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LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IV.

ON "OLD TESTAMENT MORALITY."—*Continued.*
To the Rev. Eustace R. Conder, D.D.

I COME now to your specific treatment of the moral difficulties of Scripture. The first case is that of God's dealings with Adam and Eve. Whether the story be literally true, or an allegory, you allow that the "moral and spiritual meaning" is the same. Man, you say, was "endowed with a moral nature in which sin had no place," a statement which is belied by the fact that he fell. He sinned; he was guilty of "a deliberate violation of known duty;" he disobeyed "God's positive command;" he committed a breach of that "law written in the heart;" and he suffered the inevitable penalty.

Such is your argument, and nearly every word is false. The fact is that Adam ate an apple, which he was forbidden to touch. Millions of boys have done the same thing since, but their parents have not damned them everlastingly for such a trivial offence. You may tell me that a parent's command is one thing, and God's another. I answer that an act cannot be affected by the greatness of the person who forbids it; otherwise morality is nothing but submission to authority, and the goodness or badness of conduct depends on the disposition of lawgivers and executioners.

What could two beings in the position of Adam and Eve know of duty? Mr. Gladstone himself, in his reply to Colonel Ingersoll, is obliged to admit that this unhappy couple had no "ethical standard," no rule of "consciously perceived right and wrong," but were under the law of "simple obedience." "Their condition," he continues, "was greatly analagous to that of the infant, who has just reached the stage at which he can comprehend that he is ordered to do this or that, but not the nature of the thing so ordered." In other words, they were infants in knowledge, experience, and wisdom, and they acted like infants in the presence of a shining allurements. I know not whether you have children, but, if you have, I suppose they have often done what you told them not to do. Yet I have no doubt you are too humane to turn them out of your house, and if you did the law would make you support them. It is a crime to strike a child, it is foolish to punish. Love is the true discipline, and wisdom and patience are its best instruments. I have a right to show even a child that certain things annoy me, but no right to beat it for a mistake, or to curse it for an indiscretion. Even if it sometimes showed a bad disposition, I should reflect that it probably derived it from its parents, and feel all the more tender and patient on that account. Nothing is more miserably stupid than the imposition of one's will, without any other justification. Parents should guide, and in some cases restrain; but it is a wretched egotism which prompts them to say "Do this because I tell you to."

No. 417.

Let us apply this truth to the story of the Fall. Why did Jehovah act in a manner which I, as a human parent, should consider disgraceful? Why did he steel his heart against his own creatures? Why did he curse his own children? Why did he prohibit an action in itself harmless? Why did he plant a trap for two inexperienced beings, and punish them for falling into it? Would he not have shown more wisdom and humanity if, instead of telling them not to eat apples, he had told them to be just, kind, and merciful to each other, fortifying the precept with his own example?

Let me ask you to consider the curse pronounced by your God on his "disobedient" children for their first "offence." I pass the grotesque curse upon the serpent who tempted them, and the ridiculous curse upon the inanimate ground beneath their feet. What remains is sufficient for my purpose. Jehovah sentenced the man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. This may be regarded as a curse in hot countries, where labor is irksome, and everything invites to repose; but in temperate climates like ours it is a pleasant and wholesome discipline. There is a great deal of truth in the observation of an American humorist that "doing nothing is hard work—if you keep at it." I admit, however, that the woman's sentence was far more serious, and indeed a curse. "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and conception," said the Lord, "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." Such language is to my mind infamous. I had a mother, I have sisters, I have a wife. I know that a woman, especially with her first child, needs all sympathy and support during her confinement. Motherhood, as Ingersoll remarks, is the most pathetic fact in nature. Surely, sir, if the woman merited punishment—which I am far from conceding—a merciful God would not choose the most piteous crisis of her life to inflict it upon her. A fiend sent to torment her at such a moment might melt with compassion, and murmur "Not now, not now!" Am I, then, to worship a deity who is too callous to relent? No, I will not. As the son of a woman, as the husband of a woman, I say that if there be a God who deliberately adds a pang to the sufferings of a woman in childbirth, I hate him with every drop of blood in my veins. Words are too feeble to express my scorn and loathing.

Why did Jehovah place a temptation in the way of his inexperienced children if he knew that their fall would involve such awful consequences? Why did he allow the Devil to heighten the temptation with all the arts of a consummate seducer? Why did he not warn them against the wiles of their enemy? Why did he station cherubim at the gate of Eden to prevent them from returning after their expulsion? Would it not have been more considerate had he used the same means to prevent the Devil from disturbing their innocent serenity?

You justify God's inflicting the penalty of Adam's

transgression upon his remote posterity. You say that they were "involved in his sin." In what way, sir? To tell me that Adam begat a son "in his own image" is only to tell me that the son was his father's child. It does not justify the transmitted curse? It does not explain why a being of "perfect rectitude, wisdom, and love" punishes millions of souls for the fault of one soul milleniums before their birth. To my mind it seems perfectly clear that, if each soul is to be saved or damned alone, every soul should have a fair start. I deny that I should be prejudiced by the sin of another. If God makes me responsible for the offences of my ancestors, I suppose I must submit to his power, but I will never acknowledge his justice.

Your own heart, sir, is evidently superior to your creed. You perceive that the conduct of Jehovah is incapable of justification on the ordinary principles of human morality. You fall back, therefore, upon the position of Bishop Butler, which is inexpugnable to the attacks of Deists, but indefensible against the attacks of a later scepticism. You ask whether the Bible account of the Fall presents "any moral difficulty which does not meet us equally in daily experience?" But this is not the argument you undertook to maintain. You set yourself the task of reconciling the conduct of Jehovah with "perfect rectitude, wisdom, and love." It is idle to point out that worse things than those in the Bible happen in the ordinary course of nature. The universe is not on trial, nor its ruler. We are not, for the moment, concerned with the God of Nature, if such a being exist, but with the God of the Bible. It is useless to defend your Deity by saying "Mine is as good as yours." I have no deity to defend. You have; and I must beg you to defend him on the principles you accepted in your introduction.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

THE MYTH OF JUDAS.

The gospel account of Judas will not hold water. It is full of discrepancies, inconsistencies, and absurdities. If Jesus was as well known as the stories make out, where was the necessity of his being pointed out by the traitor's kiss? In (John xviii.), 2-5, Judas is a mere bystander. He neither kisses Jesus nor points him out, but Jesus himself says to his arrester "I am he." Yet it is John who is the most virulent against Judas; says he "was a thief" (xii., 6), and attributes to Jesus the words "Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?" (vi., 70).* The divine discernment displayed in the choice of a devil as one of Christ's apostles—he also applied the term Satan to Peter (Matt. xvi., 23)—may excite the admiration of faith, especially as he had promised these twelve that they should sit on twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel (Matt. xix., 28). Jesus is said to have known who it was that should betray him, and speaks of it as "determined" (John xiii., 21; Luke xxii., 22), yet he is said to have said "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi., 24), a sentence, by the way, which excludes the hope of final salvation for the man who was the immediate cause of the redemption. So poor Judas is represented as condemned to be hanged and damned in order to fulfil the scriptures. The motive of covetousness usually assigned for the betrayal of a God whose miracles Judas had witnessed, is so ridiculously inadequate—especially as he bore the bag, and presumably could have helped himself to more than thirty pieces of silver—that Archbishop Whately suggested he did it in order to force on the coming of the Messianic Kingdom; a supposition precluded by Jesus's own denunciations against him. And then

* "The son of perdition," John xvii., 12, is also referred to Judas.

the discrepancies as to the suicide. The account in Matthew is utterly irreconcilable with that in the Acts. Did Judas first repent, return the money and hang himself and afterwards buy a field with the money and burst asunder, or first buy a field and falling headlong burst asunder and then repent, return the money and hang himself? Papias, who lived in the middle of the second century, gives a different account of his end. He says that "Judas walked about in this world a sad example of impiety, for his body had so swollen that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily, so he was crushed by a chariot and his bowels gushed out." This is a proof Papias did not know our Matthew. From Paul's saying that Jesus appeared to the twelve (1 Cor. xv., 5) it is probable he knew nothing of Judas's suicide.

