

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IV.

ON "OLD TESTAMENT MORALITY."—Continued.

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

LET us now consider the case of the "heathen nations" whose slaughter you admit to have been "authorised by God's express command." You protest against these massacres being judged by our modern ideas of humanity, and this may be a fair excuse for the Jews, but what excuse is it for Jehovah? It is idle to talk of the barbarities of ancient times; we are not discussing the morality of the ancient Jews, but the morality of an "inspired" volume, which, if it comes from a God such as you define, can never sink below the loftiest benevolence, and still less shock the common feelings of civilised men and women.

One of your observations on the chosen people is ludicrous, even as a piece of special pleading. Considering the cruelties of antiquity, you remark that the "Hebrews, far from being a ferocious and blood-thirsty people, were marked by superior self-restraint and humanity." You seem astonished at their moderation. But is it not obvious that the Jews were never treated by their conquerors with the cruelty they displayed towards their own victims? Had they been so, they would have been annihilated. The Assyrian government was coarse and brutal, but it never equalled the ferocity of Jehovah's warriors. So far were the Jews from being ill-treated during the Captivity, that many of them who had settled in Babylon refused to return to Palestine when they were free to do so. Even under the Pharaohs, they had been allowed to multiply enormously, and if they were compelled to work they were not allowed to starve, for when they were sick of the desert manna they bewailed their loss of the fleshpots of Egypt.

I can conceive of nothing more absurd, or more immoral, than your plea that every man must die, and that death by the sword is generally less painful than death by disease. It is an outrage on common sense and common humanity. It would justify every private murder and every public massacre that ever was or could be committed. I know that I must die, but I do not wish a set of pious assassins to decide when and how I shall expire; yet, according to your argument, I should thankfully hold out my throat to any inspired butcher who will do me the honor of cutting it.

Your next argument is that the nations, whose territory the Jews requisitioned, were doomed to extermination as "the just punishment of their outrageous wickedness." You forget that the Jews vexed the Lord more than the nations he drove out before them. You also forget that the defeated side is always in the wrong, and that the character of the Canaanites is described for us by those who robbed and murdered them.

That the Jews were God's executioners is open to suspicion when we reflect on their interest in the massacres. Nor is it tenable that in the extermination

of whole nations of men, women, and children, there is "no principle involved different from what is involved in the execution of a single murderer for a single crime." There are two answers to this argument, and both of them unanswerable.

In the first place, it is quite inconceivable that "outrageous wickedness" was universal. Had it been so, the Canaanites would have perished from social anarchy, without waiting for "God's executioners." There must have been a moderate regard for the primary laws of human society. Men must have supported their wives and families, and mothers must have cooed over their smiling babes. Yet we read that the massacre of these people was universal and promiscuous. Nay more, we read that the camels and asses were involved in the slaughter, while the horses were subjected to the infamous process of houghing. You would cry "Shame!" if this were done by a desperate Irish peasant, but you ask me to regard it as divine justice when it is done by Jewish marauders in the name of their God.

In the next place, the object of individual punishment is not vengeance, but the protection of society. It is a warning, an example, a deterrent; characters which can never belong to massacre and extermination. Edmund Burke professed himself unable to draw up an indictment against a whole people; you, however, are ready to draw up their indictment, pronounce their sentence, and superintend their execution.

There is something worse than death. It is dishonor. There is something worse than murder. It is violation. I do not wonder at your silence on this topic. You feel that a plea for the selection of virgins for the Jewish conquerors would affront the conscience of humanity. Yet I must remind you that this was done by the express command of Jehovah. Youth and beauty were sacrificed on the altar of lust. Maidens were handed over—*by your God*—to the bloody embraces of the murderers of their fathers and brothers.

Your treatment of the projected sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham does not lessen its "difficulties." That human sacrifices were common at that time is probable; that parents had power of life and death over their children is certain. But what has this to do with a *divine* command? Was Jehovah unable to rise above the morality of the age? It may be that such a sacrifice was not "at variance either with Abraham's own conscience or with the ideas of morality then universally prevailing." But Abraham's conscience is a poor standard, and we are not bound by the moral ideas of that period. You forget the real point at issue. It is Jehovah who is on trial. Why did he tell a father to slay his son, or lead him to suppose that such a sacrifice could be acceptable?

Should a father obey a voice from heaven commanding him to kill his son? Not now, you reply, for the voice would be a delusion. But that is your opinion. The voice is not a delusion to the man who hears it. If he acts in all sincerity is he justified? I defy you to answer this question without absolving

him or condemning Abraham. Twenty voices from heaven would not induce a brave and tender man to commit a murder. If Jehovah thundered in concert with all the gods of the Pantheon, from the Himalayas to the Olympus, I would not dip my hands in blood at his bidding. I would rather incur his vengeance than earn his rewards. I would despise his heaven, and never fear his hell.

The cursing Psalms are another theme for your sophistry. You quote a few of the mildest as though they were fair samples of the rest. You cannot complain, therefore, if I quote one of the worst:

"Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children."

Such infamous words would disgrace the lips of a fiend? Is it not strange to find them in "an inspired manual of devotion?" Do you imagine that the study of these curses upon the innocent wives and children of one's enemies is calculated to make men tender and merciful? You allege that "the persons denounced in these Psalms were enemies of God, of religion, and of the commonwealth," but you admit that they were "also (at least in some cases) personal enemies of the Psalmist." Do you not see that this is a very convenient way of gratifying malignity under the cloak of religion? Will you also tell me how the "widows" and the "fatherless" were the "enemies of God, of religion, and of the commonwealth?"

Your defence of David is labored and curious. With regard to the very politic execution of Saul's male descendants to arrest a famine, you bid me remember the old principle of blood-vengeance. Is the man after God's own heart to be judged by secular standards? What is the use of the grace of God if it leaves men slaves to the foolish superstitions and coarse morality of their age? There is one point of the story which you conveniently forget. After the execution of the seven victims "the Lord was entreated for the land" and the famine ceased. Does not this make Jehovah an accomplice of David's? Will you ask me to excuse David and Jehovah on the same grounds?

David's mean, treacherous, and cowardly murder of Uriah, after vainly endeavoring to make him pass as the father of Bathsheba's bastard, is enough to damn him in the eyes of every honest man. It reveals a dreadful turpitude of character. It was not one act of passion, but a series of calculated villainies. Yet all you have to say in palliation is that David repented, and you appear to think that repentance is higher than innocence. I differ from you, but I will not argue the point. I will merely say that David's repentance was rather fear than remorse. I read that he made atonement by going to war, and butchering his prisoners with every circumstance of horror. "Where," you ask, "shall we find a parallel to his repentance?" I answer—happily, nowhere.

