

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IV.

ON "OLD TESTAMENT MORALITY."—Continued.

To the Rev. Eustace R. Conder, D.D.

BEFORE I proceed further I will quote the following passage from your essay.—"We must understand love and righteousness in God to mean substantially the same thing with love and righteousness in man, only free from all limitation and defect; otherwise, neither objections nor replies have any meaning." This is your own rule of judgment, and you cannot complain if I rigorously apply it to the rest of our "moral difficulties."

With regard to the Deluge, you make the gratuitous assertion that "the substantial and weighty evidence for its reality is often overlooked by those who ought to know better." After this somewhat pedagogic utterance it is amusing to read the footnote, in which you refer your readers "for the bearing of geological science on the question" to a tract by Sir William Dawson. I have read this tract, and the author argues for a partial flood. To use his own words, it was "one of those submersions of our continents which, locally or generally, have occurred over and over again, almost countless times, in the geological history of the earth." Yet I find you asserting, in the very teeth of your picked authority, that the Deluge "stands alone" by reason of its "stupendous scale." May I conclude that this is a dexterous way of steering between the Scylla of the heterodox view of a local flood and the Charybdis of the orthodox view of a universal flood? At any rate, you commit yourself to neither, but moralise on either side as it suits your purpose.

Let me also express my astonishment at the use you make of an awkward text, which you would have shown more discretion in avoiding. After drawing a dark picture of the awful sin of the antediluvians, you quote the sentence "There were giants in the earth in those days," and you ask the reader to imagine what might have happened if men with the lust and cruelty of a Nero or a Borgia, the strength of a Samson, and the intellect of a Cæsar, had lived for a thousand years. Do you believe in the reality of such prodigies? That they are conceivable I admit, but so is a centaur, a dragon, or a satyr. Such imaginary beings do not trouble the heads of sensible men, nor are your antediluvian prodigies any more entitled to respect. You are ill-advised in introducing these "giants." As the Revised Version discloses to the unlearned reader, they were simply *Nephilim*, who, as the context indicates, were like the Gigantes of the Pagan mythology, the mixed offspring of heaven and earth. You are a devout believer in the existence of these fabulous monsters, but the existence of the Pagan giants, as Lemprière says, was also "supported by all the writers of antiquity, and received as an undeniable truth."

Taking the Bible record as it stands, as you profess to, with its "stupendous" slaughter of men, women, and children—in fact, the extermination of

the whole human race, with the exception of eight persons—what is your excuse for the God who planned and executed this unparalleled massacre?

First, you remark that the same kind of thing frequently happens, although on a smaller scale. People have been swallowed by earthquakes, swept away by pestilence, and destroyed by floods. Volcanoes have buried cities, the sea has engulfed myriads of ships with their crews. But all this is beside the point. As well might a murderer argue that his victim must die at some time, and that cholera and small-pox kill a great many more than he does. The only reply you can possibly make is the one which St. Paul resorted to when he desired to silence the objectors to predestinate damnation; namely, that God made us, and has a right to do as he will with his own. But this exalts his power at the expense of his beneficence, and puts an end to all controversy on the subject.

You next observe that the antediluvians were awfully wicked. Still, they were God's creatures, and surely the Maker could have reformed his own handiwork. Could not the being who said "Let there be light! and there was light," as easily have said "Let all men be good—or decent" with a similar result? No doubt you will reply with the argument from "free-will." But, for my part, I think it shocking to make men what they are, to curse and torture them for being so, and to offer them consolation or excuse in the shape of a metaphysical puzzle. It is not thus that we reason on any other subject than theology.

According to the story, God gave the devoted multitude a warning. Noah, that "preacher of righteousness," admonished them for the space of a hundred and twenty years. But the Lord should have selected a better prophet, or, if that were impossible, he should have sent a capable missionary from heaven. Noah's character, as revealed by his conduct after the Flood—when he indulged himself in drunkenness, indecency, and indiscriminate cursing—was not calculated to lend persuasion to his appeals. Indeed, I have often wondered why Jehovah took the trouble to preserve this precious specimen of his primitive creatures. Admitting the necessity of a wholesale massacre, it seems to me that the Lord should have completed the work and left none of the old race surviving. This would have enabled him to start with a fresh stock, instead of re-peopling the world through Noah. Had he followed this sensible method, it is to be presumed that the world, a few centuries later, would not have fallen into such wickedness that a whole city could not yield a handful of righteous men to save it from destruction, while the elderly gentleman who *was* spared on that occasion celebrated the event by getting drunk and committing incest with his own daughters.

Suppose I grant you, for the sake of argument, that the antediluvians were all incurably wicked, that there was no room for gradations, that every man and woman was full of iniquity. Still, there remains the fact that multitudes of children perished in the

catastrophe, who could not have sinned as they were too young to be responsible. You are unable to dispute the fact, and your explanation is preposterous. You declare that "the suffering of the innocent with the guilty, and on account of the guilty, is part of the mysterious economy of human life." Do you seriously mean that such bungling is a mark of "perfect wisdom" and such indiscriminate slaughter a mark of "perfect rectitude and love"? Could not Jehovah have spared the children as easily as the family of Noah? Was there not wood enough to build a thousand arks, and time enough for their construction? No wonder you close this section of your essay by deprecating further criticism, and bidding your readers "reverently bow before the veil, and patiently wait till God's own hand withdraws it." But if we have to await God's convenience, after all, it is a waste of time on your part (not to use a harsher phrase) to offer temporary explanations.

Were I not acquainted with the petrifying influence of religious dogmas on the best feelings of the human heart, and the feebleness of the human imagination with respect to distant scenes and events, I should marvel at the continued worship of a Deity who could find no other method of dealing with his creatures than drowning them. It is easy to kill, it is difficult to educate and develop; the one shows ignorance and brutality, the other wisdom and humanity. The destructive impatience of Jehovah—who, like all barbaric gods, was fond of hurling his thunderbolts—would be an intolerable anachronism in our civilised jurisprudence. But what would be detestable in human practice is sacred in religious theory. Men who would not hurt a child, and who shudder at the sight of blood, ascribe wholesale massacres and the most relentless cruelty to the God of their inherited faith. For the most part, I am convinced, they never attempt to realise these horrors, which, if vividly conceived, would drive them mad or destroy their belief. But let it not be supposed that it does the character no injury to harbor such notions of the being one worships. The debasement of our ideal must re-act upon our feelings, and it would startle many a Christian philanthropist to recognise how much of the brutal callousness of mankind is due to the worship of barbarous and bloodthirsty gods. Here and there, indeed, worship is carried to the point of imitation, and the result is an Alva or a Torquemada. It is even held by Dr. Forbes Winslow that if "Jack the Ripper" is ever caught, he will be found to be suffering from religious mania, and perhaps to consider himself charged with a murderous mission from heaven.

Passing from the Deluge I come to the destruction of the cities of the plain. You compare this event with the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii, whose inhabitants you conjecture to have been "equally wicked." What is your reason for saying so? There is nothing in the authentic records of history to justify the conjecture. You are a thick-and-thin pleader for Jehovah, but you have no scruple at libelling your fellow men. In any case, the analogy is useless to your object. Educated men—to whom, I suppose, your tract is addressed—are not so superstitious as to imagine that Mount Vesuvius is a providential reservoir, which belches out its contents when the Lord has someone to punish. Nor is there any similarity between a volcanic eruption, which is as natural as a thunderstorm, and the "fire from heaven" which the Lord rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah. The one is natural, the other is miraculous. Some perception of this difference must have been present to your mind when you fell back upon the Abrahamic exclamation "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" This, you say, is "the one reply" to all such difficulties, and "it is adequate." I deny its adequateness; I call it a begging of the question. But I admit it is "the one reply" of

Bibliolators. They cry off in the crisis of debate, close their eyes, and offer up a prayer.

Scientific criticism of the Bible removes the "difficulty" in quite another fashion. The cities of the plain are imaginary places. Ancient peoples associated legends with every striking aspect of nature. Ignorant of geology, the Jews and other orientals ascribed a supernatural origin to the Dead Sea and its volcanic surroundings. The story grew up of cities that were destroyed on its site, and to this day the natives believe they see fragments of buildings and pillars rising from the bottom of the lake. Similarly, the story of Lot and his daughters is legendary. Moab and Ammon were for many centuries the implacable enemies of the Jews, who libelled them generically by tracing their origin to the incestuous and prolific intercourse of a father with his own offspring.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

SCHOPENHAUERIANA.*

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, the German pessimist, was a great philosopher, but not an amiable man. Of proud and passionate spirit, his life was soured by seeing puny men idolised, while he himself was neglected, and still more by observing the incompatibility between the ways of the world and his own ardent love of truth and justice. Lamartine said of himself "he was born with a sore on his soul." The same might be said of Schopenhauer. No man probably more keenly felt or more deeply probed the miseries of mankind.

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear,
He struck his finger on the place
And said "Thou ailest here and here."