Such considerations show that the gospel story of Judas is as much a legend as that in the gospel of the Infancy, which relates that Judas when a boy was possessed by Satan, and endeavored to bite Jesus (chap. xiv). But how did this legend grow? It is evidently so entwined with that of Jesus that whoever shall unravel the one will go a long way towards explaining the other. † I cannot pretend to do this, at any rate in the limits of an article, but will throw out a suggestion or so for the disentanglement of a few points, which may give the clue to some others. If the reader will give patient attention to a somewhat difficult matter, I will make amends for what he may think the conjectural character of my suggestion by winding up with an anecdote.

In the first place Judas is wanted in the Christian story as "the villain of the piece." The function of the traitor is to set off the betrayed. An explanation was needed as to how the divine being came to get crucified. The treachery of a disciple was a natural suggestion. Jesus had been put to death, but of course he died a sacrifice, "our passover sacrificed for us." The first-born son was regarded by the Jews as devoted to God, and had to be redeemed by an offering (Exod. xiii., 13; Num. xviii., 15; Luke ii., 22). This offering Kitto tells us in his *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, ‡ was thirty pieces of silver. Here we have the origin of this portion of the Judas myth. The story of his hanging himself may well have come from the name Iscariot, since *Ascara* signifies strangling, and *iskariot* means a leathern bag, and may have led to the legend of his being treasurer. Those who wish to know why the adversary of Jesus was named Judas may get a hint from *The Jesus of History and the Jesus of Tradition Identified*, by George Solomon. It is certain that the Christians were first known as Galileans (Acts i., 11; ii., 7; Luke xxiii., 6). Now the Galileans are mentioned by Josephus as a turbulent people, the followers of one, Judas of Galilee (mentioned Acts v., 37), who Origen informs us was regarded by his followers as the Messiah.§ The Galileans, says Josephus, were the latest sect which originated among the Jews. Their leader Judas was put to death, but his party still carried on his work (Antiq. xviii., 10; Wars ii., 8-1). Josephus, be it ever borne in mind, knew nothing of the Christians, unless he intended them by the Essenes or this turbulent sect founded by Judas of Galilee. Mr. Solomon boldly surmises that this was so, || and that the Jesus of the gospels was a mixture of Judas with the Jesus of whom Josephus tells as crying "woe, woe to Jerusalem."

As Christianity spread in the Roman empire, it was necessary to carefully distinguish its founder from the Judas who led an insurrection and was put to death. Judas became the antagonist of Jesus,

† It is noticeable that in the *Jewish Life of Christ* Judas has a prominent place, being indeed the hero of the piece.

‡ Article "First Born." The offering was made when the child was thirty days old.

§ Homily on Luke xxv.

|| In a paper on "Josephus and the Gospels," contributed to *Progress*, Nov. 1887, I have given reasons supporting this view.

though Irenæus, the first Father who mentions the four gospels, also mentions a Gospel according to Judas, and we know that an early Christian sect, called by their adversaries the Cainites, venerated him.

Now for the anecdote. A red-haired Freethinker once overheard a Jesuit remark, "Let me see. Is not Judas always depicted with red hair?" "That, sir," remarked the fiery-hued Freethinker, "has no warrant in your Gospels. But it is quite clear that Judas was of the company of Jesus."

J. M. WHEELER.

TALMAGE'S VILLAGE LAD—JESUS.

It has often been observed that the Gospels contain very little respecting the boyhood of Christ. Except the account of his wonderful birth and mysterious parentage, there is an absolute silence in the Gospels concerning young Jesus until he was taken at the age of twelve by his parents to the Temple.

Dr. Talmage, who appears to have had a special revelation all to himself, has, with characteristic audacity, recently supplied the deficiency. In a sermon on "Christ, the Village Lad," the American divine, with the aid of the "uninspired" "Apocryphal Gospels," has described once for all in vivid colors the characteristics of Jesus as a boy, so that anybody who desired to make the life of the Nazarene a model upon which to base his conduct from early childhood upwards, may now have all the necessary data for the purpose.

Dr. Talmage explains why he does not hesitate to select incidents from the Apocryphal Gospels. The explanation is so ingenious that it is worth recording. He admits that he does not believe these writings to be "divinely inspired," but then he remarks neither is Macaulay's *History of England*, yet this work—though marred with errors—contains much that is true. Why not the Apocryphal Gospels? Just so. Whatever seems reasonable, whether found in sacred or profane literature, is accepted by the rationalist. Only the alleged miraculous doings and absurd stories respecting Jesus are repudiated by him; the rest, if it possesses any value, is taken for what it is worth. But this is not the method adopted by the American divine. He accepts some of the stories of Christ's early miracles and rejects others, but does not say why. I suppose it is because some miracles are even too tough for him. He takes the "uninspired" and probably untrue statements of the Apocryphal Gospels because he can find no other. That is, he thinks that falsehood is better than nothing at all. But let us glance for a moment at the "village lad" described by Dr. Talmage and see what this imaginary boy is like. What sort of a country lad was he? A yokel? A scarer of birds, or minder of sheep? Not at all. Jesus lived in a neighborhood twelve hundred feet above the level of the sea, surrounded by mountains of enormous height.

From a hill-top Jesus could gaze upon Lake Tiberias; by a turn of the head he could look into the valley beneath, or towards the great Mediterranean Sea. Like ordinary mortals, Jesus was influenced in his boyhood by his surroundings. Indeed, Dr. Talmage avers that this village lad was "the most sensitive being that ever walked the earth, and if a pale invalid's weak finger could not touch his robe without strength going out to him, these mountains and seas could not have touched his eye without irradiating his entire nature with their magnificence." All this sounds very well, no doubt; but Jesus could only get out of these surroundings just as much as his mind was capable of extracting from them, which evidently was not much: otherwise he would not have left his views on these picturesque places for Dr. Talmage or any other theologian to describe, but

would probably have rushed into poetry, and left in his own handwriting his early impressions of these magnificent scenes. "From the naturalness, the simplicity, and freshness of his parables," Dr. Talmage says he knows that "Jesus was a boy in the fields." Further that he was a "perfect boy." There are various degrees of merit, but perfection itself is utterly inconceivable. One boy may be better than another in some respects, but a "perfect boy" would be worth preserving in a museum.

It is refreshing to learn that Jesus "bathed in the stream like other lads, broke through flowery edges, drank from the wells, chased butterflies" (which no perfect boy should be cruel enough to do), "talked to strange people of Damascus and Egypt;" indeed, Dr. Talmage wants no further inspired or uninspired information to persuade him that Jesus "was a splendid boy, a radiant boy, the grandest, holiest, mightiest boy of all the ages!" What rubbish! From this it is perfectly obvious that this American divine is easily satisfied of anything *good* respecting Jesus. Ordinary folk, however, will chuckle over the absurd idea of an infinite God chasing a butterfly or getting stung by a bee!

Talmage has nothing to say about Jesus making mud birds, as recorded in the gospel of the "Infancy," which when completed got up and flew away, reminding one forcibly of the American artist who said that he painted a ginger beer bottle so naturally, that the cork flew out before he had time to paint the string to hold it in with. Such stories as these are dexterously passed over, and Dr. Talmage proceeds to say something of Jesus in the mechanic's shop.

Joseph, the gentleman who allowed himself to be called the father of Jesus, though he was no relation, if the Christian creed be true, is believed to have died very soon after the famous trip to the temple, when his alleged son gave him three days of mental anxiety, which he might very well have been spared. If Jesus worked at his trade as a carpenter, it is singular that in the whole of his discourses he never mentioned anything about it; never advised his hearers to join a trades' union; never taught his disciples how to make tables and chairs, or any article of utility; while, as a God, the least we could expect of him would be that he should leave some sample of his workmanship on exhibition to future generations of carpenters. This, however, he did not do, and so far as the world is concerned, instead of serving his time at his trade as carpenter, he would have been just as usefully employed in chasing butterflies or hunting for mare's nests.

And finally Dr. Talmage has something to say about the visit of Jesus with his parents to the temple and his discussion with the learned doctors. "Though so young," says this Brooklyn preacher, Jesus "knew all about that temple under whose roof they held that most wonderful discussion of all history. He knew the meaning of every altar, of every sacrifice, of every golden candlestick, of every embroidered curtain, of every crumb of showbread, of every drop of oil—and he might have added, every drop of wine—in that sacred edifice." "He knew all about God." Of course he did, was he not himself God? "He knew all about man." "He knew all about heaven for he came from it." And he might have gone further and said "He knew all about hell, for he went to it?"