"An exhaustive treatment" of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament is not your aim. You add that "perhaps no such treatment is possible." Here, at least, I have the honor to agree with you. No special pleading, however able and subtle, can make the Jewish scriptures anything but a record of barbarism, with gleams of growing culture, and occasional aspirations towards higher things. Some of the Old Testament pages are filthy, some are brutal, and some are disgusting. To defend these is to palter with conscience, and to sap the very foundations of morality.

G. W. FOOTE.

## THE ALMIGHTY INQUISITOR.

This title is not original. It is taken from a Catholic work written in defence of the Inquisition by a friar named Macebo, whose work is printed "by authority." The varied and jarring sects of Protestants must excuse us if we take a document issued by authority of the great Mother Church as a better standard of Christianity than their own insignificant and contradictory creeds, and in accordance with that authority we bestow on God the title of the Almighty Inquisitor.

The Inquisition of Rome is, according to Father Macebo, truly the Holy Office. It is instituted in accordance with the word and work of God himself. Its motto is taken from the gospel, "Compel them to come in." Its proceedings are regulated in accordance with the divine command and the divine example. The first case was that of Cain, who typically added religious error to his mortal crime. God came down and questioned him and set a mark on him, as the Inquisition puts the San Benito on its penitents. The next cause in Macebo's list was the process of the Holy Office against the builders of the Tower of Babel. The Almighty Inquisitor came down to see the city and tower, and having inquired into their blasphemy proceeded to punish it. And so throughout the Bible. Did he not punish Abimelech and Pharaoh, going the length of killing all the first-born of Egypt for the hardness of the king's heart? Did he not instruct Moses that "He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only shall be utterly destroyed"? (Exod. xxii., 20). Did he not enjoin that if any left the faith they should be put to death, though it were "thy son or thy daughter or the wife of thy bosom"? (Deut. xiii.) The Holy Tribunal was instructed to proceed against those that had familiar spirits in accordance with the divine command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. xxii., 18; Lev. xx., 27). All who kept not the true faith were to be cut off, and all heretical nations to be extirpated. Was not the son of the Israelitish woman put to death for blasphemy? and were not the Canaanites destroyed for their heathenism? When Nadab and Abihu offered strange incense before the Lord he devoured them with fire (Lev. x.) When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled, they were swallowed up in a pit, and a fire from the Lord consumed two hundred and fifty men (Num. xvi.) When Achan kept back the spoil from God's priests, both he and his were stoned and burnt with fire (John vii.) Agag was hewn to pieces before the Lord by Samuel (1 Sam. xv.) When men were sent by the king to take Elijah they were consumed by fire from heaven (2 Kings i.) Forty-two children were destroyed by bears for reviling Elisha (2 Kings ii.) The angel of the Lord smote a hundred four score and five thousand Assyrians in the night (2 Kings xix.)

Not a jot or a tittle of the Divine Law can pass away, and the Holy Inquisition is the divinely appointed means of carrying it out. In its supervision of human affairs it but emulates the Being whose eyes are in every place, beholding the good and beholding the evil. In its direst form it but anticipates the day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God (2 Thess. i., 7). Indeed, it is merciful if by any and every means it can preserve souls from damnation. Better that ten thousand heretics should die than that a single soul should be lost. It is merciful to the faithful for it prevents them from being contaminated by the emissaries of Satan. It is merciful to the faithless, for surely at the last moment they may repent and be saved. For there is no salvation after death. As the tree falls so it must lie. It is better to be maimed and tortured in life

Returns from Roman Catholic Schools in thirteen English dioceses gave over 88,000 as the number of scholars.

than to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

What were the tortures of the Holy Office compared to the unending torments hereafter? The rack, the wheel, the pendulum and the thumbscrew are as nothing compared to the question-chamber of the Almighty Inquisitor. What were the painted devils in the San Benito garb of the victims to the real devils who will torture for ever in hell? What were the painted flames, or even the real fire of the *auto da fé* to the lake of brimstone and unquenchable fire? What were a few moments of agony at the stake compared to the torments decreed by the celestial Torquemada! The malice of man, when at its worst, inflamed with religious bigotry and providing, as Calvin did for Servetus, green twigs, that he might burn the longer, is soon defeated by kindly death. But the Almighty Inquisitor provides that his victims shall live on for ever in tortures that are also eternal. What a sweet and comforting faith is that of the blessed gospel!

J. M. WHEELER.

### THE LUMINOUS LEGISLATOR.

EXODUS xxxiv., 29-35.

I CANNOT be far wrong in speaking of Moses as the Luminous Legislator or the Luminous Prophet, for he is probably the only legislator and the only prophet who could rightly be so described. Vo-luminous they are well known to be; but luminous never. Unfortunately the luminosity bestowed on the great Hebrew legislator was only physical and temporary, not moral and intellectual and permanent; which would have been a miracle far more worthy of a God of sense and of true nobility and dignity of character. It was the "skin of his face" that God made to shine. God did not care to let the soul of Moses shine forth as that of a true liberator and friend of the human race who insisted on the abolition of slavery and polygamy. He allowed his Luminous Legislator to uphold the false belief in witchcraft and to issue stringent orders which have resulted in the pious murder of thousands or perhaps millions of innocent women and men for an impossible crime. The Luminous Legislator allowed slaves to be bought or to be captured or to be beaten to death. He shone forth as the author (under God) of superstitious laws and brutal customs little better than those of the lowest African fetish-worshippers. Death by stoning was the general penalty for trifling breaches of his senseless ceremonial law. He ordered men to murder their own wives and children if they preferred any temple to that of Jehovah. He ordered the cold-blooded massacre of helpless women and children. His laws insisted on the sacrifice of all human beings who should be devoted to the national deity (Lev. xxvii., 28, 29). While the religious virtues were thus faithfully and benignantly fostered, such impious crimes as sculpture, painting, picking up sticks on Saturday, or eating pork, were emphatically prohibited and rigorously suppressed.