No more decided Atheist ever lived. He derided the possibility of a being higher than man. The Christian deity he was in the habit of referring to as "the old Jew upstairs." God, he said, in modern philosophies only plays the role of the last Frankish kings under the mayors of the palace, 'tis but a name preserved for others' benefit and profit, and in order that they may push themselves on more easily in the world. He remarked "No man who is religious can become a philosopher, metaphysics are useless to him; and no true philosopher is religious, he is sometimes in danger, but he is not fettered, he is free." Elsewhere he said "Religion and philosophy are like the two scales of a balance; the more one rises, the more does the other descend."

The only merit Schopenhauer found in Christianity was its pessimistic spirit. "Jesus Christ," he wrote in his greatest work, *The World as Will and Idea*, "ought always to be conceived in the universal, as the symbol or personification of the denial of the will to live, but never as an individual, whether according to his mythical history given in the gospels, or according to the probably true history which lies at the foundation of this."

But it is not with his philosophy we concern ourselves. The world will always remain with those who assert the will to live, rather than with those who deny it. Our purpose is to call attention to some notes made by the German philosopher on some English books, notes which have only been published since the centenary of his birth. Schopenhauer's library was fairly stocked with the standard English works of his day, and he was in the habit of annotating all he read with marks, sometimes of approval, but more usually of contempt. His own observations are always to the point. Obscurantism, the besetting sin of German philosophers, he declared was worse than the sin against the holy spirit, it was a sin

* *Edita u. d. Inedita, Schopenhaueriana, Leipzig, 1888.*

against the human spirit. With this fault he cannot be charged. He is rather wanting in civility than in clearness.

Schopenhauer especially read all he could get hold of on the subject of Buddhism, and considering that comparatively little was known in his day, his insight into that faith was remarkable. He writes on Sangermano's description of the Burmese Empire, "He most foolishly translates Buddha by 'God.'" In notes on Hodgson's sketch of Buddhism, when that writer suspects some of the Nepal legends were taken from the Bible, Schopenhauer writes, "O you ass!" To the answer giving "the fear of God" as one of the motives of good action, he underlines the words and writes the Sanskrit term of contempt, *mlecha!* on the margin.

But the reader will be more interested in Schopenhauer's observations on familiar authors. He seems to have been acquainted with most of our great writers of last century. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* he esteemed as one of the finest novels. Of Pope he writes in the margin of Warton's *Life*, "He is the great poet of reason." Many of Pope's lines, such as "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread" and "Nature's chief masterpiece is writing well," are underlined. But he could not stand the optimism of *The Essay on Man*. To the line "All Nature is but Art unknown to thee" he inserts a big NO, and to "All partial Evil, Universal Good," he writes underneath "Impossible! Universal means for All! a contradiction," and by the side "Partial Green is universal Red." To the proposition "whatever is right" he jotted down a significant "oho!"

The annotations on Pope's "Universal Prayer" are as striking. We must give the first verse in his own way—

Father of All! in ev'ry age, } A LYE!
In every Clime ador'd }
By Saint, by Savage and by Sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord! Not the same

To the next verse—

Thou Great First Cause, least understood,
Who all my sense confined,

"First Cause" he underscores twice, with the note "contradictio in terminis," on "least understood" he annotates "sure."

To know but this that Thou art good !?!
And that myself am blind. *Very kind.*

And so he proceeds with notes of interrogation, exclamation, and marginalia.

Dr. Johnson's bigotry seems to have specially stirred his bile. He writes: "This Dr. Johnson is a true pattern of that old-fashioned truism dealing, commonplace, narrow-minded set of pedants, which, eighty years ago, had reached its height in England." He scores at the side of Boswell's observation about Johnson's orthodox belief in the Trinity. "What a bigotted, priest-ridden, narrow-minded fellow Johnson was." When Johnson says "the infidel would be guilty of any crime if he were inclined to it." Schopenhauer writes on the margin. "What an ass!" To the passage where Johnson says, "Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote." Schopenhauer wrote "he lies." To Johnson's argument for a first cause he writes, "Expositio philosophiae asininae." To Johnson and Boswell's disparaging mention of Priestley he writes, "A single Priestley is worth 1,000 such prating commonplace asses as Dr. Johnson was!"

Schopenhauer in his old age read Dickens, and rejoiced in the discomfiture of Stiggins in the *Pickwick Papers*. He writes on the passage where Stiggins is kicked out and put in the horse-pond, "The author shows here allegorically how the English nation ought to treat that set of hypocrites, impostors and money-graspers, the clergy of the established humbug, that

devours annually £3,500,000." The English Church in the eyes of the German philosopher, was a standing proof of the stupidity and hypocrisy of our nation.

No one expects to find an author's profoundest thought written in the margins of his books, but even such jottings as these are interesting as coming from a man whose influence has widely extended since his death, and who, however much we may dissent from his philosophy, all must allow was a deep and independent thinker, whose writings are probably more fertile in suggestion than those of any philosopher since Hume.

J. M. WHEELER.

BLASPHEMY IN GERMANY.

WE are pleased to note from the *Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags Blatt*, that the case against Dr. Voelkel, the editor of that journal, is likely to break down. It will be remembered that he was proceeded against for a speech delivered at Erfurt, in Rhenish Saxony, in which he had pointed out how much was doubtful in theology, it being even a question whether Christ was crucified or hanged. It appears that there were originally seventeen counts in the indictment against him, but these were reduced to three, to which he has submitted answers showing, among other things, how easy it is for various ideas of God to be taken for blasphemy by ignorant persons, and citing passages from Professors Harnack, Hölder, etc. We presume, although it does not say so, that he also pointed out that the New Testament endorses the view that Christ was hung. The State prosecutor has declared these answers would need time for full consideration. There are three that bear record against Dr. Voelkel—a police officer, a cabinet maker, and a school teacher, and as these three are by no means one as to what blasphemy he did utter, it appears likely that the State prosecutor will abandon the case. Dr. Voelkel says this is the fifth process tried against him, and he wonders when will be the sixth.

FREETHOUGHT AND RELIGION IN GERMANY.

The prosecution of Dr. Voelkel is sufficient to show that, although Freethought is undoubtedly more widespread in Germany than in this country, it is still severely hampered by repressive restrictions. Those who imagined that Bismarck's attempted suppression of the Ultramontane propaganda by the Falk laws was a step in the direction of Liberalism have been undeceived. The May laws, now repealed, only cemented the Catholic population, who, augmented to seventeen millions by the unification of Germany, vote like sheep at the instance of their pastors, and send a compact body of deputies to the Reichstag under the leadership of Herr Windthorst, with whom Bismarck is glad to make terms. Fear of Socialism has kept the great Chancellor from showing any favor to the Rationalists and Freethinkers, and the orthodox Protestants will of course make no alliance with them. It is possible that Bismarck counted on support from the Old Catholics. Despite the learning and ability of Drs. Döllinger and Reinkens, they have, however, made no progress, and are of no influence as a political factor. The death of Frederick III. removed the only hope of an era of religious Liberalism, for the present Emperor is quite as pious as his grandfather—with the piety, that is, which looks upon the maintenance of religion as inseparably bound with the maintenance of the monarch.

All the ministers of public worship for years past have been selected for their orthodoxy, and the professors at the Universities know that their chairs are in danger should their heresy appear too openly. All vacancies, with few exceptions, have been filled with orthodox professors, distinguished only as apologists of Christianity. In the census of 1880, over thirty thousand boldly registered themselves as of "no religion." In 1885 this number sunk to less than half, a fact only to be accounted for by the pressure put on from above.

On the other hand, the churches are everywhere being left to women and children. At Berlin there are only 47 churches and 27 chapels, with 50,000 seats, for a Protestant population of nearly a million. Throughout Germany the churches are usually three parts empty. The only parties who appear to be making progress are the Roman Catholics, and those who are practically Secularists. In Germany, as elsewhere, the conflict is tending towards a struggle betwixt Rome and Reason,

ACID DROPS.

The Bishop of Oxford is a clerical Columbus. He has discovered new worlds. The Church of England, he tells us, has helped to train men in and for liberty. Well now, if the Bishop will just read Macaulay's famous passage on the uniform assistance the Church has rendered to every species of tyranny, and then consult the list of episcopal votes in the House of Lords during the last hundred years, he will be able to form some idea of the disgust with which honest men will be filled on hearing his brazen falsehood.

For years, says the Bishop, the Church of England bore the burden of Education. The truth is that for years she fought against any other education than her own, as she still does wherever she has a chance. She loves the education which trains up children for her fold; every other kind she hates.

But the third "crammer" is the biggest. The Bishop claims that the Church has given freedom to science and investigation. But he lets the cat out of the bag by qualifying the statement with an important "if." The Church, it appears, gave science and investigation as much scope as is "consistent with the holding fast of irrevocable faith." In other words the Church tried to tie up science and investigation with Test Acts and other such "bonds of freedom." It loved science and investigation like the affectionate mother who tied her child up to the kitchen table lest it should run away.