Talmage is delighted at the idea that Jesus asked the learned doctors questions. He thinks that all children should be inquisitive. So they are; and most children could ask Talmage questions to which it would puzzle him to give satisfactory answers.

Perhaps Jesus said, "There are just six billion of stars, and if you don't believe me count 'em." But according to the Apocryphal Gospels, Jesus discussed astronomy with an astronomer, and overwhelmed the

scientist by telling him the number of heavenly bodies and spheres in the universe; also describing their triangular, square, and sextile aspect; their size by several prognostications, and other things which the reason of man has never discovered (Infancy, chapter xxi., verse 10). Jesus also discussed physics, natural philosophy and metaphysics, and proved himself quite an *au fait* on all these subjects.

But what was the use of discussing these matters in this learned way, and leaving the rest of the world in total ignorance respecting them. A good work on astronomy would have been of immense value two thousand years ago, and a work which finally decided the cause and *modus operandi* of all astronomical phenomena would have been valuable for all time. Yet these important utterances were not so much as recorded in the Gospels, whereas utterances of far less value are given at length. The truth is, Jesus is just as likely to have discussed electricity, steam power, the telephone, and other modern discoveries, as to have spoken authoritatively on such topics as astronomy or physics, which, in that period of the world's history, were like Jesus—only in their infancy, having just parted with their swaddling clothes. And in that condition the theologian would like to keep mankind forevermore.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ACID DROPS.

From a paragraph in the *Lone Star* it appears that Spurgeon finds the "Down Grade," or Hell Fire, business a paying one. A gentleman who used to give him £200 a year stopped the subscription on account of the great preacher's attitude towards his fellow Baptists who went in for more treacle and less brimstone. Thereupon Spurgeon laid the matter before the Lord, with the result that he now gets £500 instead of the £200. All very well, Mr. Spurgeon! But suppose, in future, you lay these matters before the Lord *only*; how much money do you think you'll get then? You tell the Lord about your financial troubles, but you take good care to tell some of his worshippers likewise—gentlemen with much piety and more cash.

A Philadelphian lady sends Spurgeon £25, and in acknowledging it he says, "I know of a surety that there is an awful twist in the thoughts of the many, and error bears the bell." It must, indeed, when pious ladies send cash across the Atlantic to encourage Spurgeon in preaching hell and damnation to the people of Great Britain. There must be "an awful twist" in Spurgeon too, or he would never groan at the thought that hell is cooling off. Could any man without "an awful twist" take a positive pride and pleasure in playing the part of a theological rattlesnake for a Devil of a God?

The American soil is fertile in cranks, Christs and charlatans. Schweinfurth of Rockford, has an imitator in a South Carolina evangelist who calls himself Jesus Christ, and has won the faith of numerous negroes. He has been going through the country crying out, quite in the style of the original J.C. "Give up everything and follow me. Let your crops go; turn your cattle in patches; the Lord will provide for you." He shows scars on his hand which he says were made by nails when he was crucified on Calvary. His hair and beard are long and shaggy. The negroes fall down and worship him, and kiss his hands and feet, and anoint him. At his bidding women have left their husbands and men their families to follow him. His familiarity with the scriptures is exceptional. He has told the people that he will go back to heaven in a chariot of fire at an early date. But alas the unbelieving whites have arrested him and if he ascends to the New Jerusalem he will probably have to levitate from a lunatic asylum.

The *Standard* wants ten thousand affidavits for the story in *Forest and Stream* about crayfish catching flies; yet it believes, without a single affidavit, the old story of a fish swimming about with a half-crown in its mouth ready to pay Peter's rates and taxes.

The tradesmen of Holloway, who consider their businesses

injured by the S.A., have endeavored to make a test case and so far have been supported by the magistrate, Mr. Bros, who held that the "Army" musicians distinctly contravened the law which said, "No noisy instrument shall be used for the purpose of attracting an assembly." There is an appeal, but meantime, failing the payment of a fine, the cornet player was sent to prison for fourteen days. That superfine Christian, General Booth, will always let his poor dupes go to prison rather than pay a paltry fine which they have incurred in obedience to orders from headquarters.

Jesus Christ—or, at any rate, a person calling himself by that revered name—has been breaking General Booth's windows at the Salvation Headquarters, and been run in for the offence. When before the Mansion House, he said, "I am Jesus Christ, all the earth belongs to me. General Booth has wronged me, and I intend to see him through with it. Whatever I get I will do the same again when I come out. I am obliged to do what I am asked and I will do it. General Booth draws a thousand a year, and those things ought not to be."

The magistrate said it was clear he was of unsound mind and committed him to Stone Asylum. This, however, is only what the people said of the original J. C. Those who believe in him are bound to believe he would come again, and perhaps the same spirit which incited to the overthrowing of the money changers' tables may have led to the smashing of Booth's windows. It is not for Christians to deny the possibility of J. C. being now in Stone Asylum.

— Two of the "S. A." arrested for obstruction at Bishop Stortford were told by the magistrate that "the Salvation Army were entitled to as much use of the highway as other people, but no more." They were fined £1 each, but refused to pay, and as none of their friends in court volunteered to pay for them, they were committed to prison for seven days, singing "We never will give in."

Pious people have great belief in God during a thunderstorm. Perhaps they will explain why he killed a coachman named George Brown in a recent storm on Buckhurst Hill. The poor fellow was killed by the electric current, the horse also being so badly injured that it had to be slaughtered. George Brown leaves a wife and eight children, for whom the Lord should make a proper provision.

On the other hand, the Lord seems to have neglected his business at South Woodford, whence a gentleman well known in religious circles is reported to have eloped with a lady, leaving his wife to look for her John.

Mr. W. Woods, of Warnford Park, near Bishop's Waltham, is a Churchman and a Conservative; nevertheless he has a strong objection to pay full tithes for a bad season. But his parson, the Rev. Mr. Wynn, is a kind of clerical Shylock who insists on having his bond. The result was a distraint for £130 and costs, and a public auction, at which sixteen policemen were required to keep the peace. After the sale an anti-tithe meeting was held, and parson Wynn and his wife were burnt in effigy. Still, it may be suspected that Mr. Wynn feels himself on the winning side, and doesn't mind being burnt in effigy, especially as most of his enemies, thank God, will be burnt in reality some day.

The effect of the Tithe Bill, with which the Government are proceeding despite a diminished majority upon the question, will be that magistrates will be compelled to commit tenants to prison for debts which indubitably are not theirs but the landlord's. We are not sorry such a measure should be passed in the interests of the clergy. It is one of those things which will tend to bring about disestablishment and disendowment.

Shocking! Shocking! Four bottles of the Blood of Christ have been stolen from a church at Bray, near Maidenhead. The rascals got off clear with their booty, and are now full of the holy spirit. We doubt, however, if it will have any intoxicating effect upon them; for Communion port is generally poor stuff, bought at thirteen, or, at the outside, twenty shillings a dozen.

The *Daily News* Vienna correspondent telegraphs: "The Emperor has just exercised his prerogative, which he rarely uses, of stopping a criminal prosecution. A priest had been arrested here for having embezzled 22,000 florins, which he had collected for clerical purposes. Confronted after the arrest with his chief, he showed such contrition that the archbishop was moved to solicit the Emperor's pardon, which was granted."

The Rev. J. Wynne, ex-rector of Llandrillo, near Corwen, Wales, offered the sum of £2,000 for a school on condition that the inhabitants consented to the dispersal of the School Board. The Nonconformists of Llandrillo, we are glad to say, declined the bribe with thanks, since its real meaning would have been that the school would be placed under the control of the rector.

A new American religious book endeavors to make capital out of the fact that at various times a number of different theories have been put forward to account for the origin of Christianity. After all, this only shows that a number of different minds are dissatisfied with the orthodox view. The period itself is so obscure, and the evidence bearing on it so disfigured with forgery, that it is little wonder a number of diverse theories have been held.

We learn on the authority of a Theosophist that Madame Blavatsky is going abroad for a few months and has confided the presidency of the Theosophical Society into the hands of her new convert, Mrs. Besant.