Perhaps God felt that the moral darkness of his divine code needed the addition of a little light of a more obvious and assuring character. Hence, perhaps, the sublime ruler of the universe condescended to make the face of his servant shine. Truly, this luminosity of skin, like many other biblical signs and wonders, was an intrinsically trivial and foolish miracle, but it would appear to have answered its purpose. A phosphorescent face was in those days convincing proof of a divine mission. The tablets of stone thus illumined—or reported to be illumined—were undoubtedly written by the finger of God. Such at least we are led to suppose were the opinions and feelings of the poor frightened Israelites, who "were afraid to come nigh" until their luminous prophet called them and "put a vail on his face"

to relieve their fears while he talked with them and reported to them the commandments against sculpture and murder which he alleged God had just given him amidst the thunder-clouds of Mount Sinai. When, however, "Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out," the Lord not objecting to the brightness; but when he quitted the Lord's dazzling presence (having apparently, like luminous paint, absorbed a fresh stock of phosphorescent luminosity) Moses carefully replaced the veil, so that while he repeated God's messages or corrections to the people they might not be terrified by the divine light thus emanating at second-hand from his glowing countenance. How "all the children of Israel came nigh" their "veiled prophet" while he gave them, by word of mouth, their deity's instructions, is rather puzzling, seeing that the Israelites were at least three millions in number, and even with dense and dangerous crowding would fill a circle of some half a mile in diameter. Moses must have had stentorian lungs to enable him to address so vast an audience, with his speech impeded the while by a thick opaque veil completely covering his too brilliant features. But we need not be surprised. Though eighty years of age Moses enjoyed so sound a constitution that his powers were not in the slightest impaired by the forty days' fast with which the inhospitable Jehovah had twice welcomed and entertained him amidst the drenching mist-clouds and thunderstorms of the sacred mount. The grand old man had not taken cold by this prolonged exposure. Jehovah even broke his promise to engrave the commandments himself on the stones which Moses had hewed; he compelled his venerable guest to do all the stone-mason's work (compare Ex. xxxiv., 1 and 27). Forty days' hard labor without bread and water, and without even a plank-bed, or a roof, left the snowy-bearded octogenarian, still so vigorous and hearty that when his task was completed he strode down the mountain unassisted, bearing the tables of stone in his hand, and straightway addressed the elders, and then the whole nation, the children of Israel being apparently so struck by the brightness of his face and the power of his voice that they forgot to ask him whether he was not hungry after his prolonged fasting. As Moses at intervals in his speech "went in before the Lord" to consult him on various difficult or forgotten points, one wonders why the preceding interviews were not conducted on similarly easy conditions. Why were the forty days and nights on the stormy peak a *sine qua non* for the original preparation and presentation of the ten commandments?

Moses was now truly and literally a great and shining light. Ecclesiastical artists represent him with great horns or beams of light, an outward and visible sign perhaps of the brilliant ideas emanating from his brains under the stimulus of the divine illumination. What was the strength or intensity of the illumination, if we may be permitted to wonder? Was his countenance like unto an electric light, or burning magnesium, in power and brilliance, or as soft and mild as the shining surf of the gently breaking waves on a summer's night? Would a photometer have registered 40,000 candle-power as the equivalent of the divine illumination, or only 00004? We cannot say. Our unsanctified curiosity is deservedly baffled. Information and belief are alike lacking with us. Scientific Christians like Faraday, however, who in heaven will "see and hear and know all that we wished or hoped below," will be able to solve this and all other curious points. Yet strange to say my own private (and public) opinion is that we could estimate the actual amount of light emitted with the greatest accuracy. Add a pint of moonshine to an ocean of credulity and evaporate a drop of the mixture in the test-tube of common sense; and the moral weight of the

residue will fairly indicate the amount of light given forth. A similar psychological process might perhaps give us the social value or power of the moral light afforded by the Mosaic glimmer to the world in general. The result, which is gradually being worked out by scholars and critics and thinkers in general, is not turning out as Christians expected. The divine or theological portion of the light afforded by the Mosaic dispensation was of the will-o'-the-wisp description, leading men into bottomless quagmires and interminable morasses. In a sense not intended by Burns, it may truly be said that "the light that led astray was light from heaven." The only light that guides aright is furnished by the earthly lamp of human knowledge. The light supposed to be emitted from "behind the veil" is of the purely subjective or imaginary kind of stuff, of which dreams and optical delusions and many minor and major forms of insanity are built.

Jesus, not to be outdone by Moses, also on one occasion appeared with a flaming countenance which shone like the sun (Matt. xvii., 2). But we need not trouble about this superior but strictly private imitation of the great legislator. Neither need we trouble about any of the "rational" or irrational explanations of the brightness of Moses' face as a kind of natural phosphorescence, or St. Elmo's fire or electric glow. The only rational explanation of the whole Mosaic narrative is utterly destructive of its credit as an historical record of fact. There is no more need to attempt quasi-rational explanations of the magical events of the Pentateuch than of the wonders recorded in the *Aeneid* or in Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra* or *She*. The miraculous is the mythical. The explanation of the cow jumping over the moon is that the event never occurred, but was only imagined. If, however, we suppose for the moment that the Pentateuch speaks truly in describing the luminosity or phosphorescence of a "veiled prophet" who, unlike Mokanna, must not be regarded as an impostor, then we must ask ourselves some questions concerning the ethical significance of this divinely vouchsafed sign and wonder. Is a human glow-worm better suited for a solemn authentication of a great moral and legislative system; or for being exhibited by a Barnum to astonish the foolish and puzzle the wise? What is the moral value of a superstitious obedience won by such puerile means as the temporary manifestation of a property common to fire-flies, bad potatoes, and rotting fish? Is there not truth in Carlyle's idea that much, at least, of the vaunted light thrown by superstition and priestcraft is but a phosphorescence of moral decay shining in the darkness as putrefying organisms commonly do?

W. P. BALL.

## ACID DROPS.

Mrs. Besant announces that she is preparing a pamphlet on Theosophy. She complains that "caricatures of it have come from some Freethinkers' pens." So far as we know, only three Freethinkers have written anything on the subject—Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Foote, and Mr. Wheeler. We presume Mrs. Besant does not mean Mr. Bradlaugh, and as she uses the plural, she must mean both Mr. Foote and Mr. Wheeler. Mr. Foote's pamphlet criticises Mrs. Besant's utterances in the *Star* and the *National Reformer*, and any "caricature" in it must be her own. As for Mr. Wheeler (it is the editor who writes this), Mrs. Besant is correcting her master; for he knows more about Buddhism and Oriental thought generally than Mrs. Besant is ever likely to learn. His "caricatures" are a good deal truer than Mrs. Besant's "portraits."

The Rev. Stewart Headlam thinks, like most other people, except Madame Blavatsky, that an Atheist cannot be a Theosophist, wherefore he rejoices in the *Church Reformer*. "There is but little now to hinder her from again making her communion at a Christian altar." Further, he hints

that "Mrs. Besant will find a Society more in accordance with her action, two floors higher up; for, oddly enough, the Guild of St. Matthew and the Theosophical Society are in the same house." Like the host in the gospel, he says, "Friend, come up higher."

Madame Blavatsky places the seat of the Theosophic Mahatmas in Thibet, probably because little is known about that country. Some *Times* correspondents have, however, been making explorations there, and they, moreover, send word about the magicians of that country. According to this account, one who desires to be a magician has to go through a probation of twelve years. At the end of that time he is seated upon a pile of barley, and if a single grain is displaced he is accounted no magician, and has to undergo a fresh probation.