It is very questionable if God understands Chinese prayers any more than English ones. Details of the great fire in the town of Su Chow, in China, show that the disaster was one of the most heart-rending character. The dead numbered 1,600, of whom 1,200 were burned to death, and 400 were killed in the rush from the flames or by falling buildings. 87,000 houses were destroyed and 170,000 people rendered homeless. Worst of all, disease has broken out among the unfortunate wretches, and they are dying at the rate of a hundred per day.

In the storm which swept over Southern Hungary last week, two churches were reduced to ruins. What is worse, many people were drowned by the sinking of ferry-boats, and the damage to the crops, which had already been stored, was enormous, numberless granaries being blown down.

The Lord's hand is heavy on Russia this year. The harvest threatens to be so bad as to send distress and discontent throughout a large part of the country. Drought reaches such a point that cattle are dying wholesale for want of grass and fodder.

The manager of the bank at Western-Super-Mare, who committed suicide left an affecting letter to his wife, saying "God forgive me," and "Would to God I had never seen you rather than you should have had this to bear." Evidently not an atheist, Mr. Talmage.

Ada Smyth, at Barnstaple, drowned her little boy in the bath-room, and said she had "sent him to heaven." The doctors certified her as suffering from religious mania. For years she had thought herself to be under God's curse, and in the power of the Devil. The poor woman is now in a lunatic asylum.

We do not agree with the *Medium and Daybreak* that Mr. Foote should have treated Mrs. Besant's "apostacy with silent contempt." A very different treatment was called for by her character and past services to the cause. According to our Spiritist contemporary, Mrs. Besant is "only approaching the threshold of inquiries which will teach her to know herself." In other words, we presume, she will find salvation when she is a thorough believer in spirit rapping. *Absit omen!*

Madame Blavatsky says in *Lucifer*, that there is nothing to hinder Mr. Bradlaugh being welcomed into the Theosophical Society. We beg pardon, there is—Mr. Bradlaugh!

This Society with all its pretences of Universal Brotherhood is not devoid of those little differences found else-

where. *Lucifer* for instance prints a number of addresses of sympathy with Madame B., on unwarranted aspersions that have been made upon her by Fellows of the Theosophical Society, and says "Only one, or at most two of the 'influential members' of the Society have left it during the past twelve months. Of rows, it is true, we have had plenty, and we may expect more, so long as human nature is the same among Theosophists as elsewhere."

Mr. Gladstone has been managing of late to combine loyalty and piety in a remarkable manner. While he was acting the courier to the throne, in relation to the latest royal grant, the newspapers were printing his letter to a Manchester Bible-class leader. Anything more replete with empty verbiage than this precious letter, we have seldom encountered. It is really pitiable to see a man of Mr. Gladstone's gifts and eminence displaying so flagrantly the softening effect of religion upon the human intellect. The Achilles of politics goes into his theological tent, and puts on the bib and shakes the rattle of childhood.

Spurgeon is a strict Sabbatarian, but he construes the fourth commandment liberally in view of his own infirmities. Every Sunday he is driven in six miles from his splendid residence to his Tabernacle. According to Jesus Christ, those who had faith enough would be able to order trees to get up and jump into the sea; but apparently no amount of faith is able to transport Mr. Spurgeon without the assistance of a carriage and pair. Perhaps the great preacher is too fat for a successful flight over South London.

Within sight of Mr. Spurgeon's fine grounds is the wooded park of the Archbishop of Canterbury. These eminent ministers of Christ belong to rival sects, but they resemble each other in getting a splendid living by preaching "blessed be ye poor." However honest they may think themselves, they are consummate humbugs in the light of the teaching they pretend to consider "divine."

Was there ever a neater puff than the one Spurgeon gave himself on Sunday morning? Some time ago, being doubtful and sad at heart, he went down into the country and found himself in a Methodist chapel. The preacher was an engineer, and his discourse moved Spurgeon with the deepest emotion. After the service he stopped and thanked the preacher, who, on learning who it was, exclaimed "Oh, it was one of your sermons that I preached," "Yes, I know it was," said Spurgeon, who was rejoiced to think that one of his own sermons had such an effect. Splendid! The Pears' Soap people may hide their diminished heads.

Now then, all you parsons who have been so vehement of late against Sabbath breaking, here is an opportunity of showing your pluck. On Sunday afternoon the Prince of Wales, with a number of "distinguished guests," took a trip on the river Thames in an electric launch. On arriving at Hampton, after dining on board, they went over the works of Messrs. Immisch and inspected their electrical appliances. Gentlemen in the clerical line, out with your trumpets and blow a blast in the name of the Lord. Don't spend all your indignation on city clerks, dressmakers, factory hands, and shop assistants. Let the big rich sinners have some of it. Denounce the Prince of Wales openly and fiercely, and we will admit your honesty; but if you don't we shall set you down as a pack of humbugs and hypocrites.

A sermon by Mr. Gadsden, which we notice because fully reported in the *Islington Gazette*, extols the Bible as the most wonderful book on record. Such a display of enthusiastic ignorance we have not read for some time. What most excites the admiration of Mr. Gadsden is the antiquity of "this precious book," which, by the way, is not, properly speaking, a book, but a collection of books of various ages, the oldest portions of which are vastly later than the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Hindu Rig-Veda, or the Babylonian cylinders.

Mr. Gadsden says: "The author of Ecclesiastes discussed the problem of evil six hundred years before Socrates in the Dialogues of Plato." Mr. Gadsden ought to know that even orthodox critics have given up ascribing this work to

Solomon. Dean Plumtre places it between 240 B.C. and 181 B.C., so that it is considerably later instead of earlier than Socrates.

Then Mr. Gadsden says "Job is the oldest writing now existing, at least one thousand years older than Homer." More nonsense. It cannot be older than the age of Solomon, for Job vii., 17, travesties the idea of Psalm viii. Renan places Job at about 700 B.C., but later critics remove it down to the period between the Assyrian and Babylonish exile, from 690 B.C. to 588 B.C. There is no writing in the Bible older than a thousand years B.C., and the immense bulk was written after the Babylonian captivity.

The London ratepayers will be far from pleased at learning that the School Board rate will have to be raised. Nor will his satisfaction be increased at learning that the increase is brought about through the suppressions and misrepresentations of the Rev. Mr. Diggle and his friends.

We all remember the professions of economy and careful management put forward by the clerical party at the last election. The savings of which they boasted prove on examination to be all fictitious. Items of income had been valued at too high a figure, and items of expenditure too low. They left a deficiency of about £4,500. Moreover they estimated £50,000 too little for salaries, and £8,000 too much for fees. The present Board of course will have to bear the odium of raising the rate.

The Parson's palaver will be held at Cardiff in the beginning of October, and a good deal of attention will be given to the Church in Wales. We see that Canon Shuttleworth is set down for a paper on the Literature of the Day, with reference to alleged Scepticism among the Working Classes.

Poor old Tracy Turnerelli, who ought to be in glory with his hero of the abortive wreath, Earl Beaconsfield, has written a long letter to Mr. Matthews, late Catholic priest of St. Mary's, Bath, whose secession to "infidelity" has caused such a consternation in religious circles. Poor old Tracy thinks Mr. Matthews shouldn't have told his flock that he had found Christianity to be false. It fills their minds with pain, and what have they done to be treated so cruelly? Poor old Tracy doesn't reflect that Mr. Matthews, in leaving the priesthood, was obliged to give a reason; and that, being an honest man, he naturally told the truth.

It is becoming perilous to preach. God seems determined to stop it. July 7th, in Washington, Rev. H. S. Carpenter was smitten down in the pulpit just as he began the old, old story about Jesus having died. The good man revived, but the service ended without the sermon. Preachers stricken down in pulpits are becoming occurrences so common that orthodoxy must explain what causes it if not the anger of God.

Disorderly proceedings characterised the election of a minister for Kirkoswald parish, Scotland, the living being a good one. There was at first a hundred applicants, but these were reduced to three, upon whom a vote was taken after midnight. Feeling ran so high that the congregation indulged in hooting and yelling, and when in consequence of a dispute the moderator declared for taking the vote a second time, the supporters of the Rev. Mr. Benson trooped out of the church declaring he had been elected and the proceedings were adjourned.

The *Liberator*, the organ of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Control, has gathered some recent instances of clerical intolerance. Among the specimens which are given are the particulars of a clergyman at Hungerford, who writes of dissent as "a most deadly sin," and declared that freer forgiveness may be expected for stealing a £5 note than for entering a dissenting place of worship. A clergyman at Brigstock is mentioned who told the children at school that if they were not baptised they would go to hell. Well, J. C. says he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. We don't wonder at the inference being drawn that baptism is essential to salvation.

The rector of a village near Basingstoke is mentioned, who sent out a pastoral letter to his parishioners telling

them that at the day of judgment they would be asked whether they attended church or chapel. At a diocesan conference at Watford a country clergyman provoked cries of "Shame" by declaring that a neighbouring Wesleyan chapel, like all Nonconformist places of worship, was "being built by the devil." A Flintshire clergyman is mentioned who, in his *Church Magazine* for January, tells his parishioners not to vote for Dissenters as County Councillors, as they "want to pull down our churches and to sell the sanctuaries of God for market-places to sell pigs in."