Light, the organ of the Spiritists, rejoices in the conversion of Mrs. Besant as "a dash out of the Sahara in which she has long wandered." We fear the dash is after all a mirage. It is certain, however, that Theosophy is closely allied to spiritism. Madame Blavatsky, indeed, says occultists believe in "spirits" because they *feel* (and some see) themselves surrounded on every side by them" (*Secret Doctrine*, vol. ii., p. 370). A delightful belief and one that can truly claim antiquity since it is universally found among savages.

Talmage draws large cheques on the bank of futurity. He promises his hearers that in Heaven they shall find a throne, a music room, and a family room, and if anyone wants an entire room to himself or herself it can be afforded. The rooms will be palatial and with any amount of jewelry as described in the Apocalypse. Talmage is not anxious to get there. All he wants is as near an approach as possible to this palatial residence on earth.

While Roman Catholics are at about eight and a half per cent. in Scotland (that is, one-twelfth of the nation), and five per cent. in England (that is, one-twentieth of the nation), the criminals vary in rate in Scotland from five to six times their due number, and in England from sixteen per cent., the lowest, and yet three times as great as it should be, to sixty-seven per cent., or more than thirteen times as large a ratio as they should bear. The last percentage is reached in Liverpool, where the Roman Catholics are about a fourth of the inhabitants. These returns strikingly illustrate that the more the religion the less the morality.

The Rev. William E. Howard, of New York, convicted of grand larceny in connection with the Electric Sugar Refining Company frauds, has been sentenced to nine years and eight months imprisonment at hard labor. He was led to his cell with a Bible in his hand.

A clever satirical card is being circulated extensively on the Paris boulevards. It shows a map of France, with the sea and strips of land over the frontiers colored green, and the indentations are made to represent Jesuit faces; the noses all pointing into the country which these expelled gentry are seeking to re-enter. On holding the card up to the light, looking through from the plain side, you behold France as a big ugly Jesuit's face; the moral being that, despite their expulsion, the Jesuits are all over France, just as of old.

There has been an earthquake shock in Arran, and we dare say it will lend point to many a Calvinistic sermon.

Piety sees the hand of the Lord wherever there is mischief.

The Wesleyans are "going forward." We shouldn't mind if they *went* forward, for up to date they have simply revolved in a circle. For the rest, there is much cry and little wool in this agitation. Cleveland Hall, in London, was bought on the pretence of converting a Secular meeting-place into a Christian one, though, as a matter of fact, the Secularists had not used it for many years. After converting the hall the Wesleyan Mission should have converted the Freethinkers. It did report the conversion of *one*, but he cannot be produced, and is obviously mythical. The only solid thing is the cash subscribed for the business.

Poor George Whitehead! He is vicar of St. Andrew's Northampton, and his proceedings in the parish are being investigated by a commission appointed by the Bishop of Peterborough. That is bad enough, but his cup of woe is now running over. His daughter Frances has been brought before the "beak" on a charge of obtaining money by false pretences. We sympathise with the poor afflicted soul, and trust he will find comfort in the great truth that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

"Modern Unbelief Among Young Men: How to Counteract It," was the subject of an essay by the Rev. W. T. Bankhead at the recent Conference of the Young Men's Christian Associations at South Shields. This gentleman's chief specific against scepticism was to prove that "one sinless individual in a race that was otherwise sinful was a break in the order of nature." What simplicity, to be sure! The Christ of the gospels is not an actual but an ideal figure, which on the other hand is far from perfect. Thus go both legs of Mr. Bankhead's argument.

The *Daily News* tells the story of one Golam Imaun, a rogue in Bengal, who by the reputation of being a magician cheated many out of their property. He pretended he could multiply 500 rupees into 1000, and persons were found simple enough to believe him. Those who smile at such credulity may be quite ready to credit the story of the five loaves and two small fishes. So easy is it to strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.

The *Vikingen* of Stockholm, devoted a leading article to "the Atheistic Propaganda," in Sweden. Its tone may be gathered from the polite quotation at head "The fool has said in his heart there is no god." It is evidently annoyed that the placidity of Swedish piety should be startled by the boldness of *Fritankaren*. The Vikings of old met their enemies sword in hand and the Freethinkers of Sweden will be well pleased to meet their opponents in free and open debate. But they seem more ready to rely upon the strength of persecution than upon the result of fair discussion.

There appears to be a little nest of Mohammedans in Liverpool. They worship in a small chapel in Mount Vernon Street, and when the Shah visited the city they presented him with an illuminated address. This document was signed by three individuals, in the name of the rest, of course, like the three tailors of Tooley Street. The President, William Henry Quilliam, is a solicitor with a police-court practice; and as there is no high falutin like that of a lawyer when he bursts out, we are not surprised that the document in question is exceedingly high-flown. But there is one sentence which staggers us. The Almighty is asked to preserve the Shah from several evils, and among them from "the mischief of women blowing on knots." Is this an oriental circumlocution for "nagging"?

Rev. John Duncan, the Baptist preacher in Alabama who poisoned his wife and eloped with a girl, has been caught.

How these Christians love one another! Down at Norwich the Church clergy refuse to cooperate with the Nonconformist ministers in holding services at the workhouse. The paupers' bodies are not valued highly, but there is a pretty squabble over their souls. The Nonconformists say "Let us go snacks," and the Churchmen say "All or nothing—no connexion with the shop opposite!"

Mr. E. J. Gorrings, chairman of the Seaford Local

Board, characterises the statement of the Vicar of Seaford, that he has never refused to meet the wishes of Nonconformists as to the position of a grave, as "astoundingly inaccurate." He gives the instance of an old man whose friends desired him to be interred by the side of his wife, and the request was refused because he was a Dissenter.

In another case a man named Clarke died, and his friends asked the Nonconformist minister to bury him. On hearing this, the vicar called on the widow and threatened her that the bell should not be tolled if that minister conducted the service. The widow, however, kept to her resolve, and they were not allowed to bury in the family grave, which had been paid for by deceased, and where his friends wished to bury him, but on the north side of the church. It is open to quibble whether this spot is or is not an out-of-the-way corner, but it is a spot that hitherto has been devoted to suicides and bodies washed up from the sea.

The Dissenters complain that although the dissenting population of the Forest of Dean is 70 to 75 per cent., sites are given for nothing for churches, while for dissenting chapels they are charged by the crown agents £240 per acre, the charge by private individuals being only £140 per acre.

Nonconformists rightly complain of the bigotry of Churchmen, but they are far from free of this vice themselves. Dr. S. Morrison writes to the *Christian World* that "a prominent London Independent minister has driven out of her employment, and into poverty, a thoroughly deserving school matron, solely on account of a change in her theological views. The change was from one form of Protestantism to another, and she was dismissed after long service, in spite of a promise not to intrude her special opinions."

Mr. Henry George has gone home to America again. Between the walnuts and wine, at the farewell banquet given to him by his friends at the National Liberal Club, he confided to them his belief "in God," as though it were a novelty. This is the soft, silly part of Mr. George's nature. He makes "the Creator" do heavy duty in *Progress and Poverty*, where he is good enough to tell us that God meant the land for the people, only somehow it has got into the wrong hands. On his own showing, Mr. George's scheme is one for helping the poor Almighty to realise his amiable intentions; which is very good on Mr. George's part, but a sad confession of weakness in his Deity.

Rev. Mr. Skewes is in a quandary. He cannot get his wonderful story about Sir John Franklin verified by the proper parties. Having published a book to show that the remains of Franklin were discovered through a tip given by an Irish girl who had a vision on the subject, Mr. Skewes finds the story ridiculed by Sir Leopold McClintock, while Lady Franklin's niece refuses to confirm it. But the pertinacious gentleman is not to be beaten. With the logic of his tribe, he offers £500 if either of them will *disprove* his story. Of course it is his business to *prove* it.

Judging from the Sunday School statistics, Freethought has a big fight before it. There are 5,733,325 scholars in the Sunday Schools of England and Wales. This vast army of little ones—the citizens of the next generation—is stuffed every Sunday with Christian teaching, and will grow up in spiritual slavery. Unfortunately it is impossible for Freethought to strike at the root of superstition. It cannot liberate the child's mind, and cut off the supply of slaves at the source. All it can do is to rescue some from bondage afterwards, and so the task is painful in its slowness. Courage, however! A little progress is made every year, a good deal in every generation, a great deal in every century. Our motto is "Work and Wait."