Madame Blavatsky at first gave out that she spent seven years in Thibet. As this could not well be fitted in with the records of her career, this has since been reduced to the other magical number, three. She weighs some thirteen stone, and if she stood the true Thibetan test, there should be a good chance for other Theosophic ladies.

A French Theosophic monthly, *L'Etoile*, has been sent us from Paris. On the cover appears a star, in the centre of which is the thorn-crowned head of Jesus. The farrago of rubbish and revelation inside fairly beats the prophet Baxter. "Jean et Pierre" (meant for John and Peter, the apostles) announce that this year, on the French borders of the Mediterranean, a young man will appear mounted on a white horse, and baptise Jean and Pierre, and also the white horse, for the Eternal Gospel; one item of which, anarchists will be interested to hear, is that "the Beast of the Apocalypse is Politics, mother of the temporal power." Antichrist is going to be destroyed, and there will be general ructions. Superstition and fanaticism die hard even in France.

An "Anti-Materialist Congress" is announced to come off at Paris in the beginning of next month. Spiritists, Theosophists, and Swedenborgians are invited. If they will stay and convert the sceptics of the International Federation of Freethinkers, who meet shortly afterwards, they will add to their laurels.

The Shah was presented with a copy of the Bible in Persian. If he reads it he will wonder why the Christians object to his polygamy, Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, and other Bible heroes were polygamists, and the Shah may think himself, even from the Christian standpoint, in good orthodox company.

There is an interesting account of a visit to Salt Lake City in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The Mormons, it appears, are very far from relinquishing polygamy. One of the saints said he had three wives, and had been in prison twice for them already. He added, "I would rather be confined in gaols all my life through than be cast into hell for yielding up my principles." Evidently the saints look upon polygamy as a divine institution, against which nothing can be found in the Christian Scriptures.

For ever so many years the Mormons have been building a big temple. When the Lord comes he is expected to make his home there. The premises are large enough for the boss and a squadron of angels.

Mr. Joseph Thomson, who has been exploring Southern Morocco, in his recent book of travels gives his opinion that Mohammedanism is capable of raising people to a certain level, beyond which it not only cannot go, but acts in a down-grade movement, serving also as a buffer to further progress. This is exactly our opinion of Christianity, and we believe that students of history will recognise that it is just as true in the one case as in the other.

Satan is not quite superannuated, at least not in the opinion of the Rev. R. Eyton, Rector of Upper Chelsea and Prebendary of St. Paul's. In a volume of sermons just published, he declared that Satan "can even touch life in certain instances seems to me to be clear from the Book of Job." What a comforting belief, and wherein does it differ from the old belief in witchcraft?

Prebendary Eyton goes on: "According to Christ's teaching, Satan causes sickness and inanity, Satan is the author of temptation, the destroyer of good seed, the sower of tares, the evil one, the adversary from whom we must pray to be delivered." Not a doubt of it. That is sound gospel. If lunacy is the work of devils, why not all other diseases? God himself is only a few sizes bigger than his antagonist, the fourth member of the Christian Quaternity, God the Devil.

Mr. Gladstone turned up at a party, where the Shah was present, in the uniform of an Elder Trinity Brother, and on asking what it was, the Shah was told in French, "Un frère aîné de la Trinité"—an elder brother of the Trinity!

Sir Joseph Fayrer, writing in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century* on "The Deadly Wild Beasts of India," says that returns for only seven-ninths of the population of India show that deaths from wild beasts during the year amounted to about twenty-five thousand human beings and fifty-five thousand head of domestic animals. Even these figures rather under-state than exaggerate the evil, which is one believers in an Almighty and all-good Parent should seriously contemplate.

A mother was one Sunday giving her child, a boy of seven years, some little instruction. She was telling him the story of Adam's fall. Having narrated the tale of the apple and what mischief it did, the mother asked—"Now don't you think Adam did very wrong to eat the apple?" The little fellow thought a moment, and then answered—"Why, would it have been polite to refuse the apple when the lady offered it to him?"

Another small boy of three, who is decidedly irreverent, on praying "God bless papa," added "and make him a good boy; and if you can't, just *warm him up!*"

Still another Christ. We learn from Charlestown, South Carolina, that Bell, the Ohio crank, who has been passing as Christ among the negroes on the Savannah river, and who was held for lunacy a week or so ago and liberated although adjudged a lunatic, is causing great excitement among the negroes. His followers fall down on their hands and knees whenever he approaches, and their numbers are increasing every day. They say they are preparing for a march to Canada, where their Christ is to lead them next month. Negroes are flocking to him in all directions, leaving their homes, crops, and all their belongings.

The colored tramp Bell has again been arrested for lunacy, and is now confined at the state lunatic asylum at Milledgeville. That's just the way Christians would treat J. C. himself if he paid his promised second visit.

Among items of religious intelligence we read that the Rev. E. F. Flemon, a colored clergyman, was arrested at Pittsburg, Pa. at the conclusion of church services July 9, and charged with being an escaped murderer from South Carolina.

Some of the whiskey dens in Glasgow have "Methusela" whiskey on sale at tenpence a gill, about double the usual price. If Noah had got drunk on this article, he might have cursed *all* his progeny, and the human race would have been black "intoiely."

Charles Edward Eatch commits suicide at Leeds with the expressed intention of spoiling Bank Holiday Monday for his cousin Annie, who was then going to be married. He, however, leaves a letter to another young woman named Morley, saying, with the utmost confidence, "I will meet you in heaven."

Yet another suicide. This time an unfortunate Birmingham servant girl, aged seventeen, leaves a letter, hoping God will forgive her. "So good-bye, God bless you all." Not atheists these, Mr. Talmage.

Thomas Harrold, a cripple who has been engaged in mission work, is under remand, charged with having led astray a girl under the age of 18, and against the will of her father. A very pious letter from the prisoner was read in court.

The Rev. Wm. J. M. Young, of the Church of England, has been charged at the Marylebone Police Court with knowingly making a false statement for the purpose of obtaining relief from funds raised for the relief of the poor. He had been vicar of Mevagissey, but had retired, and according to his own statement, was destitute, though 14s. 1d. was found on him.

Elizabeth Landon knows better now. She resides in Islington, and is somewhat superstitious. Hearing that children could be cured of telling lies by burning their tongues with a hot poker, she tried the prescription on her little son Vincent, aged seven. The result was her appearance before the magistrate, who took a lenient view of the case on account of her superstition and simply bound her over in the sum of £10. See the moral! Superstition excuses the burning of a boy's tongue, and, on the other hand, exposing superstition may land you in Holloway Gaol.