The cry is still for more Bishops. Now it is Birmingham wants a father in God to oversee its souls, or rather the church wants to find a good billet for one of its dignitaries. It is proposed the bishop's income shall be £3,500, a nice little sum for the diocese to shell out annually.

The Rev. T. T. Waterman, one of the Christian Evidence Society's secretaries—there are two of them for a very small business—declines to send a representative to reply to Mr. Foote's lectures at Camberwell, and returns the orders of admission sent by the Branch Secretary. Messrs. Engstrom and Waterman prefer to keep a body of paid libellers, who go out into the streets and defame every Free-thought leader, rather than reply to Free-thought arguments with decency and decorum. Evidently the mission of Mr. Wise, who followed Mr. Foote in the north of England, was only a plum for the annual report, to give some color to the appeal for "more cash."

The C. E. S. is a valorous body. For years it went down to the London Hall of Science, and "bearded the infidel in his den." A report of this performance sounded bravely at the annual meeting in Exeter Hall. Last year the Secular Federation sent Messrs. Foote, Robertson, Standring and Moss to oppose, who gave the C. E. S. lecturer such a pounding that the "annual course" has been discontinued.

Giordano Bruno is being reviled and cursed all over the Catholic world. Eight thousand of the faithful sheep of Papa Pecci met a few days ago at Neustadt, and were told by Herr Lieber, a Catholic member of the Reichstag, that Giordano Bruno was a pig and an ass. Well, it will take a great deal of such talk to knock down the statue at Rome.

Christopher Crayon, of the *Christian World*, is touring at the antipodes. He finds that there are "Christians of all sorts" in Australia, and that "the dream of Christian unity seems as far off realisation as at home." Exactly! Private judgment in religion leads to a multitude of sects, for theology is all a matter of fancy, on which people unite or separate according to taste and temper. Unity never did, and never will, exist except in a church like that of Rome, which decides every point of faith, and expels—and when possible exterminates—heretics and schismatics.

According to the same writer, the Australian fly is a veritable imp. It is particularly active in church. During the first part of the service it is tolerably well behaved, but directly the sermon begins it attacks the congregation most viciously. The worshippers lose their tempers and try to retaliate on the fly, which may, in the circumstances, be regarded as an emissary of Satan.

Some of those Australian flies would be a godsend to country parsons, especially on Sunday afternoons when the sermon is too often accompanied with distressing notes from the nasal organs of over-fed, sleepy farmers. How the parson would be delighted to see a sharp fly exorcise a trumpeting nose and make the posses-or open his ears. A paper on the importation of Australian flies might be read with advantage at the Church Congress.

By the way, on the Church Congress programme "Infidelity" is down for discussion—a very one-sided discussion, we may observe, for no representative of "infidelity" will be present. Some day or other, perhaps, the Congress will invite the Editor of the *Freethinker* to put a little life and reality into the debate.

Canon Wilberforce cannot make it out. He is eloquent

and elegant, distinguished and popular, but his congregation responds very feebly to financial appeals. He declares that the paltry nature of the offertories is a disgrace, and complains of well-dressed people who let the plate pass regularly without dropping in a cent. Shocking! Shocking! But, after all, this may be only a prelude to worse. The time may come when people won't go to church at all without being paid for it.

Miss Frances Whitehead, daughter of the Rev. George Whitehead, vicar of St. Andrew's, Northampton, has been sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment for obtaining money under false pretences. She had been in the habit of visiting the residences of wealthy people, and asking for subscriptions for charitable objects on behalf of clergymen of the town. She had no authority to do so, and appropriated the money to her own purposes.

The Rev. Gustavus Hopton Scott, vicar of Gringley-on-the-Hill, Notts, is a warm member. He has just been ordered by the court to pay £70 damages to one of his parish wardens, Mr. Benjamin Marrison, for having smashed his face and loosened five teeth with an iron stanchion in the churchyard. This minister of the meek and lowly Jesus will probably restrain his exuberant brutality in the future. Assaults are too costly to be indulged in at this rate. Parson Scott will therefore be obliged to fall back upon the cheaper luxury of swearing.

The *Quarterly Review* has another attack on the French Revolution founded on the diatribes of Bishop Freppel and W. S. Lilly. It seeks to saddle all the wars and revolutions since upon the principles of '89, regardless of the fact that the wars at the beginning of this century arose from the efforts of other nations to prevent the French choosing their own form of government. All this special pleading does not get over the fact that the condition of the people of France is vastly superior to that before the Revolution.

A chief item of the impeachment of the Revolution was its irreligion. The writer says "in its respect for humanity it not only abolished the birch, but emancipated the child from the oppression of the 'Hypothesis,' in whose name he had been baptized. The first words which the child of the Revolution learnt were no longer the commandments to fear God and honor priests. They were the Republican Catechism, the Republican Gospel, the Republican Ten Commandments." How horrible! That a child's mind should not be imbued from the first with the notion of God, is evidently to the writer the *ne plus ultra* of iniquity.

That the churches and clergy were disendowed he calls irreligious intolerance. He surely forgets how Bishop Gobel and many of the clergy not only renounced Christianity, but stated that they had long ceased to believe in it even while preaching it. Query: Would it not be the same if the Church were disestablished and disendowed to-day.

"Throw it all upon Jesus" is the latest "correct card." Accordingly we are not surprised at the appearance of a Christly Ethical Church of England, the object of which is "to inculcate the moral and practical teaching of Christ, irrespective of creeds and of all questions as to his divinity, the inspiration of Scripture, or of a future existence." Still, we venture to predict the failure of this fantastic society. Christianity cannot survive its doctrines. Very few men discard the supernatural and dogmatic elements, without soon discarding belief in the perfection of Christ. Directly his moral teaching is examined in the dry light of the intellect it turns out to be one-sided, exaggerated, sentimental, and far away from the practical necessities of life. There is much praise abroad of the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, and an equal disregard of every one of its maxims.

Mari Wilhelmina Zajicek. Reader, did you ever hear of her? A million to one you haven't. Yet a terrible fuss was made about her at St. Michael's, Chester-square, last Sunday. A special form of service was drawn up for the occasion, and the sermon was preached by Canon Fleming, all because Mari Wilhelmina had left the Romish and joined the English Church. Three years, it is said, have been

spent in converting her. You may lay heavy odds the lady has cash.

The Bishop of St. Albans has kindly condescended to sanction the use of a special burial service for unbaptised persons. Still, if the doctrines of his Church be true, he cannot insure such persons a seat in heaven. Unless a parson has sprinkled some rain or pump water on your face you don't stand the slightest chance of admission by St. Peter. Holy-water treatment is necessary to salvation.

As for the corpses what does it matter whether bishops curse or bless? It is all the same in the end, for there are no degrees in death. A dead lord, said Gray, ranks with commoners; and certainly a dead Christian ranks with dead heathen.

How these Christians love one another! The Rev. T. R. Smithson, formerly a Congregational minister, and now a Church lecturer and pamphleteer, prints a diatribe against the seventeenth century Puritans, including Oliver Cromwell, whom he denounces as "drunkards, renegades, and schismatics." We have Smithson's opinion of Cromwell but we should like to have Cromwell's opinion of Smithson. It would be far more interesting.

Paul thought a woman's hair her glory, and condemned the short-hair fashion as shameful. Apparently the ladies of Christendom are still of his opinion. Anyhow, 130 tons of false hair is made up annually in France, and exported chiefly to England and the United States, the two great Bible-reading countries.

Captain J. B. Sharkley has been working out figures to show that there will be plenty of room for the inhabitants in the New Jerusalem. Who doubts it? If the Christian scheme of salvation be true, it is the other place that is likely to be crowded.

That Calcutta judge must be a Scotchman who recently addressed a murderer sentenced to death thus: "I beseech you to make use of the short time that remains to you on the earth in seeking forgiveness at the hands of Him who only, *as far as I know*, can give forgiveness for the wrong that you have done."

Scene—South Western Railway. Fact!
First Passenger: I cannot agree with Foote. He indulges in too much ridicule.
Second Passenger: What style of logic would suit you?
F. P.: Euclid's is ideal logic.
S.P.: But does not Euclid use the *reductio ad absurdum*?
F. P.: Er—well—ah—good evening; this is my station.

TRUTH ABOUT THE DEBATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I observe that the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale has written to the *National Reformer* and the *Freethinker*, to say he has accepted my challenge to debate the following ungrammatical proposition: "Is the belief in Atheism, or the belief in God, the most reasonable and the most beneficial to mankind."

