to remember such words as Melchizedek, Golgotha, Padan-aram, Methusaleh and such other barbaric words as may only be found in our Bible.

Although the government instructions emphatically state that each day, at least 4 hours secular instruction must be provided, yet I have known many cases where, at the near approach of the scripture examination, scripture has been taught from 9 to 10.15, then from 10.15 to 10.45 in lieu of a dictation the youngsters have been forced to transcribe the catechism, the creed, etc.; from 10.45 to 11.30 secular instruction has been given, just as a sort of soothe-conscience and at 11.30 to 12 scripture once more. At 12 all the school has adjourned for grace before meat, etc. (and God has often totally ignored the prayers of the poorer children, strange to say) and the school is supposed to be over. But not so; as the scripture examination is at hand, over-time must be worked and consequently scripture till one o'clock is indulged in. Then children and teachers are allowed to go home. I say teachers advisedly, for mind, *they* are not desirous of this over-work; all this is done to satisfy the greed of the head-master, who in turn does it to please the parsons, and woe betide the assistant-teacher who, in this matter, dares to disobey the behests of his masters, for 'twere better that a millstone, etc.

At two o'clock, school reassembles, with cane for those unlucky youngsters who have not finished their meal in time. Although no Scripture-lesson is marked on the time-table, yet it is no uncommon thing to indulge in that subject from 2 till 2.30. Then secular subjects until 4, at which time the school returns to scripture until 5 o'clock, or I have known cases until 5.30 or 5.45.

Now this is a thing that goes on in our schools every day, right under the nose of H. M. Inspectors, who either pretend they are not aware of these things, or else conveniently ignore them. From evil cometh forth good, and so this surfeit of scripture is doing more useful work in the Freethought world than years of propaganda; for the youngsters, I can assure readers of the *Freethinker*, get to positively loathe the sight and name of Bible.

A CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER.

PROFANE JOKES.

Diocesan inspector (examining class on third chapter of Timothy): Inspector: "Why should a bishop have but one wife?" After a few seconds, a sharp boy puts his hand up. Inspector: "Well, my boy, why shouldn't he?" Boy: "Please, sir, because no man can serve two masters."

"Little girl," said the minister to a child who was playing on the street Sunday morning, "does your mother allow you to play with a hoop on the Sabbath?" "No, sir, not usually." "Does she know you are out now?" "You bet she does; I caught her in a whopper this morning."

It is reported that his Satanic majesty, while on a recent visit to this planet for a cargo of sulphur, was shown a sample of iodoform. He immediately countermanded the sulphur order, and substituted iodoform, saying, "Not in all my realms below does any perfume so please my sense." In other words, he odor of iodoform beats sheol.

Deacon Julius C. Snowball, who takes a religious paper, asked Rev. Aminadab Bledsoe the other day, "What is de meanin' ob de terms pan-Episcopals and pan-Presbyterians? Why hain't we got no culled pan-Baptisses?" "Look heah, niggah, it pains me to see you s'play such ignorance. Don't yer know dat de pan-'Piscopals, pan-Mefodists, and pan-Baptisses is dem what pans out de mos' when de hat is passed?"

Wicked boarder (on Sunday). "You do not read Sunday papers, I believe, Mrs. De Goode?" Mrs. De Goode (severely); "No, I do not, and I am grieved to find that you do." "I was only going to say that this copy of the Sunday *Scandal* has a two-column account of that minister who was arrested for improper—" "Oh, if there is anything in the paper about ministers, that's different. Thank you."

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