Job Jones has been seeking to emulate, in a small way, the deeds of David and the Lord's prophets of old. A married man, he joined the Salvation Army as a fitting sphere for his pious inclinations, and ruined several of the S. A. lasses. He also threatened and terrorized over his victims to prevent exposure. Following humbly in the course of Solomon, he ventured on a second marriage, which brought his holy career to a temporary close. As he has once before been convicted of bigamy, he was sentenced to six years' penal servitude.

The spiritual squabble over the Northwich paupers has ended in a victory for the Church. The clergy would not cooperate with the Nonconformist ministers, and the Board of Guardians has appointed a regular workhouse chaplain. The Church triumphs, the parish loses £50 a-year, and the paupers gain—What?

A writer on "Atheism and Anglicanism" in the *Catholic Weekly Register* seeks to make out that Anglican Protestantism leads to scepticism. He says, "The teachings of the English deists were spread through Europe by Voltaire—" That is right enough; "who learned them from Lord Herbert of Cherbury—born and bred an Anglican." This is incorrect. The deists who influenced Voltaire were Shaftesbury, Chubb, Woolston and Bolingbroke. It is doubtful if he even read a line of Lord Herbert.

The Catholic writer continues, "What did we see last year at the Manchester Church Congress? Anglican ministers expressing doubts as to the genuineness of the gospel narrative, and this in the presence of Anglican Prelate. The Rev. Sir George Cox, surely a rationalist in his principles, continues to officiate in the Anglican Church. Why should he not? Many of the most prominent of the Anglican clergy are mere sentimental deists. Under the very eyes of the Archbishop of Canterbury a committee of clergy at Lambeth have adopted pretty well all the exploded sophisms [sic] of the German neologists; while the Bishop of London confessed the other day that he had come across several clergy who denied the Resurrection."

The Rev. Z. B. Woffendale says that Mr. Foote has covered Mr. Moss's retreat, but has not "the manliness to step into the breach himself." Mr. Moss has not retreated, and the "breach" is a ditch. Mr. Woffendale has been told over and over again, in these columns, that if he wants a public debate with Mr. Foote he can be obliged. Until the reverend gentleman says "Yes" we do not intend to trouble ourselves or our readers about his boastings.

At the Wesleyan Conference at Sheffield a memorial was read from the missionaries at Madras, strongly complaining of the charges brought against them by Dr. Lunn in the *Methodist Times*, of luxury and indifference to the claims of the lower castes in India. Dr. Lunn said he held the views now which he held when he wrote the article, and proceeded to show the ground on which he accused the missionaries. There was a long and excited discussion. Dr. Lunn showed that the average cost of a missionary in

India is £321 8s., and a bungalow, although £150 a year in India is worth more than £200 in England.

An English Catholic paper, in this age of popular science and Board Schools, trots out a silly, fabulous story about the holy wafer of Douay. In 1254 a priest of the church of Saint-Aimé let fall a wafer as he was giving Holy Communion. He stooped to pick it up, but the wafer rose in the air of itself and rested on the altar. Then it turned into a little child, and thousands of people flocked to see the show. Presently the child developed into a full-grown Jesus Christ, with a fine, flowing beard and a crown of thorns. "This miraculous event," says our pious contemporary, "is mentioned by several ancient authors," and that proves it to the satisfaction of—every believer.

The Duke of Norfolk, Lord Clifford, W. S. Lilly, and other eminent Roman Catholics are engaged in getting up a large "English Catholic Pilgrimage to Jerusalem." We wish them the utmost success, and hope the Holy City will be found so delightful that they may be induced to stay there.

A Pontiac boy was told at Sunday-school that when he died he would leave the body here. After returning home he was much troubled in regard to it, and he questioned his parents. His mother explained by saying, "You will take all the good with you, but leave the naughty below." He thought a moment, and looking up, said, "Well, I guess I'll be awfully thin when I get there."

Seismologists tell us that the earthquakes which happen now are nothing to what used to be. The old Jew upstairs still, however, occasionally shows his tantrums, and at the end of July destroyed the town of Kumamoto, on the island of Kiou Siou, near Nagasaki, Japan, causing great loss of life and destruction of property.

A Russian telegram announced that at Bokhara seven hundred and two persons, exclusive of children, died through the excessive heat between the 14th and 17th of July last. The Optimists who think that everything is arranged for the best in the best of all possible worlds do not live in Bokhara.

Professor Baldwin, who drops from the clouds in a parachute, says there is one thing he objects to—being called a sky-pilot.

A Maine correspondent of the *Green Mountain Herald* gives the following as the form of prayer by a class of people called "New Lights," and who believe both in direct preaching and direct praying: "Lord, have mercy on sister Kelly, who gets up, cuffs the cat and kicks the dog, scolds her husband all the morning, and then goes to meeting, and gets up and talks right on top of it."

"I declare," said Noah, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, "we're going to be cramped for room! I don't know where we're going to put all these animals," "Boss," suggested the elephant and the mast-don, both of whom were switching their tails viciously, "why not leave out the flies and mosquitoes? They take up more room than we do."

Canon Rowsell is indignant at reading of people dying "wickedly rich." When people die rich they are able to leave money for cathedrals and churches. This is a new reading of the Sermon on the Mount—Jesus Christ brought up to date.

The Catholics are getting up a monument to St. Philip Neri in Rome as a set off against the statue to Bruno. We have nothing to say against St. Philip. He was a wealthy young man who devoted his fortune to the Church and founded the order of the Oratorians to preach the doctrines of religion. From his standpoint he was doing his religious duty and thereby made his salvation sure. But how can his devotion be compared to that of a man who gave up his life for truth, and that without any expectation of future reward?

Good old Church of England! Down at Cheadle there is a rector, the Rev. E. A. Macdana, who doesn't care a cent

for the views of his parishioners. They want him to conduct the service in the time-honoured style, but he is a very High Churchman, and as he is in possession, he insists on having his own way. The congregation pulls in one direction, and the parson in the opposite. A happy family!

This is what the ex-Rev. Hugh Pentecost says in the *Twentieth Century*: "There are many good people in the Church, but the Church, as an organized institution, is the enemy of Jesus, the foe of truth, the defender and abettor of every respectable thief and receiver of stolen goods, the incarnation of hypocrisy, and as cruel as the grave." Mr. Pentecost has come out, but he knows the inside as well as the outside.

Dr. Dallinger, the Wesleyan scientist, has been telling the Sheffield folk that man has only one characteristic that is wanting in the animal world, and that is "a tendency to devotion." Dr. Dallinger ought to remember that Darwin considered the feelings of a dog towards its master very much like the feelings of a savage towards his deity.

The Mayor of Scarborough went by invitation to a Roman Catholic Church. One of the local Wesleyans was so incensed that he stood at the gate and publicly denounced him. How these Christians love their brethren if of another church!