Now, as a matter of fact, I challenged Mr. Woffendale to debate the subject of "Hell," but when the rev. gentleman came up to our platform he suggested a discussion on the "God" question, to continue for fourteen consecutive Sunday mornings. To that I demurred—first, because I did not know how many vacant Sundays I had at my disposal; and second because I thought fourteen Sundays on such a subject a little too long. Ultimately I consented to discuss the "God Question" with Mr. Woffendale, and defend the principles of the National Secular Society on such dates in September as I had open. On referring, however, to my engagements, I find that all my Sunday mornings in that month are booked; but I am willing to cancel two dates in order to debate with Mr. Woffendale on his pet theme, providing he chooses a more suitable hour to begin, and also pledges himself to debate with me for not less than two nights in some suitable hall in the North of London on the subject chiefly at issue between us, viz., "Whether Secularism or Christianity is the more rational or more beneficial to mankind." If Mr. Woffendale will consent to this or something more nearly approaching to fairness than his own arrangement, I shall be most happy to meet him.

ARTHUR B. MOSS

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 4, Old Pimlico Pier (open-air), at 11.30, "The Devil." Secular Hall, New Church Road, Camberwell, at 7.30, "Has Man a Soul?"

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; 27, Milton Hall, London.

Dec. 8, Nottingham.

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.

A BATH FRIEND.—Mr. Foote will be happy to visit your city if any friends there will see to the arrangements for a lecture; that is, engaging a hall, doing the advertising, and finding a chairman. The last could be dispensed with if absolutely necessary.

J. MILTON.—Sorry to hear your newsagent is troubled with pious qualms, and refuses to sell the *Freethinker* any longer. This is the sort of thing we have to contend against incessantly, and it should stimulate our friends to promote our circulation whenever and wherever possible. We know nothing of Lady Somerset, good, bad, or indifferent.

"STUPID AWE."—Ingersoll is not an uncommon American name, and we doubt if the work on *Lost Israel Found in the Anglo-Saxon Race* is by any relative of the Colonel. We may utilise what you send when we have looked the matter up.

R. TILLER.—A fuller account of Mirabeau's death is given in *Infidel Death-Beds*.

A LOVETT.—Pleased to hear you consider *Mrs. Besant's Theosophy* a "manly production." Mr. Foote tried to be polite, and not to give unnecessary offence. Your verse is good in some respects, but hardly up to our mark. The defect is in the workmanship, not in the ideas and feeling.

A. DIPPER.—Date booked. Glad to hear you *do* keep literature on sale at the outdoor lectures. This is, if anything, more important than the lectures themselves.

E. ANDERSON.—Shall appear.

R. S. SEAGO.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. H. SPIVEY.—Mr. Foote will answer your letter as soon as possible. If it can be managed he will be happy to spend a week in the Huddersfield district, lecturing and organising.

H. SNELL.—Most people agree with you in liking the change in the *Freethinker*, especially the enlargement. We are happy to say our circulation increases. It would soon double if our friends did their utmost to push it. We will consider the suggestion as to Guide Notices. You will, in all probability, meet both Mr. Foote and Mr. Wheeler at the Paris Congress.

E. CLARK.—We are preparing some gummed literature, such as you suggest, for sticking up in country places.

NED MORGAN.—You were lucky in getting your letter inserted. Evidently the editor does not want to print anything more; we think, therefore, you had better let well alone.

E. T. GARNER.—It is, of course, only natural that the Church Defence Society should promote the success of the Tithes Bill, and does not seem to call for a special comment.

ONE OF THE PEOPLE.—Honest criticism is not an insult, but a compliment. Still, one who is steering a boat shouldn't pay too much attention to the shouting of the folk on the banks. Thanks for the cuttings.

T. BIRTLBY.—We have given you "a final Sugar Plum," and hope you will have a good party and a fine day at Durham. It would have been an act of civility to invite the Bishop. He has been ill lately, and a day in the country with people who know how to enjoy themselves would be beneficial to his health.

B. BRIGGS.—Thanks for the cuttings. Mr. Foote never writes out his lectures, but he intends to write and publish by and bye on the subjects he is treating at Camberwell. Mr. Foote is, as usual, in excellent health. Mr. Wheeler is well.

H. HEFFER.—We quite agree with you. There should be a Western Secular Federation for South Wales, Bristol, Bath, etc. Branches of the N. S. S. should be started, and could be started, in a score of towns in the district. The N. S. S.

Executive meets soon after we go to press. We shall have more to say on the subject next week.

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. — Menschenthum — Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Liberator—Twentieth Century—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Bulletin des Sommaires—Freethought—Islington Gazette—Hastings and St. Leonards' Observer—Open Court—Ironclad Age—Star—South Wales Times—Der Lichtfreund.

SUGAR PLUMS.

WE seldom advert to politics in this journal, but we reserve the right to do so on great occasions, when the first principles of morality and the public welfare are involved. Upon this ground we congratulate the party of rational progress everywhere on the crushing defeat of General Boulanger at the recent French elections. Having watched this cunning, unscrupulous, but not too capable adventurer very closely since the beginning of his public career, we are confident that his success would be disastrous as well as pernicious to France. Around him is a motley group of Royalists, Clericals, and Irridentists, whose only common object is to overthrow the Republic; some being animated by envy, hatred and personal spleen; and others by a hope of being able to pick a plum if the sedition is successful. The whole gang has been taught a bitter lesson, which, let us hope, will be repeated in a still more bitter form at the approaching elections to the Chamber.

M. CARNOT, the President, has counted for a good deal in this result. He may not be a genius, but he has character, and that is far more important in the official head of the State. Honesty, self-respect and independence, are the traditions of his family, and when a Carnot is a scoundrel, or a conniver at scoundrelism, we may begin to doubt the most virtuous, and sympathise with the cynic Diogenes. M. Carnot is also a Freethinker, and may be trusted to keep the Church in its place, as well as political adventurers. The French Republic is not perfect—simply because Frenchmen are not perfect; but conspirators and rebels cannot be tolerated in a country of universal suffrage and representative Government. Were the Republic overthrown by a King or a Dictator, we should have a monstrous display of bigotry and militarism. Priests and soldiers would carry everything before them, and the loss of liberty would in all probability be followed by war. This is not a question of party politics; it affects the most vital and permanent interests of humanity.

MR. FOOTE had a fine audience in Hyde Park on Sunday morning, and a good collection was taken on behalf of the London Secular Federation. The opponents were a Christadelphian, who contended that his sect was right and all the rest of Christendom wrong, and an unclassified Christian who said he was *bound* to believe in a supernatural Devil but forgot to say *why*. The rowdy Stiggles made for the platform, but was not allowed to speak, the meeting heartily endorsing the chairman's ruling. The fellow shouted and yelled, but was gently though firmly sent to the rear. The meeting broke up with three cheers for the lecturer.

IN the evening Mr. Foote lectured to a very large audience in the Secular Hall, Camberwell—a wonderful audience considering the fine weather. His discourse was the first of a series; the second on "Has Man a Soul?" will follow to-night (Aug. 4), and the third on "Is the Bible Inspired?" the succeeding Sunday. The audience was appreciative and enthusiastic. Mr. J. H. Ellis made an ideal chairman, his healthy, intellectual, and genial appearance being an excellent advertisement for the cause. The only opponent, alas, was a well-meaning, diffuse gentleman, who wanted to settle the question by reading a string of confessions of belief in God from Plato, Seneca, and other ancient philosophers, but was politely barred by the chairman from doing so. Then he proved the existence of Design by holding up his hand and saying he could move his fingers. The audience was literally overpowered by this brilliant argument.

J. CRABTREE (Hanover) sends £5 instead of the £2 promised towards the expenses of Mr. Foote's delegation to the International Freethought Congress at Paris in

September. It will be necessary to take Mr. Wheeler also if a good report of the proceedings is to be written for the *Freethinker*, as Mr. Foote will be taking an active share in the business. About half the necessary expenses for both is already subscribed, and no doubt the remainder will be forthcoming.

MR. S. STANDRING is elected honorary secretary of the new North Middlesex Secular Federation, which will soon give evidences of its life and activity.

MR. LUCRETIVS KEEN, of the Wood Green Branch, has undertaken to form a Branch at Finsbury Park, in the neighborhood of which a good many Freethinkers are resident. Mr. Keen will himself lecture in the Park this afternoon (Aug. 4) at 3.30 on "Evolution or Special Creation: Which?" Other lectures are being arranged.

CAPTAIN WADE has allowed the Old Southgate Branch the use of his cricket-field at the rear of the Cherry Tree Hotel on Sunday afternoons. This afternoon (Aug. 4) the sport will begin at 3. All Freethinkers are welcome, but they must bring their own appliances.

CAPTAIN WADE has also placed his Assembly Room, capable of holding about 200 at the service of the Branch for Sunday or week-night meetings.

SABBATARIANISM has experienced another defeat in Glasgow. At the Tramway Company's half-yearly meeting a motion for the discontinuance of Sunday cars was lost by a large majority. We are no friends of a seven-days labor week, but the way to stop it is not to discontinue the Sunday cars, but to make the company keep enough hands to give every one of its employees a clear day off in every seven.

THE Sabbatarian shareholders of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway who attempted to stop the running of cheap Sunday excursions were defeated by a large majority. The Chief Constable of Hastings has given his testimony that the excursionists conduct themselves "in a quiet, orderly manner, and I have no complaint made to me of misconduct on the part of any of them," and a similar opinion is generally expressed at Brighton.