A correspondent of the *Daily News* exposes a nice piece of jobbery sought to be perpetrated by the Bishop of Lichfield under cover of a private bill in Parliament. Last year the Bishop appointed as his suffragan the Rev. Sir Lovelace T. Stainer, Bart., rector of the large and important parish of Stoke upon Trent, who became Bishop of Shrewsbury, without, however, resigning the rectory or its large emoluments. On the principle that one good turn

deserves another, he is, however, ready by private bill to hand over the advowson to the Bishop of Lichfield.

This worthy father in God has entered into a contract to buy the advowson of the trustees for £13,876, that henceforward the patronage may rest with the Bishops of Lichfield. But the oddity of the transaction is, that instead of the bishop finding the purchase money, it is to come out of the £15,730 forming the accumulation fund, which forms part of the Stoke rectory estate, and may be considered to belong to the inhabitants of Stoke. The scheme altogether ignores the parishioners beyond using their money to give the patronage to the Bishop, who thus appears as a trafficker in livings at other people's expense.

Mrs. Besant goes in for the transmigration of souls. But this doctrine is as useful to priests as the doctrine of heaven and hell. Bombay girls have been taught in the Government school that in the next life a wife who is cross with her husband will become a village dog; the woman who eats sweetmeats without sharing them with her husband's relations will become a musk-rat living in filth. On the whole we think Hell is slightly preferable.

The Bishop of Carlisle, to whom Mr. Foote addressed one of his *Letters to the Clergy* on Creation, pretends to great liberality; but on his own dunghill—we beg pardon, in his own diocese—he can be as bigoted as you please. Recently he administered a severe rebuke to the Rev. C. F. Gunton, vicar of Farlum, in Cumberland, for allowing a Nonconformist minister to deliver an address—not from the pulpit—in favor of the Hospital Sunday movement.

A call for money to build a new hospital in Jerusalem, issued by the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, has roused vehement protest from the Jews. The influence of the hospital, they say, is resorted to for the purposes of conversion, and as a matter of fact the hospital is not needed. The proverbial care of the Hebrews for their own people has not been lacking toward those crowding into Jerusalem. There are already two hospitals, and £9,000 has just been collected in Europe for enlarging them or for building another. Besides that, the Rothschilds have built a very fine one without the city walls.

Dreadful nonsense about Miracles appears in a leading article in the *Christian World*. "When an eagle," we are told, "carries a pine branch from the valley to build its nest on the crag three thousand feet aloft, it defies gravitation." This stuff is written in an age of School Boards and popular science. Evidently the writer doesn't understand the law of gravitation or the method of a bird's flight. He actually thinks that the builders of the Eiffel Tower "defied" gravitation! Eiffel himself would be the first to laugh at such idiotic ignorance.

A Christian correspondent takes us to task for lowering the sublime Jehovah into the cabmanlike Jahveh. Is he aware that Mr. Sayce calls Jehovah a hybrid monster? This indeed it is, being formed by adding the vowels of Edonai to J H V H. The Jews have always held that the Tetragrammaton should never be pronounced at all, and Jahveh or Yahveh is a nearer approach to the original than Jehovah, which is certainly not Hebrew.

God has been striking quite a number of his churches in America with lightning this summer. Of course, this is to be attributed to the vanity of Christians, who will put up high steeples, and their stupidity in thinking a sacred edifice does not need a lightning conductor.

More persecution in France! The New Army Bill classes priests with other citizens and makes them liable to the conscription. Up to the age of 45, also, they will be obliged to turn out whenever called upon for service in the Reserve, unless their presence is considered necessary in parishes. Of course it will be objected that priests and ecclesiastical professors and students will not fight—although, by the way, they are very ready at egging other people on to, especially when the interests of the Church are involved. But the French government has provided for this. In time of peace they will serve in the regiment but during war they will serve in the hospitals and ambulances.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, July 28, Hyde Park (open-air), at 11.15, "The Devil" Secular Hall, New Church Road, Camberwell, at 7.30, "Is there a God?"

Aug. 4 and 11, Camberwell; 18 and 25, London Hall of Science. Sept. 1, Manchester; 8, Liverpool; 15 and 22, London Hall of Science; 29, Newcastle.

Oct. 6 South Shields; 13 and 20, London Hall of Science.

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.

W. G. ELSMORE.—There is no good English book devoted entirely to the subject, but there are remarks upon it in Büchner's *Force and Matter*, Haeckel's *History of Creation*, and the various works of Darwin and Huxley. Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God* might help you, and Dr. Garrison's pamphlet on Design issued by the Freethought Publishing Co. By the way, *design* is a perfectly unscientific expression; the proper word is *adaption*.

A. D.—We have not yet any space for Guide Notices. We don't understand the writing on the back of the Comte photo, which is too faded for reproduction. Austin Holyoake couldn't have seen Comte in 1885, for the former died in 1874 and the latter in 1857.

R. W. sends us two profane jokes from *England*, a paper established by the Bartletts with the Baroness's money for the express purpose of squelching Atheism and Republicanism.

J. KEAST.—We wish success, of course, to all who are trying to promote Freethought.

A. D.—You say it is a first attempt, and you need not be surprised at its not being up to the mark.

C. DOEG.—September 8 is booked for you.

FREETHOUGHT.—Simply "I solemnly affirm," and the rest as before.

HENRY ARTHUR.—Thanks for the extract. Your order passed to Mr. Forder.

G. H. JUDD.—Always glad to receive papers and to hear from any of our readers. We thank you for procuring us six fresh subscribers among your fellow workmen. Our circulation might be doubled in a short time if a good percentage of our readers followed your example.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—We hope you will go on with your work. At the same time, we should like to see a strong and united Branch in Bristol.

JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec. of the North Eastern Secular Federation, acknowledges the following:—Mr. Pace, 5s.; Mr. Jacques, 2s.; Messrs. Sanderson and Teesdale, parcels of literature.

W. MERCER.—Pleased to hear of your firm determination. The police must not be allowed to say *what* meetings shall be held in Bristol or elsewhere. There must be absolute impartiality, and we rejoice to hear that the Bristol Freethinkers are resolved to uphold this principle.

TRUTH.—Your letter is unintelligible.

W. STEWART writes from Wood Green:—"We have acted on your suggestion at the Conference as to collections, with the result that our (outdoor) lectures are about self-supporting. Audience about 300." This correspondent asks Mr. Foote to pay the station a visit. He will try.

J. H. THOMAS.—Such things *will* happen. Mrs. Besant's change of opinion no more shakes our convictions than one of last year's thunderstorm shakes our nerves. Whoever is affected by such "conversions" has never thought out the subject for himself.

C. S. MORE.—what you say is true, but superfluous. Our Bible Sketches are not meant as history. They are caricatures. Apply your criticism to any cartoon in the comic papers and you will see its absurdity. For the rest there was no "inaccuracy" in what we gave from Scripture below the pictures on Moses. We cited the text without a word of comment, giving the exact reference, as we always do.

HOMERUS.—We should say that the course you contemplate is right. Argus says, "I have taken in the *Freethinker* from nearly the first number, and I have been perfectly satisfied with everything connected with it, except the folding. The party that has this to do must be disgusted with the work or the paper. As I have the paper bound, it annoys me very much, as after it is

once folded you cannot get the creases out." We do not fold the paper at our office. That is done by the newsagents. The creases will come out in binding if the pages are slightly damped, as the paper is for printing.

W. H. EMARY.—No reproach was intended. We stated a fact, hoping to get an explanation.

W. BRYAN.—Your apology for the shareholders does not prompt us to cancel a word of our paragraph. Whatever casuistry may suggest, the fact remains that they fear—or pretend to fear—an old law which is defied by men of every persuasion.

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.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Herts and Essex Observer—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Liberator—Neues Freireligioses Sonntagsblatt—Islington Gazette—Freedom—Twentieth Century—Open Court—Liberty—Thinker—Lucifer—Secular Thought—Freethought—Truthseeker—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—Western Figaro—Bulletin des Sommaires—Le Danton—Light

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE is delivering a special course of three Sunday evening lectures in the Secular Hall, Camberwell, beginning to-day (July 28). The subjects are—(1) Is there a God? (2) Has man a Soul? (3) Is the Bible Inspired? These cover pretty well the whole ground in dispute between Christians and Freethinkers. The clergy and any other representatives of Faith are specially invited, and, as there will be ample opportunities for discussion, the Branch has asked the Christian Evidence Society to send representatives.