The Christians are getting tired of their champion at Wood Green, the polite and polished Williams. Goodship came to take his place on Sunday, and some people said it was a distinction without a difference.

A recent advertisement in the *Christian World* runs as follows: "Cultured, earnest, godly young man desires a PASTORATE. Vivid preacher, brilliant organiser. Tall and of good appearance. Blameless life. Beloved by all. Salary £120." All this for a paltry £120. The young man evidently doesn't know his worth. He should apply for the situation of boss of the seventh heaven.

Spurgeon says of the New Theology that there is no theology in it and nothing new. We incline to agree with him. Spurgeon's gospel is the good old sort, but it is such a damnable gospel that humane people go in for a compromise even at the expense of logic.

The English clergyman who declared at the meeting of tramway shareholders in Glasgow that half the pastoral work in the city must stop if Sunday traffic was discontinued must have elastic notions of the truth. No doubt many who use the cars do go to church but as the *Glasgow Evening News* remarks, the parks are a greater attraction.

*Pick Me Up* must look out for squalls if it publishes Bible skits. An editor who cracks jokes at the expense of Elijah may learn that the blasphemy laws are *not* obsolete.

The Rev. Thomas Robert Smithson, or Smithson Moore, M.A., LL.D., described as a clergyman of the Church of England, has been remanded for striking and threatening to kill a house agent. When taken into custody the prisoner used foul language and struggled severely with the officer. Let out on bail, he went off to Belfast, leaving his bail to be estreated. He says he thought entering into recognisances was only a matter of form.

A special whip was issued to the Bishops, asking them to be in their places to oppose the amendment to the Protection of Children Bill of which Lord Dunraven had given notice. Only two put in an appearance, one who read prayers and forthwith departed, the other, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who both spoke and voted against the amendment. As the majority by which the amendment was carried was only seven, a very moderate muster of Bishops would have sufficed to defeat it.—*Daily News*.

OBITUARY.—Felix Pyat, the well-known French Freethinker and Socialist, author of the *Ragpicker of Paris* and many other works, died on Sunday, Aug. 4, at Saint Gerainte, at the advanced age of 79. An account of his career and services to the Freethought cause will be found in Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

*Sunday*, August 11, Midland Arches (open-air), at 11.15, "The Devil." Evening, Secular Hall, New Church Road, Camberwell, at 7.30, "Is the Bible Inspired?"

Aug. 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.

D. (Woolwich).—Thanks for the Comte photo. Pleased to hear the name of this journal is a household word in your district. We wish it were a household paper as well.

W. and J. BRIERLEY send 10s. towards pushing the sale of the *Freethinker*.

P. J.—The Manchester Secularists never had the £500 left by Mr. Spencer. The will was contested, and the Court held that a bequest for the propagation of Secularism was illegal.

G. NAEWIGER (Hull) thanks the friends in London and Berlin who sent him parcels of literature for distribution.

P. S. (Gateshead).—You deserve credit for your gallant defence of Thomas Paine in the *Weekly Chronicle*. We are glad to see that you found *Infidel Death-Beds* so serviceable.

J. BURRELL, secretary of the Westminster Branch, says that one gentleman came all the way from Chatham to hear Mr. Foote's lecture at Pimlico. We know of another who came from near Northampton.

W. B. THOMPSON (Chatham).—We think your Society was very hasty and ill-advised in withdrawing from the N. S. S., especially over such a personal matter. Still, we retain our interest in your success, and we are delighted to hear that your open-air propaganda is so flourishing. Go on, and prosper; it is all work for the cause, and where we cannot agree we must agree to differ.

S. STANDRING.—Always pleased to receive your cheerful letters. You are doing good work for Freethought.

SATAN.—We cannot find space for politics.

J. S.—You will find the history of Lot and the destruction of Sodom in Genesis xix.; the story of the Flood in Genesis vi.—viii.; the words "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" in Genesis xviii., 25.

GORGON.—(1) The "Atheist's Grave" is by that voluminous author "Anonymous." (2) Bauer's book is an old one, out of print. (3) Deutsch's article on Talmud, *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1867. (4) Freeman Clarke's and Keningale Cook's publishers, Williams and Norgate; Max Muller's, Longmans. (5) Judge Strange's book is better worth getting than Stone's. (6) Byron was a Freethinker. There are several Freethinkers among the younger poets of to-day, such as Mathilde Blind and T. Marzials.

A TEACHER, who says the *Freethinker* has done its share for him, recommends the sending of copies to the masters and mistresses of elementary schools.

T. POSTLETHWAITE.—You are three months after date. We cannot re-open the question now.

W. WHEELER.—Your Branch is heartily welcome. We are glad to hear you had such a good sale of the *Freethinker*.

J. H. THOMAS.—Your letter is amusing, and we have no doubt of your sincerity. Thanks for the cutting.

T. BIRTLEY.—It is pleasant to hear that your excursion was such a success and that Mr. Moss has done so much good in the district.

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.—Freidenker—Menschenthum—Der Arme Teufel—Twentieth Century—Glasgow Evening News—Scarborough Mercury—Freethinkers' Magazine—Liberator—Secular Thought—Fair Play—Lucifer—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Le Danton—L'Etoile—La Rinascenza—Boston Investigator—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Bon Accord—Scarborough Evening News—Shields Daily Gazette—Shields Daily News—Star of Gwent.

## TO OUR FRIENDS.

WE venture to print a few plain words about the *Freethinker*. Some people fancy we make a little fortune out of it; others think we must be subventioned. Both are wrong. At the lowest circulation the paper has always paid its way, but it leaves nothing for the editor, whose work is unremunerated; and as he contributes on an average about six columns a week, this is a heavy tax upon his time and energy. Since the enlargement our circulation has gone up steadily. The increased sale nearly covers the extra cost of paper and printing; but there is an additional expense in the weekly contents-sheet, which we recently resumed. Should our circulation continue to increase the paper will soon pay in the full sense of the word. Meanwhile we may fairly boast that no such paper—for matter, size, and price—has ever existed in the Freethought field. And this gives us some claim on our friends. We may ask them to help us in widening the circle of our readers. Some of them can subscribe to our Circulation Fund, which is spent in advertising and in other useful directions. Some can order half a dozen or a dozen copies weekly, asking their newsagent to sell them if possible, and paying him for the unsold copies. Some can get their newsagent to display a copy of our contents-sheet. A thousand or two of our readers could easily take *two* copies weekly instead of one, and give the extra copy to a friend or acquaintance. There must be some Freethinkers, too, who would find it answer to advertise in our columns, which are widely and carefully read in various classes of society. If all who are able to help would do so at once, the *Freethinker* might be a paying concern by Christmas. For our part, we promise to maintain our standard, and to improve the paper as far as possible by the introduction of new features.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

OUR next number will contain a fine portrait of R. B. Westbrook, the President of the American Secular Union with a biographical notice.