MR. R. FORDER, secretary of the N. S. S., lectures to-day (Aug. 4) in the Abercorn Hall, Victoria Street, Belfast. Time, 3.30 and 7. Subjects, "Romanism, Protestantism and Freethought," and "The Early Evidences for Christianity Considered." We have many readers in the district, and we hope they will rally round Mr. Forder on this occasion.

MR. MOSS reports that his lecturing tour in the North has opened successfully, and promises to give a full account of it in our next number.

TO-DAY (Aug. 4) the North Eastern Secular Federation's excursion to Durham comes off. A good knife-and-fork tea will be provided at the Durham Coffee Tavern, 11 Elvet Bridge, at 3.30., for the modest sum of fifteen pence. This will be followed by outdoor speeches from Mr. A. B. Moss and others in the Market Place at 5. Breaks leave Newgate Street, Newcastle, at 9.30, joining the Chester-le-Street friends at 10.30 at the Crown Hotel. The general rendezvous is the Market Place, Durham, at 12, when the whole company will proceed by boat or on foot to the Pelaw Woods. There should be a good muster.

HALL of Science Childrens' Excursion on Sunday, August 25. Members of the National Secular Society wishing for children's tickets will please state the name of their Branch. Brakes for parents and friends will accompany the children; tickets, 2s. 6d. each. Further subscriptions: "Invicta," 1s. 6d.; Per H. Smith, D. K., 2d.; Jacobs, sen., 6d.; Jacobs, jun., 6d.; Friend, 3d.; Howe, 1s.; G. Calvert, 5s.; Per Oldfield, Mrs. Oldfield, 6d.; Leeton, 6d.; R. C., 6d.; Parsonson, 6d.; Whack, 6d.; D. B., 3d.; Copping, 3d.; Per Binks, Phoebe, 1s.; Per Isaacs, J. J., 2s.; J. L., 6d.; J. G., 6d.; A. K., 1s.; Eppel, 2d.; Spark, 2s.; Hundley, 6d.; J. Pollock, 6d. Subscriptions will be thankfully received by W. Cookney, hon. sec., 1a Willow Street, Paul Street, Finsbury, E.C.

A MEETING of the Freethinkers who have been carrying on the open-air work in Bristol was held on Sunday evening. It was resolved that Mr. Hellier, the Branch secretary, should be written to, and desired to call a members' meeting, in order to see what could be done to energise the organisation. Mr. Derrick promised a donation if something were done. The report is signed by T. A. Williams, G. J. Mercer and J. Keast. We earnestly hope this will lead to a vigorous propaganda and a thorough organisation of the Branch.

JUDGE FRANK T. REID, writing in the *Twentieth Century* on Prayer, says: "How we of this day still grovel under the grossest superstitions, such as would split the sides of God and his angels with laughter were they not so pathetically tragical. And of them all is there any one more laughably pathetic than that which dresses up the terrific forces of Nature in the white necktie of a preacher of divinity and concedes to him, after a fashion, the power to guide and control the decrees of Fate?"

RELIGIONISTS have for some time been crowing over the Bishop of Durham having had the last word in the controversy with the author of *Supernatural Religion*. It is announced, however, that that gentleman, who is understood to be a nephew of Dr. Pusey, has been preparing a counter-blast, which we venture to predict will blow the learned father in God to smithereens.

Menschentum continues its account of the French Freethinkers of the Eighteenth Century, and gives its readers a column of Aphorisms from Ingersoll.

THE *Ironclad Age* reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on Funny Christian Evidences from our columns of June 22.

MESSRS. COPE AND CO., the well-known tobacconists of Liverpool, are about to publish the contributions of James Thomson ("B.V.") to *Cope's Tobacco Plant*. They will be issued in a cheap form at threepence, and will contain a portrait of Thomson and an introduction by Walter Lewin. We understand that 25,000 copies will be printed, so it seems likely that Thomson's name will yet be well known, if only for his contributions to a trade journal.

LANCASTER has no Branch of the N. S. S., and we do not remember any Freethought lectures being delivered there. But there must be room for an active and successful propaganda. A friendly newsagent, in ordering a fresh supply of Mr. Foote's writings, says he is doing "fairly well," and has "only half a dozen left of the last three dozen of *Royal Paupers*." Cannot a few Freethinkers be found to form a Branch in Lancaster?

THE *Star of Gwent*, in commenting on a brutal outrage declared that perhaps this is not to be wondered at, seeing that Dissenters are striving to banish the Bible from our schools. It, however, has the fairness to insert a letter from Mr. Ned Morgan, who urges that the Bible teems with crimes and indecencies committed by God's own people, and is therefore an unfit book to be placed in the hands of children. Mr. Morgan gives his opinion that Bible reading tends to increase crime and outrage among the ignorant rather than diminish the same.

MR. FOOTE'S pamphlet on *Mrs. Besant's Theosophy* is being well circulated, and we hope it will continue to be so. Appearances seem to justify Mr. Foote's prediction that Mrs. Besant would ventilate her Theosophy from Freethought platforms, and Mr. Foote's pamphlet will be an antidote to her mysticism.

THE powerful story translated by Mr. Foote from Catulle Mendès is only an episode in a curious narrative. It finely illustrates the mercy of priests in the good old times. The episode opens abruptly, but the story tells itself as it proceeds. It will be completed in three parts.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Church Times*, who sends an account of "A Tour Through India," states as the result of his investigation that a very small proportion of the English population of Indian cities attend church at all. This accords with our own observation that those who are brought into contact with the claims of other religions—such as

Mohammedanism, Brahminism and Buddhism—soon cease to believe in the divine and exclusive pretensions of Christianity. A large proportion of Indian officers are notoriously sceptics.

THE MERCY OF PRIESTS.

A STORY OF "THE GOOD OLD TIMES."

From "*L'Homme Tout Nu*," by *Catulle Mendès*.

Soon the fresh air blew upon his limbs; he knew he was outside the castle, but he saw nothing, for they had put his head in a sack. He was thrown rudely upon the straw, the stalks on all sides scratching his skin. A clacking whip, a neighing horse, a squeaking wheel, told him he was in a cart. Where would they carry him? The vehicle staggered, nearly overturned, slanted, and rolled on. The sack, which prevented him from seeing, also prevented him from hearing; so that the talk and oaths of his captors sounded only as a loud humming. Now and then there was a rough shake, but the cart went on no less swiftly, and he was like a plucked bird that a cook turns in a saucepan. The time passed—an hour, and still others. From the cold he judged that it was night. Suddenly, it seemed as though a thousand needles were piercing his flesh; it was a fine rain which began to fall. Had Peter the Truthful, at that moment, held between his free hands the fine Bishop Flodoard de Quinqueland, he would certainly have strangled him. Indeed, scratched, shaken, pricked, wet, chilled, deaf, and blind—that fashion of travelling would have seemed uncomfortable to most persons.

All at once, after a sharp turn, the cart halted. Peter was seized unceremoniously, and set upright, with his naked feet on the stones. His hands were unbound, cords were passed under his arms, and he was suddenly lifted. In falling he no longer found the earth under him. He understood that he was descending. But where? into what? He was sore perplexed.

The descent was long, the cords holding him under the armpits. Although he had pulled off the sack, he could see little, because of the thick darkness. Stretching out his hands he felt walls that were sticky with viscid moss. He descended still, vainly kicking his legs in the darkness and the void. At length, the cords slipping from him, he fell heavily on the stones, in the muddy water. The blow was severe enough to produce unconsciousness.

Muddled, wounded, exhausted, when he was able to raise himself he saw nothing but the black night; then, still blacker, and rolling in the obscure humidity, a low round form, perhaps that of a beast, prowled around him.

"Ah," said Peter, "what is that?"

"A pig," replied the other; "I live in this filth, because everything should be in its place. Who are you?"

"A man, naked and cold."

"Your name?"

"Peter the Truthful."

"Why are you put here?"

"For telling the truth. Where am I?"

"Are you not naked?"

"Yes."

"Are you not truth?"

"Yes."

"Well then, you are in a Well."

Peter de Pierrefeu was indignant at being lodged in a dark, wet, and stinking pit, looking up from which he could not even perceive a circle of sky; for the deepening night had, as it were, closed up the opening through which he descended. In what part of the subterranean world was he lying? Would he stay there long? Who would release him? Between four walls of oozing stone, up to the knees in liquid filth, seeing nought but darkness, wet, dirty, full of pain, and shivering in his dress of leaves, you may be certain he did not forget to curse loudly Flodoard de Quinqueland, bishop of Avignon. As the time passed the adventure became still more unpleasant. The company of the man he had encountered at the bottom of the pit, and who, without shame, had likened himself to a pig—indeed, in the darkness and the mud, he had much the air of one, running about, grubbing and grunting—this company, I say, was not calculated to recreate Peter the Truthful, any more than several cockroaches that climbed up his limbs like sailors up a ship's rigging.