OUR London friends might give the *Freethinker* an extra push this week. We suffered badly last week from the excursion and the bad weather, which practically stopped our weekly sale at the various meeting-places, both in and out of doors. This was peculiarly unfortunate, as we published a costly engraving in that number.

MR. BRADLAUGH is to debate at Newcastle with the Rev. M. Gibson on "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief." We fear the discussion will be very one-sided. Mr. Gibson is a well-meaning man, but he might as well box with Sullivan as debate with Mr. Bradlaugh.

NEARLY a thousand, or to be precise, nine hundred and seventy-three, lives of eminent Freethinkers have already appeared in the seven parts of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers* now issued. Those who wish to learn something of the literature and history of the Freethought movement in Europe and America will find this work indispensable.

As the *Freethinker* is a journal of world-wide circulation, going in ones, twos, and threes, to the remotest parts of the globe, it will not surprise our English readers that we have subscribers even in Russia, though *we*, at any rate, are puzzled to understand how such a "blasphemous" publication passes the censorship. One of our Russian subscribers, who writes a very decent English letter, is providing himself with a stock of our other publications. He is delighted with Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers* and the *Bible Handbook*, and especially with *Bible Heroes*, which he is anxious to see completed. Well, his wish will soon be realised. Two fresh numbers will be ready next week, and two more will complete the work.

OUR Russian friend is also anxious to obtain Mr. Foote's photograph, and that desire may also be gratified. Mr. Foote has always had, and still has, a sentimental objection to selling his photograph; but so many Freethinkers want one, and so many friends look upon his objection as fantastical, that he is prepared to give way for their sakes, and, as Carlyle would say, the thing shall be done.

Secular Thought, of Toronto, Canada, has now entered on its sixth volume. It has slightly changed its size, but continues to give twelve pages of interesting matter. The price is two dollars yearly.

THE *Western American*, a large journal published at Chicago in opposition to the encroachments of the Romish party in the United States, reprints Mr. Foote's article on the Bruno celebration, but without mentioning the *Freethinker*.

MR. ARNOLD JEROME MATTHEWS is by no means the only prominent English Roman Catholic who has come over to more or less pronounced Freethought. Quite recently we chronicled the conversion of Mr. Thomas W. Addis, one of the editors of the *Catholic Dictionary*. There are also the Rev. Rudolf Suffield, who edited one of the most popular Catholic books of devotion, and is now a Theist of the Voysey school, Mr. Arthur Wollaston Hutton, who published a work to which Cardinal Newman wrote a preface, and Mr. T. G. Law, a distinguished Oratorian, all of whom have forsaken orthodox Christianity of every kind. These are men of ability, and if they would work together might make a great impression on the Catholic community.

IT is not easy to convert Catholics. The terrors of purgatory are too strong and the power of the priest too firmly riveted, but when these are loosened the Catholic usually becomes a Freethinker. Protestantism is too evidently but a half-way house to afford more than temporary shelter for one on the road from superstition to rationalism.

ACCORDING to a decree published by the Minister of Education, no clergyman can in Italy be an inspector or director of a State school. This is based upon a recent law to the effect that the local control of schools should be in the hands of heads of families, who would naturally take a deep interest in their welfare. The leading object is to cut the schools loose from clerical oversight and influence, under which they have been but training-places for Catholics.

WE have evidence of the activity of Mr. Victor E. Lennstrand in Sweden by receiving pamphlets on "God," "Is there a life after death?" and the Four Gospels and their historic value. We hope they will have a wide circulation in Sweden, and the government seems determined by its prosecutions of Mr. Lennstrand to see that this hope is realised.

WE have received from Antwerp a pamphlet, being the published report of the mission of M. Navez to the inauguration of the monument to Bruno. We see that M. Navez was received with honor at Rome, and that amongst those who were there to greet him was our friend Signor Teodor Contreras, who, as some of our readers will remember, was one of the Italian delegates to London in '87, and who is now one of the Municipal Council at Naples.

THE Secularists of Oregon State have held a Convention at which Messrs. S. P. Putman and B. F. Underwood attended. They have formed an Oregon Secular Union, and decided to enter upon an energetic propaganda.

IN the midst of his struggles with the bigots in Australia, Mr. Symes has an eye for events in England. The occurrence of Whitsuntide makes him allude to the annual conference in England, and the *Liberator* extracts from our columns the report of the London Secular Federation's first annual dinner.

THE North-Eastern Secular Federation's pic-nic comes off at Durham on Sunday, August 4. Mr. A. B. Moss will be present and will deliver an open-air lecture. Tickets can be obtained at Newcastle from Peter Weston, stationer, Newgate Street. Friends in the Cleveland district should note that morning trains for Durham leave Middlesboro' at 7.24 and Stockton at 7.30.

WE understand that many more societies than Mr. Moss is able to visit desired his services in the north. There should be a good opportunity for an organising lecturer in several districts, if the men are ready and willing to come forward and do the work. The harvest truly is plentiful and the laborers but few.

THE *Times* Italian correspondent, July 22, says, "It is not unlikely that the Pope will soon leave Rome *bon gré, mal gré*, and I doubt whether he will ever return." Of course the Pope's object in going would be simply to embarrass the Italian Government and with the object of returning as Pope king, but the chance of this is so remote we do not believe that Pecci will stake his all upon the hazard of the die.

MEMBERS of the N. S. S. desiring children's tickets for

the annual excursion on Sunday, August 25, will please state the name of their Branch to Mr. Cookney, 1A Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury. Brakes for parents and friends will accompany the children; tickets, 2s. 6d. Mr. Cookney begs to acknowledge the following further subscriptions:—Samuel Seal, £1; Proprietor, "King's Oak," High Beech, 5s.; per J. Anderson, Charles Tomlison, 2s. 6d.; per Mrs. Cookney, Mrs. Hennell, 6d.; T. Hennell, 3d.; Bysison, 6d.; Mr. Bater, 1s.; A. Smith, 3d.; C. Norris, 3d.; R. S. S., 6d.; Mr. Hartmann, 2s.; Mrs. Cole, 6d.; Three Friends, 3s.

AN address by Mr. J. Wakefield MacGill on "How to Evangelise the Masses of our Great Cities," published at Manchester in *The City Missionary and His Work*, gives the following testimony to the failure of Christianity. "The Church of Christ has lost its hold of the working people of our great cities. There is no use shirking that fact. You can test it any day, as I have done dozens of times. Take a band of music down any of the districts where the working people live and you will draw the whole population to their doorsteps, except such men as are worshipping Bacchus in the neighboring public houses. In some localities not above one per cent of the working class population are in the house of God, and I question if in any locality you will find fifteen per cent."

MR. MALCOM QUIN, the chief of the Newcastle Positivists, has written an open letter to the mayor which has caused unnecessary surprise among the Secularists. Mr. Joseph Brown has replied vigorously through the local press. Both are in favor of *liberty*, and that is the main thing. They differ on the subject of religion. As a Positivist, Mr. Quin approves it in any form rather than none. Mr. Brown, on the other hand, as a Secularist, is dead against it in any form. Yet, after all, the dispute is about words; the disputants attach quite different meanings to "religion." For the rest, we note with pleasure that Mr. Quin agrees with Mr. Brown that the Sunday band performances on the moor should not be interfered with.

FREETHOUGHT is being propagated at outdoor meetings in Bristol by Mr. T. A. Williams and others. According to the *Bristol Mercury* there was a large and interested audience around the Secular orators on Sunday evening, and some "gentlemanly discussion" after the speeches. Some men and boys with "ultra-Christian zeal" tried to create a disturbance, but they were quieted by the approach of a blue helmet.

THE most recent volume in the "International Scientific Series"—a work on *The Primitive Family in its Origin and Development*—is by a Freethinker, Prof. C. N. Starcke, now of Copenhagen, but who, we understand, comes from Finland, in the extreme North of Europe.

THE ashes of the great Carnot, of the pure, heroic Hoche, of the independent Marceau, and of the constitutional martyr Baudin, will be laid in the Pantheon amid splendid ceremony. The whole garrison of Paris will file past the building, and speeches will be made by representative Frenchmen. There will be plenty of music, but all military, and no religious ceremony whatever.

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 contents-sheets, 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.