MR. FOOTE has made up his mind to reply to Mrs. Besant on the subject of Theosophy at the Hall of Science. Last Sunday evening Mrs. Besant lectured there on "Why I Became a Theosophist," and we are informed that she dealt with Mr. Foote's pamphlet in a manner which indicates that she regards all criticism as insult. There was a large audience, and we hear a lively discussion. Mrs. Besant cannot complain if Mr. Foote, who follows her at the Hall of Science on August 18, uses the platform to expose the rubbish of Theosophy. It takes two to quarrel, and Mr. Foote does not intend to make one, but he is determined to oppose Mrs. Besant's attempt to use the Freethought platform for the propagation of superstition.

MRS. BESANT may feel aggrieved at Mr. Foote's pamphlet, but in his opinion it contains nothing but legitimate criticism. Before going to press he went carefully through the proofs, in order to give no unnecessary offence. Until Mrs. Besant spoke he heard no complaint as to the tone of the pamphlet, and perhaps it will be allowed that she is not altogether an impartial judge.

MR. FOOTE had another fine open-air audience at Old Pimlico Pier on Sunday morning. The Christian Evidence lecturer did not carry out his programme. He formed one of Mr. Foote's audience and had two speeches in reply. His critical method may be seen from the following "point." He asserted that "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," means that you must not let her *get a living*.

THE London Secular Federations is profiting by Mr. Foote's open-air lectures. The sum of £1 5s. 6d. was collected at Pimlico. Not a great amount in itself, but a great amount to gather in coppers out of doors.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer of the London Secular Federation, acknowledges the following subscriptions:—G. E. Lupton, £1; N.W. London Branch, collection, £1 4s. 9½d.; Hyde Park Branch collection, £1 6s. 2d.; profit on Hall of Science brake, Aug. 4, 8s.

THE North Eastern Secular Federation's excursion to Durham was a decided success, and the same may be said of Mr. Moss's lecturing tour. Mr. Moss returned home with very little voice left. He is now recruiting at Ramsgate.

MR. S. STANDRING reports a sale of three quires of the *Freethinker*, at Wood Green and Old Southgate on Sunday. Some of the purchasers ordered the paper regularly.

GRAYS is "a very hopeful place," says Mr. Standring, "but it needs to be worked with tact. Last Sunday it was planned to mob me, and a defensive force was mustered. However, there was no opposition even, although the audience numbered between 400 and 500 persons. Many came up and expressed their delight at having Freethought lecturers come amongst them."

MR. LUCRETIVS KEEN opened a new station at Finsbury Park, on Sunday afternoon, with a thoughtful and instructive discourse on Evolution *v.* Creation. "Josephus Appleblossom," and other friends from Southgate attended. Some opposition degenerated into something like a squabble, and the chairman, Mr. Rowney, retired. This indicates the necessity of having a platform—with invited opposition at the end. Where there is simply a ring every one thinks himself at liberty to speak and interrupt the discourse.

*Doctor Daniel* and *The Prophets* are the two new numbers of "Bible Heroes." The second includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea.

MR. M. S. WARHAFTIG writes in *Freethought* (San Francisco) on "Jewish Respect for Jesus." He denies the assertion that Christ has the respect of those who are not Christians, and considers that he, "according to the Christian story of him, must have been either a lunatic or fanatic—just what Lewis the Light is in our day." Mr. Warhaftig says:—"I am a Jew though an Athiest. I have met with hundreds of well educated Jews in Europe and in this country, and failed to find one that has any belief in supernaturalism. The so-called reformed Jewish synagogues, known as temples, are filled with Agnostics and outspoken unbelievers. The less religious the Rabbi is, the higher salary he commands. Their sermons touch modern ethics rather than Old Testament morality. In fact, the old book is almost absolutely ignored. Wise words from the prophets or kings constitute the texts generally. I was once well acquainted with one rabbi in this country. He spoke on our Thomas Paine celebration, eulogizing the revolutionary hero of our independence as well as of religious thought. In the course of his speech he expressed a belief that in a century hence more temples will be erected to the memory of Paine than to that of Luther."

THE same Jewish rabbi urged that synagogues should be kept up not so much for the purpose of raising religious Jews as for preventing them falling victims to Christian idiocy.

THE *Freethinkers Magazine*, of Buffalo, New York, opens its August number with a thoughtful and learned article on "The Myth of the great Deluge," by James McCann. We hope Mr. Green will be well supported in his endeavor to supply a first-class Freethought monthly.

DR. MARTINEAU is engaged on another important work in which, according to the *Christian World*, he will print some "searching criticism on the New Testament." Our contemporary doubts whether the religious world will be grateful for this gift. So do we.

"A SHOPMAN of twenty years' standing," writing to the *Christian World*, says: "I have worked for several

employers in my time, and generally meet with more consideration from those who do not profess any religion."

IN a very interesting article recently published by the *Popular Scientific Monthly* on the "Directive faculty in Brutes," the foray of a tribe of monkeys on a field of corn is described. When they got ready to start on their expedition an old monkey, the leader of the tribe, with a staff in his hand, standing upright more easily, marches ahead on two legs, thus being more elevated than the others, so as to see signs of danger more readily. The rest follow him on all-fours. The leader advances slowly and cautiously, carefully reconnoitring in all directions till the party arrives at the corn-field. He then assigns the sentinels to their respective posts. All being now in readiness, the rest of the tribe ravage and eat to their hearts' content. When they retire each one carries two or three ears of corn along, and from this provision the sentinels are regaled on their arrival at their lair. Here we see ability to rule and willingness to submit to a rule; a thoughtful preparation of means to the end in view, and a recognition of the rights of the sentinels to be suitably rewarded at the close of the expedition. Wherein does all this differ from a similar foray of a tribe of savage men? the only difference that really exists is in degree, otherwise it is much the same.

THE *Secular Review*, of Toronto, is reprinting in instalments "Bible Contradictions" from *The Bible Handbook*, edited by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball.

THE corner-stone of a new Academy of Sciences, the money for which was bequeathed by the infidel James Lick, has been laid at San Francisco. The *Daily Report* says that "neither prayer nor praise constituted a part of the ceremony." It errs slightly. Prayer was omitted, but all the speakers paid glowing tributes of praise to James Lick.

*De Dageraad* gives a translation of Professor Morselli's discourse on the relation of Giordano Bruno to philosophy, a further account of the festival at Rome, and some significant extracts from the *the Catholic Press*. In its *Algemeen Overzicht*—*Universal Review*—it mentions the enlargements of the *Freethinker*, and translates several items from our pages.