However, the bestial form, having approached, spoke with a softer voice than at first.

"Have you nothing more to say? Ah, whoever you are,

let me hear the voice of a friend! I am scarcely worth a thought, having grown almost an animal in body, and I hope mad in mind. But now and then the memory returns to me of the days when I enjoyed talking under the sweet sky with other men. You, who come from the world, speak to him who suffers and groans in hell! What season is it now? for here it is always black winter. When you passed along the roads lately did the snow or the wild rose whiten the eglantine? I think I should die with joy if I were allowed to see an apple-tree in blossom on the plain, or to drink from a rivulet in the grass."

Truly, such words from such a person were heard by Peter with surprise.

"How long," he asked "have you been here?"

"Alas! ten years, I think."

"Ten years!"

Peter shuddered. Would he also grow old in that vile dungeon, never seeing the fields, nor the towns with their sweet women?

"Do you never leave this hole?" he asked.

"Never."

"Were you always alone?"

"Always."

"Why, you would have died of hunger."

"Sometimes some dirty bread or other kitchen refuse is flung to me from above, by a hand which appears, opens, and retires. At first I strove to catch my food before it was befouled in the mire, but I am no longer so delicate, I readily eat the mud with the bread."

"With the nails of your fingers and toes you should have climbed up the sides and regained the light, or fallen and broken your neck."

"They have broken the bones of my arms and legs with iron bars! My limbs, when I move them, are like the flails that beat the corn, one part going here and the other there; for this reason, during ten years, I have gone upon my stumps."

"Ha!" said Peter, "But what crime have you committed?"

"None! None! I swear by the Holy Spirit!"

"What frightful place is it we are in?"

"In the abbey of Saint Gorgon, formerly the richest in Provence; and truly it must still be enriching itself because, alas, of the miracles that are wrought there."

Peter asked no more questions. Seated on an abutment of the slimy wall, he pondered, with his head drooping and one knee between his hands.

"Do you pity me?" the other continued. "It would do me so much good to know that someone pitied me. Moreover, I wish someone would tell me if I really speak, if I am what I think, if the place where I am is really what it seems to me. My case is so strange that I often doubt if it be not imaginary. It may be that I have lost my reason. All that I remember and all that I endure is perhaps only a dream of my delirium. Ah, God! what joy!—at this moment when, heart-broken with moving on the stones, I feel the cold water and the night freezing me to the marrow, I am perhaps lying on my bed, beside my wife, my dear Bertrande, who is frightened at seeing me so demented."

"Your distress is real," said Peter.

"Ah! cruel!"

"I must speak the truth."

"Then you understand me?"

"Yes."

"Touch my forehead."

"I do."

"I am here, then, truly?"

"Alas! poor man!"

"Misery! misery! But at least I am beside myself, am I not, and my lot is not so frightful as I imagine?"

"It does not seem to me that you have entirely lost your senses."

The other started violently at these words, and raising his sad and soft voice he said sharply:

"It does not seem so to you? What sign have you that I am not extravagant? Do I speak like a sensible man? Mad, mad, I would be mad, and I know that I am, and whoever says no, he lies!"

"I cannot help you to believe it."

"What, you declare that my misfortune is not an illusion of my insanity?"

"Yes."

"That I am in this pit?"

"Yes."

"Ah! traitor!"

Peter de Pierrefeu with difficulty restrained a cry, for his leg had been bitten by the man, as by a dog. He could easily have avenged himself, but he felt pity for the poor wretch, and forebore to spurn him with his foot.

"I will try another proof," the man said. There was a splashing in the mud, and Peter knew that the man had gone to a distance. The noise ceased, then recommenced, and drew nearer. The man had returned.

"Feel," he said, "feel what I have here; yes, under my arm; and tell me what it is."

Peter's outstretched hand encountered something hard among what seemed old wet linen rags. His nails scraped it, and something round seemed to whiten in the obscurity.

"Speak," the man said; "tell me what it is."

"I cannot."

"Feel again."

Peter passed the palm of his hand over the hard curve, which whitened more and more; and he felt that his forefinger penetrated a small aperture.

"Well?"

"It seems a playing bowl; this should be the hole for one's finger."

"Well said! very well said! I possess a bowl, and we shall have something to divert ourselves with, if the space is not too narrow. Yes, truly, a bowl of oak or boxwood! And you see plainly that I am really mad, since for ten years I have taken this—you will laugh, for it is only a bowl—I have taken this for the head of my little child."

Peter, it may well be imagined, was not a little astonished at such language; and the madman, for so he must be, continued, laughing:

"Ah! I have kissed and cried over that bowl. And these holes—there are two to play more easily with—these holes, I fancied they were the sockets which held the eyes of my Jacquinet. Poor dear one! I could have sworn he was dead. But he is not; it was my disordered brain that imagined it. He lives, the dear little one, and I will give him the bowl, that he and the young dog may play with it under the trees in the orchard."

At that moment the moon broke through the night, filling the depths of the pit with a sudden light.

Black, ragged, almost prone, raised on his stumps, the unfortunate creature lifted a wan face, with grey hairs and reddened eyes, but beaming with a holy joy.

"A bowl!" he repeated, "a bowl! Look again. You say well it is a bowl. Oh, how good you are! I love you!"

But Peter had trembled.

"A head!" he cried, "yes, the skull of a child!"

Having said these words, he was sorry he uttered them, for the poor wretch, from laughing, turned to piteous weeping.

"Why do you tell me so? Why not tell me a lie? So this is a skull? Oh, I will not believe it! Alas, I have believed it too long already! He really perished, then; and I am not mad? All is true, then; not only the cold, the hunger, the darkness, my broken limbs, and this filthy hole for my eternal habitation; but also the cry that he uttered, and his fall, and his poor little body that was nothing in my arms but a corpse. And the other thing, too, must be true; the thing that, since ten years, every night, at the same hour, makes every hair of my flesh stand on end."

"What thing?" inquired Peter.

"Oh, do you not hear? It is the hour. I hear. And I am not mad, since this—as you cruelly tell me—is the head of my Jacquinet. How she screams? God, how she screams! What do they do to her to make her shriek like that? It is as though she sang and cried at once. My Bertrande! Oh, they are beating thee! Ever and ever she cries. Sweet Jesus! my name, it is my name she is shouting! She is calling me, and I—nothing, nothing, I can do nothing. Ha, the screams redouble! It seems as if wolves were howling in my heart. O Bertrande, my Bertrande!"

Splashing horribly in the rebounding mud with the awkward movements of a maimed beast, the man thus plained at the bottom of the obscure hole; and Peter de Pierrefeu shuddered from head to foot. For above them, and even far higher, it seemed to him, than the mouth of their prison, a lamentable clamor, unique, but shrill and continuous and increasing, rent the silence of the night.

(To be continued.)

MADAME BLAVATSKY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Allow me a few words of protest against what has been said by Mr. J. M. Wheeler about "Theosophy and Madame Blavatsky" in your issue of 7th July.

I do not understand why the old slanders, which have been proved to be *slanders* indeed, and nothing else, are repeated so often, even by persons who, like Mr. Wheeler, do admit of their own accord in the same breath that "it is difficult to credit that a woman of learning and philosophy, as Madame Blavatsky is, could stoop to such tricks." Why are the numerous answers to all those slanders never produced? Is it really such a pleasant task to throw mud upon a fellow-creature's name? I would rather say with Lavater, "If you hear evil spoken of somebody, and you are not quite sure that it is true, do not repeat it; and if you know it to be the truth, ask yourself—Why do I tell it?"

Unfortunately, the adage quoted by Mrs. Besant is right: "To be great is to be misunderstood," and in many cases it could be paraphrased thus: "To be great is to be discussed and ill-judged; to be great is to be, wilfully or unwilfully, slandered." Because to be great is to become objectionable to some of the smaller people, who are apt to resent it, and to say: "Why is that head so much higher than our level? It cannot be genuine. That person is surely walking on stilts. It is only a very good trick!" And having pronounced the puzzling high stature to be only the result of a very good trick, the smaller people feel comforted, and hold on to the idea of the trick.

But why should Mr. Wheeler—who as a Freethinker is certainly satisfied to grant everybody his due, and who cannot be displeased to meet and acknowledge greatness in others—seek information almost exclusively from those who are hostile, or envious, or simply ignorant, and therefore unable to be accurate and impartial in this particular matter? If somebody wants to hear the truth about "Theosophy and Madame Blavatsky," let him go to the friends of the "woman of learning and philosophy," who has, nevertheless, to be considered as "the most extraordinary and accomplished adventuress of the age" . . . in order not to be startled by the wonderful reality of the greatness! Or let him go at least to persons who know something of the purpose of her noble life, and they will tell him that there is no trick about Madame Blavatsky, and no trick about the "New Religion" (which is as old as the world). And if anything is needed to understand the meaning and aim of this Old Religion, it can only be found in an earnest endeavor to love Humanity, under *all* its aspects, with an unselfish and devoted heart—a difficult lesson to learn, because the *practice* of it clashes daily with our own personal interests, not to speak of all other hindrances met in every form at every step. All that we are, all that we have, all that we do, should be consecrated to the service and welfare of others; all that we become should make us able to help others. *That* is the meaning of Madame Blavatsky's life and teaching; and that is the stern and *true* meaning of Theosophy, whatever may be the diversity of opinions about religious and philosophical matters among the Fellows of the Theosophical Society. We cannot repeat it too often. It is the *practice*, not the theory, of the Master's teaching: "You are all brothers. . . . Love thy neighbor as thyself." And through the voice of Theosophy all masters and sages, of every time and nation, teach us that selfishness is the cause of all evil and suffering and that unselfish love alone can redeem.