MADAME BLAVATSKY AGAIN.

We do not intend to open our columns for the discussion of Theosophy, which is a subject of the very slightest interest to our readers except for its relation to Mrs. Besant. This week, however, we have received a letter from a Fellow of the Theosophical Society, to which Mr. Wheeler will pen a rejoinder. The letter is ostensibly from a lady with a French name, living in Holland; but, curiously, the envelope bears a twopenny-halfpenny English stamp and the Notting Hill postmark. Somehow, everything connected with Theosophy seems to be mysterious. We have only to add, that the Theosophists must not expect to use our columns any further. Mr. Wheeler reviewed Madame Blavatsky's book on its being sent to him for that purpose, and it is not customary to discuss reviews. We have held over the letter in question, with Mr. Wheeler's rejoinder, till next week for reasons which will then appear. There are circumstances in connexion with both that necessitate the delay.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION
EXCURSION.

As far as numbers were concerned the first excursion of the L.S.F. was a complete success. Seventeen brakes, besides traps and other vehicles, including cycles, one of which held a sweet little baby placed between its father and mother, made their way from various parts of London to King's Oak, High Beech, and excited much comment by their merriment and distribution of Freethought literature. The North-west London Branch was especially conspicuous by its display, each brake having the name of the branch and a finely executed oil portrait of Mr. Bradlaugh. The Lord, who sends his rain on the just and the unjust, got into a tantrum as the ungodly cavalcade entered Epping Forest, and pelted down a severe storm, to the temporary dismay of some ladies on the box seats or otherwise unprovided with shelter. Heaven kept frowning more or less ominously until evening, but the party nevertheless enjoyed themselves as though there was no such thing as rain or fire and brimstone to follow. Inside the hall Mr. Wheeler, of Westminster, and other friends provided a variety entertainment. One negro hymn, "I'm gwine in de valley for to meet de Lawd, I'm gwine in de valley for to pray," sung by Mr. Richards, excited much amusement. As the day brightened many of the friends rambled among the beautiful though slightly soppy scenery, the bulk of them gathering at half-past five to a tea.

After tea Mr. Foote delivered a brief presidential address, apologising on behalf of the celestial powers for the bad weather, and promising (if possible) an improvement on the next occasion; explaining the hitch in the arrangement for refreshments; congratulating the London Freethinkers on the fresh vitality they are displaying all along the line; and suggesting that a resolution should be passed, sympathising with the demonstrators in Hyde Park, and protesting against the taxation of "ninepenny-tea people" for the support of more royal paupers. This being carried with acclamation, brief speeches were delivered by Mr. A. B. Moss (vice-president), Mr. G. Standing (secretary), Mr. R. Forder, and Mr. Clark, who was cordially welcomed as the latest recruit. Miss Vance was called upon to say a few words for the ladies, which she did bravely and neatly. The large party, numbering about five hundred, then returned home in fine weather. Despite the rain during the day everybody seemed pleased, and it was apparently a unanimous hope that a summer excursion would be a regular feature of the Federation's programme.

THREE SEANCES,
AND WHAT THEY REVEALED.

At the present time, when Theosophy and all pertaining to it is engaging the attention of some who read this paper, an account of what was seen, heard, and done, recently in a small room in the outskirts of Edinburgh may not be without some interest.

To begin at the beginning. One Sunday evening, about two months ago, a well-known professional man in that city, a believer in Spiritualism and in Christ, lectured upon "Does death end all?" In the course of his address (which was given under the auspices of the Scottish Secular Union) the lecturer contended that only a negative answer could be given to this question by those who inquired fully into it, throwing aside all prejudice. He, at the same time, offered to attend a spiritualistic seance organised by sceptics, stipulating only that all should withhold judgment until the facts were before them; or, as he expressed it, "no one should form a theory and then look about for facts to support it, every honest man being bound to take the facts as he finds them, and upon these facts build up a theory."

The fairness of his condition was admitted, and a seance arranged for. One who believes not in Spiritualism put her house at our disposal, and there, one wet night at the beginning of this month, were met together three Spiritualists, one who knew not what to believe about Spiritualism, and five avowed unbelievers. After sitting round a table for upwards of an hour, the master of ceremonies (our lecturer already referred to) intimated that he felt as if no good could be got by sitting longer that evening, but suggested meeting again in the same place at an early date. Another seance was accordingly decided upon, and at this second meeting the division of parties stood thus—three Spiritualists, two doubters, and four unbelievers.

Sitting, as formerly, with our hands, palm downwards, resting on the table, two of our number, after the space of half an hour, affirmed that they felt a distinct motion at their end of the table. Whereupon the M.C. addressed a few words of encouragement to the spirits present, and, after several efforts, the table moved with a distinct wave-like undulation felt by all. A code of signals was then arranged, and, in a darkness, almost Egyptian (for the blinds were closed and the hour 9 p.m.) began the strangest performance which it has ever been my lot to witness. The table tilted, turned, and trembled, like a living thing, and answered questions with a directness and accuracy which left no shadow of a doubt that some intelligent power was at work, a power, too, which was well acquainted with many things known only to two of our number. I cannot, from want of space, enter into a full description of what amazed us all that night. I simply ask the reader to imagine how he or she would feel if attending, for the first time, any meeting where an unseen power told that it was the spirit of one deceased who yearned to communicate with a dear relation now in the room—that relation the reader—and told, moreover, with almost unerring certainty many things attending her last illness, death and burial, known only to that relation and his wife. I venture to think that any one so placed would feel as staggered as I felt, and would be constrained to admit that there was here a fact on which, at first sight, it was impossible to build up a theory which did not admit a spirit communication. All who were present at this second meeting expressed their willingness to attend another in the same place, and, accordingly, I have now to introduce the reader to a company in the same room under conditions, to all outward appearance at least, the same as before.

I shall here, however, diverge for a moment and tell something which was known only to a few of the persons who on the third occasion formed our company. I may as well admit here that it was my sister who, according to the Spiritualists, communicated with me—her brother—at our last meeting. This was the contention, but there was at least one thing about that seance that required clearing up before I could be satisfied that my sister's spirit wished to communicate with me. The only thing that seriously troubled me was this—My sister was called Ellen but the name was spelt ELIZ, which the table affirmed stood for Elizabeth, my sister's name. On my stating that I never had a sister called Elizabeth, we were assured by the table, in answer to further questions, that the name was not Elizabeth but Ellen. This slip suggested to me an explanation which I resolved to put to the test at our next meeting. Accordingly I took into my confidence four of those who had expressed their intention to

be present at the third seance. You will please imagine now, dear reader, that you and I are two among ten persons seated round a table standing firmly on four legs in a small room, where there is only a faint glimmer of light; our hands, palms down, are laid gently on the table's surface. We have sat thus for, say, five or ten minutes when the table moves gently up on two legs and then quietly sits down again. Some one present suggests that the M.C. should ask if this spirit is the one who was with us on Thursday night, and the table immediately tilts *three* times, meaning yes. Again, acting on a suggestion, the M.C. asks "Do you wish to communicate further with your brother?" Again three tilts. Then the brother asks, "As there was some slight misunderstanding about your name last evening will you now spell out your Christian name and surname?" Answer, yes. The name Ellen Ritchie is then spelt out. Other questions and answers follow, when, suddenly, the M.C. informs the company that this spirit has gone—he felt it leave. This seems to be true, because no amount of coaxing can draw another answer. The table is, however, immediately taken possession of by another spirit, who professes to be the cousin of a young lady present, and, on the name being spelt out, Agnes Gilmore is given, but as the lady in question never had a cousin of that name, the spirit, at the request of the M.C., gives place to another, after having been induced to tell the name of its own father and the date on which he died. Spirit number three says she is the mother of our hostess, but as our hostess's mother is hale and hearty, the believers assert that there are lying spirits about to-night, and as we are all of the same opinion, the seance is closed and the gas lit.

Now comes the fun. The party whose lost relation was supposed to have conversed freely with him at the second meeting informs the company that, upon the fact that his sister ought to have remembered her own name, but didn't, he had built up the theory that the table was charged with animal magnetism by those sitting round, and what was thought of by them was transmitted to it; the answers expected by those who magnetised it being given. If a question were put the answer to which was known only to a few, that few involuntarily brought out the answer, all the others being passive, as they knew not what answer to expect. In the present case a list of questions and answers—all the answers false—had been committed to memory by some of those present, with the result that in almost every case the answer expected and wished for came. This statement having been borne out by those in the secret, the Spiritualists admitted they had nothing to say except that a complete explanation could be given if time permitted; but as the company was breaking up, and no one seemed inclined to attend another meeting.