But that has nothing to do with "tricks," "lies," and "fraudulent systems"! It simply means hard constant work.

People who would find an occasion of perusing *Isis Unveiled*, even as a mere "literary curiosity," might see for themselves that the author must have been acquainted with something more than what Mr. Wheeler gives her credit for; and they will have to come to the conclusion that if Madame Blavatsky, when writing this stupendous work, has not had at her disposal the most marvellous and precious collection of books that one can imagine, she must be gifted with a still more wonderful memory.

As to the name of Koot-hoomi (or Kut' humi), which, according to Mr. Wheeler, is not Thibetan, if any one interested in the subject would take the trouble to read several articles published a few years ago in the *Theosophist*, and written or related by different persons (some of whom did not belong to the Theosophical Society), he would find that Koot-hoomi is the name of a well-known Himalayan Mahatma, whose

A Western minister has been preaching Dr. Talmage's sermons, but his friends expect to prove he is insane.

disciples are called after him "Koot-hoom-pá," which in Thibetan means "men or disciples of Koot-hoomi." Mahatma Koot-hoomi and his followers have been met in Thibet by these different persons and by others on several occasions. (See *The Himalayan Brothers, The Sages of the Himavat, Interview with a Mahatma, etc.*)

Your journal is called *Freethinker*, and as such must be impartial, I trust. After having inserted the opinion of persons who think badly of "Theosophy and Madame Blavatsky," will you kindly allow a place in your columns to the expression of a good opinion on this same subject by one of those who have a right to know?

FELLOW THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

["Fellow Theosophical Society" has fallen into a few mistakes. I have not sought information in regard to Mme. Blavatsky "almost exclusively from those who are hostile, or envious, or simply ignorant." Nor have I cited statements which "have been proved to be slanders." My opinion of that lady has been mainly formed by a perusal of her own writings, among which I include certain letters certified by experts to have been written by her to Madame Coulomb, and which have been published both in India and in England, without any attempt on Mme. Blavatsky's part to prove before a court of law that they contain slanders.* That lady's friends say she possesses supernormal power. Madame Coulomb, who resided in the same house for years with her, says she performed her wonders by means of trickery. I have simply stated the fact, not even giving my opinion. Is this slander?

Major A. Lillie, who resided many years in Northern India and has given much attention to Northern Buddhism, says "The name Koot Hoomi is gibberish."† "An expert in the British Museum assures me that there are no words in the Thibetan dictionary in the least degree resembling them." But it seems the Mahatma has been seen, not by Mr. Sennett, with whom he had so much correspondence, but by certain writers in the *Theosophist*. Now the article on "The Himalayan Brothers" was written by Mohini M. Chatterji, in whom Mr. R. Hodgson, sent out by the Society for Psychical Research, found a "lamentable want of accuracy." That on "The Sages of the Himavat" was signed by Damodar, upon whom, says Mr. Hodgson, "no reliance could be placed," and "I could come to no other conclusion than that he had co-operated with Madame Blavatsky in the production of the spurious marvels,"‡ and whom he accuses together with Madame Blavatsky of deliberately making "statements they must have known to be false."§ As to the other alleged writer, his existence is as problematical as that of the Mahatmas themselves. If I am any judge of style, many an article signed with other names in the *Theosophist* is the production of Madame Blavatsky herself.

I must remind F.T.S., that the Society for Psychical Research, largely composed of spiritists, was not hostile to Mme. Blavatsky at the outset, though the person it sent to India to investigate was forced to the conclusion "that the strongest apparent evidence of the Mahatmas, comes to nothing at all," and that the alleged wonders were "part of a huge fraudulent system."||

As to Mme. Blavatsky having "at her disposal the most marvellous and precious collections of books that one can imagine." "Precious" is a matter of opinion. I have already said that Mme. Blavatsky is well read in precious trash and has a capital memory. Her parade of learning and occult knowledge does not impose on

J. M. WHEELER.

CARLYLE'S RELIGION.—(Conclusion.)

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY.

SCOTTISH scepticism is generally more keen and incisive than that which one meets in England. In conversation Carlyle was sometimes so bitter against Christianity that it appeared as if he felt a sense of personal wrong. One evening, talking of William Maccall, with whom John Sterling had a notable correspondence, Carlyle said: "I remember Maccall; I have

* Mr. F. G. Netherclift, of Bedford Row, gave his testimony that the letters to Mme. Coulomb, others purporting to come from Koot Hoomi, and those admittedly signed by Mme. Blavatsky were all "undeniably hers."

† *Koot Hoomi Unveiled*, p. 6.

‡ "Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research," vol. iii., p. 210.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

|| Proceedings, Vol. iii. p. 210.

lost sight of him, but remember a vigorous way of expressing himself. I recall his breaking out in conversation about elevating the people: "What can you do for a people whose God is a dead Jew!" A fair enough question. If I had my way the world would hear a pretty stern command—Exit Christ!"

One Christmas evening he said: "I observe some folk at the corner a little drunker than usual this morning. Then I remembered it was the birthday of their Redeemer."

I was present one evening when someone asked: "Mr. Carlyle, can you believe that all these ignorant and brutal millions of people are destined to live for ever?" "Let us hope not," was the emphatic reply.

He had never been in a church of any kind since the visit to South Place already alluded to, when one day in the country, he was persuaded by some ladies to go and hear a famous Methodist. He returned furious about the prayer, which he summed up in these words: "O Lord, thou hast plenty of treacle—send us down a flood of it!"

And all the while there was a strong survival of Calvinism in Carlyle, which led him to divide the world into saints and sinners, sheep and goats—to worship those, and doom these to unquenchable burnings—of course of the purely metaphorical kind represented in his own frequent "damns."

It was pathetic, too, to note the tenderness with which he clung to every shred of scripture which his intellect could honestly admire. This was shown in his enthusiasm for the book of Job—which, however, once led him into a queer predicament. During one of his latest visits to Scotland he passed a night in the mansion of an old gentleman whom he had reason to esteem. In the evening this gentleman said: "Mr. Carlyle, it is my custom to read the Scriptures to my family and servants before retiring; but your room is ready and you need not remain if you do not wish it." "Wish it!" exclaimed Carlyle, impulsively, "Why, I'll conduct the reading myself." The delighted host summoned children and servants, and placed the large Bible before Carlyle, who straightway turned to his favorite (though not much studied) book of Job. Unfortunately he hit on the chapter of Job's cursings: "Let the day perish wherein I was born," and so on. Carlyle proceeded with faltering tones, increasing nervousness, a growing perception that the pessimist invectives were not suited to the children and servants; but when he had got out "Why died I not from the womb," he groaned, closed the book with a slam, and stalked out of the room.

As life was closing—so that it was an effort to hear what the old man said—his mind wandered back to the old hearthstone, to his parents, and he sometimes seemed striving to realize their views. One afternoon he said feebly to Mr. Justice Stephen who had called, "That fire is rather hot. It seems a curious thing that people should have believed that they were to be punished by fire." "The belief," said Sir James, "came from a time of cruel and savage punishments." "It would be very uncomfortable to continue in that grate through eternity; and yet my father, one of the ablest men I ever knew, believed that such would be the fate of most people,—he believed it as much as his own existence."

Carlyle's ideas of deity were vague, but in his last years he sometimes spoke as if he were not certain there might not be a devil. Once after he had been thundering against certain particular evils which excited his wrath, I said: "We who believe in evolution regard all these as temporary arrests of development." "It might," he answered with a smile, "astonish you if I were to say where I believe these evils come from. Let us walk!" There was something in his manner which kept me from pressing the subject. He was now, however, in the year before his death,—a period when religious "survivals" are kept to show themselves. There were none of these, however, from which the orthodox could obtain any satisfaction. Even were it true that Carlyle inclined to suspect there might be a devil, it was at a period when theology had just explained the devil away. His disbelief in the Christian scheme was complete and final. Indeed, though myself a heretic, I have at times thought that Carlyle's character might have been more humanized had he felt deeper sympathy with the spirit which has imperfectly and superstitiously, yet with a true and tender sentiment, found its expression in the Legend of Jesus.—*The Open Court* (Chicago).

Bishop: "Miss Autumn, I hear you are an earnest student of the Bible. What, in your opinion, is the most interesting line of Holy Writ?" Miss Autumn (promptly) "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

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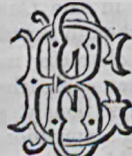
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