Each took off his several way,
Resolved to meet nae ither day.

(Burns, with a variation.)

This is a plain unvarnished statement of fact; but I shall be pleased to give any further information, and all communications addressed to me, care of the Freethought Depot, 39 Rose Street, Edinburgh, will receive immediate attention.

R. M. RITCHIE.

CARLYLE'S RELIGION.

WITH REMINISCENCES OF HIS TALK THEREON

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY.

CARLYLE was the most remarkable religious phenomenon I ever encountered. I have preserved some reminiscences of him in that aspect, which I have never published, wishing to study them more carefully, and in the light of the facts which his biography promised.

Mr. Froude's romance which passes for the biography of Carlyle,—but which is not even realistic romance to others who knew its subject personally,—has by no means recognized the strange combination of hereditary and original elements in his spiritual being. Nor can it be clearly discovered from Carlyle's writings. The sweeping, sometimes biting, scepticism of his conversation did not get into his books. Only those who knew him personally could detect it in his *Life of Stirling*. To the average reader the diatribes of that volume appeared directed mainly against religious insincerities in general. Professor Francis William Newman told me that when the book appeared Carlyle's friends congratulated each other that he had at last spoken out boldly. But it is difficult to find in the charming biography a distinct negation or affirmation of any theological doctrine.

It was still possible, when a passage appeared in his *Life of Frederick*, affirming his (Carlyle's) faith in Calvin's fatalism, for the Presbyterians to claim that the great author was on their side. It must be admitted, however it may be explained, that this famous apostle of self-truthfulness never extended his principle to open testimony against discredited dogmas. Speaking once of my predecessor in the South Place pulpit, William Johnston Fox, M.P., he said: "I once went to hear him; he was a polished and powerful orator; but he was appealing to a crowd of people on matters of which they were no judges at all." In his distrust of the populace I suspect he shared the notion of many Europeans that superstition makes men more governable.

One evening we were talking of Strauss, whom I had recently visited. "His *Leben Jesu*," said Carlyle, "made a strong and wide impression, but its views were not unfamiliar to me. Various persons had reached similar conclusions, but would never have dreamed of proclaiming them to the world. He married an actress who made him miserable, and he had to separate from her; a good many thought it a proper punishment of his heresy." The latter remark was made with a smile. Speaking of the Unitarian leader, Rev. James Martineau, he said, "Yes, I have met him several times. Once in a small company where a discussion about Christianity became warm, Martineau sat at an end of the room with his eyes closed, as if asleep; but I could see that he knew everything that was going on. I never cared much for Unitarianism. The best men I have known go that far needs go much farther."

But Carlyle drew the line of compromise at reticence. When he was at Edinburgh, on the occasion of his installation as Lord Rector of the University, I was with him a good deal, and remarked his restlessness under the incidental religious ceremonies. I can readily believe the following story of whose truth I was assured by a Scotch gentleman. Carlyle was invited to pass some days in a country-town in Scotland, with an old college-mate. They had been fellow-sceptics, and many a time had between them disposed of Christianity. But his old friend had become rich, the leading man in town, and naturally a zealous supporter of the kirk. He invited the parsons and deacons to meet Carlyle at dinner. According to usage the host said grace himself; it was a grace so long, unctuous, canting, that Carlyle could not stand it, but broke in with—"Oh, F——, this is damnable!"

Carlyle was a Calvinist who had lost his creed. To others such loss has been the dropping of a fetter; to Carlyle it was a breaking of the link that connected him with all he really loved. The real feeling is told in his poem "The Night Moth." He bowed to Goethe as a master, but could never quite forgive him for shattering his little shrine in the cottage at Ecclefechan. Goethe could easily become the happy man of the world, dress in velvet, and amuse himself with lords and ladies, and the Weimar theatre; but when Carlyle's supernatural visions faded they left him a peasant, surrounded by poor and ignorant people, and without either capacity or taste for the career of a man of the world. His youth had been devoted to preparation for a profession—that of the pulpit—from which he had to turn at the moment when family and friends were ready to usher him with plaudits on a career whose splendor was prophesied by his genius. He had made desperate efforts to find some way of honestly remaining in the old homestead of faith; but all had been in vain; and it was no doubt this experience which broke out in rebuke of his college comrade in scepticism, who had sold his soul to the village parsons and deacons for the fine mansion to which he had invited his friend.

(To be concluded.)

Open Court (Chicago.)

Mr. Vizetelly is beguiling the tedium of his sojourn in Holloway by writing *Recollections of a First-class Misdemeanant*.

Italy has to maintain such a military force to protect herself against Catholics within and Catholic machinations in the nations without, that her taxes are oppressive. Catholics then point to the heavy taxes and endeavor to stir up citizens against them as a grievance.

A traveller who was once visiting a Mexican cathedral, was shown by the sacristan, among other marvels, a dirty, opaque, glass vial. After eyeing it some time, the traveller said: "Do you call this a relic? Why, it is empty." "Empty!" retorted the sacristan, indignantly. "Sir, it contains some of the darkness Moses spread over the land of Egypt!"

REVIEW.

Paul of Tarsus. By the author of *Rabbi Jeshua*, London: George Redway; 1889, pp. 178. Whoever the author of this work may be, and speculation has been rife as to whether it should be assigned to a distinguished Eastern explorer or to the late head-master of the City High Schools, it is certain that he is thoroughly at home in the details of Oriental life, and capable of presenting a life-like picture of the beginnings of Christianity stripped entirely of supernaturalism. The book as we say has *vraisemblance*. The writer carries us through the scenes of Paul's life and journeys, and fills up the back-ground with such local coloring and scholarship that the readers are apt to forget how much is purely conjectural. He presents us for instance with a picture of Paul witnessing the entry of Jeshua into Jerusalem.

"The crowd surged by. The white robe, the chesnut locks, the deep dark eyes, have been clearly seen by Paul as the slow beast picks its way among the stones. Alone in all that shouting and triumphant crowd that face is still and grave. This, then, is the prophet of Galilee, and these poor peasants, with but a single shirt on their backs and patched sandals to their feet, are the men who have come to teach Caiaphas and Gamaliel, and to turn the world upside down."

The work is in fact, like Rénan's *Life of Jesus*, an historic romance, throwing much light on the times dealt with, even as Scott's *Kenilworth* throws light on the days of Elizabeth, but still a romance. The journeys ascribed to Paul in the Acts of the Apostles form a good opportunity for describing the Roman world of that time, but after the work of Baur and Zeller it is evident that little reliance can be placed on the Acts as an historic document. None the less the mingled civilisation and barbarism, the fanaticism and surging superstition of the time are vividly presented. Even the conjectures are not without interest and suggestiveness. John the Baptist and Rabbi Jeshua are, for instance, treated as Essenes, and Buddhist influences are traced in that community. The

description of Paul's views appears to be faithfully founded upon the epistles. The belief in the early approach of the end of the world, which so largely contributed to the early spread of Christianity, is well brought out.

"He believed, as many before him, and as yet more since his time, have believed, that the world was shortly to come to an end. He expected with his own eyes to see the form of Jesus in the air, descending to earth from the golden city above the firmament, where he pictured the Galilean sitting on a throne beside the throne of God—coming in the clouds of heaven and all the holy angels with him, to judge mankind and to execute vengeance on his enemies. It was to occur before Paul's death and this at least we know that it did not so occur."

In many such touches as this does the author exhibit himself as fully familiar with the tone of thought prevalent in the early days of Christianity. The work is the production of a scholar, and although we could have wished his study to have been entirely historical, there can be no doubt that it will be more attractive to the reader in its present form. We commend the work, not as a contribution to the history of Paul of Tarsus, but as a picture of the times in which Christianity emerged.

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Sydney Smith told a story of Lady Cork being so moved by a charity sermon that she borrowed a guinea of him to put in the plate. But she forgot to put it in, and also to repay the money. Of a right reverend bishop he remarked, "He is so like Judas that I am quite converted to believe in the apostolical succession."

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