WE are glad to hear that the Liberals of Belgium are uniting to present a common front against the clerical party during the elections of next year. Their disunion resulted in the advent of that party into power in 1884, and as a consequence the whole system of education has been thrown back. The first result of the reunion has been the election of M. Paul Janson, a Freethinker, as deputy for Brussels, and several municipal victories have also been achieved.

FUND for sending Messrs. Foote and Wheeler to the International Freethought Congress:—J. Downing (Plymouth) £1. J. H. Ellis, 10s.

THE *Shields Daily Gazette* has been giving very good reports of Mr. A. B. Moss's lectures.

#### A WARNING.

[Translated from the German, of Heine, by John Ackerlos.]

Dearest friend, thy fate I see,  
If you write such books as these!  
Would you gold and honor win,  
Servile and humble you must be!

Surely you provoke the Fates,  
Thus to speak unto the people,  
Thus to speak of Priests and Parsons,  
Thus of Kings and Potentates.

Friend your lot excites my fears!  
Kings and Princes have long arms,  
Priests and Parsons have long tongues,  
And the people have long ears!



## THE MERCY OF PRIESTS.

A STORY OF "THE GOOD OLD TIMES."

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

CONTINUED—II.

As at the signal of the clear bells, a little cold morning light paled the depth of the pit. More visible, the circular walls distilled a viscid sweat. Here and there, sleek black spots shone like enough to puddles of liquid ebony; it was the surface of deeper holes, full of old stagnant water. Thus, in the crepuscular reek, the place looked still more filthy and abject. Overhead, so far, a lark swiftly crossed the narrow round of azure grey.

Peter, shivering, shook his dilapidated dress, letting fall the broken leaves.

The other, more calm—for the nocturnal clamor had ceased to rend the silence—raised himself painfully on his arm-stumps. His rampant black form lifted and wet, with its heavy, awkward movements, resembled those marine animals called sea-dogs, that are sometimes surprised in their creeks by the Mediterranean fishermen.

Questioned by Peter de Pierrefeu, the man spoke as follows:

"I was the most renowned artisan in the city of Avignon, whose craftsmen are held in high esteem; to say sooth, no one understood better how to carve Jesuses, and Virgins, and Saints in the hard oak, or in olive which is harder still. I ornamented more than one church with many splendid figures; you would have thought the images were living persons, so much I excelled in giving them a life-like appearance. Such a talent is not a thing to be acquired; I held it, certainly, as a gift from heaven. I carved also the seats in the choir, where, amidst the devout groups, would be a laughing devil, thrusting his horns from a font. If you happen to visit Saint-Marcelle's chapel at Saint-Remy, you will see on the back of the stall—where once used to sit the Canon Mayeul, who was afterwards an abbot—a squatting monkey displaying what reverence forbids one to mention. And I remember how I found diversion in this bit of work. For I was then of a joyous nature. But now it is not a time to laugh.

"Being so famous, I was more than once employed in the convents and castles of Provence, where I exerted my talents to the utmost. Living in the company of clerks who taught the finest doctrines, I showed less ignorance and uncouthness than other persons of my condition: moreover, I was good-looking; and for these various reasons I was heartily welcomed in every place where I was invited.

"Now once, having promised to make, for the lady of the castle of Signe, a chair whereon a serpent was to be seen twisted round the heel of the great archangel Michael, I strolled into the forest to choose some wood suitable to my design.

"In that forest I met a woodcutter. She seemed to me so beautiful, though dressed in rags, that I loved her on the spot; and when in answering me, she spoke with a voice so sweet that I had never heard the like, I felt that I could nevermore love but her. On the morrow I did not fail to revisit the glade in which I met her; and although there had been no assignation, she did not fail to be there either; for, according to her own confession afterwards, she had chosen me at first sight as her lover. Why need I say more? Each day I returned, each day she was there. I had no care to choose the wood for my serpent; my sovereign delight was to talk beneath the branches with my Bertrande, who, for her part, bound up very few faggots, because I always held her hands. The women of Avignon walk out superbly, and tempt many a knight; the ladies or damsels seen at the manor casements, smile for long in the hearts of travellers they never noticed; but all the beauties I had ever seen were at once forgotten, and I swore that this one should speedily become my wife; for she was no less virtuous than beautiful, and whoever had approached her dishonorably would soon have found his mistake.

"Alas! she was a serf of the abbey of Saint-Gorgon in Provence, and I, to espouse her, had also to become a serf; I, the free artisan of the city of Avignon, where the juries and the consul maintain high respect for the rights of the Guilds. Truly it was a hard law. But the chargin at no more belonging to oneself and being the property of another, even the regret at ceasing to carve the sacred or facetious figures, did not prevent me from relishing the precious joy of living with Bertrande, possessing and possessed. Woodcutters both,

we went to the forest, and, being always together, we were always content. Lovely as she was, she was none the less good and tender, and when we returned, after the day's fatigues, to the little cottage where we both slept, I do not think there was anywhere in the world a lord or king with whom I would have exchanged lots. Ah, Bertrande! Ah, my sweet Bertrande!

"I should say that I had not altogether left off carving the olive and the oak; indeed, I had made a wooden cradle, which, as I hoped, would not long remain empty.

"In the little room—so little that there was hardly space for the coffer, the trunk and the bed—it certainly did not displease us to be two together, but we fancied it would be better still if we were three. The cradle was so prettily made, and Bertrande had so filled it with soft warm things, that it astonished me to wait so long for the one we looked to rock there.

"During many days the bed rested empty. Bertrande looked sad, and I felt languid. We did not love each other less, but we were devoured with a longing for something to make us love each other more. Sometimes, so beside ourselves were we, that in the night we fancied we heard—like the noise of a little bee—a light breathing in the cradle. But it was only a dream; and Bertrande, awaking, would often weep.

"Good Christians both, we did not fail to pray for the accomplishment of our desire. As often as possible we said *neuvaines*, burnt candles, and went on pilgrimage. But all in vain. The saints, and even the Virgin, showed little gratitude to one who had so often carved them, and so beautifully.

"At length Bertrande grew sullen. At first she spoke less, and then became silent. We no longer went to the woods together; she went alone, and forbade me to follow; sometimes it was night before she returned home. I was disquieted, and asked her 'Where have you been so long away from me?' Finger on lip, she signed me to ask no questions, and my anxiety increased, for her absences were more and more prolonged.

"Once the day began to dawn, and Bertrande had not yet returned. How sad I was not to see her at my side! It was winter, and cold even in bed; but it was not the winter that made me shiver like that.

"Towards the pale grey hour after matins, she returned, and as I was going to reproach her for leaving me thus lonely, she did not give me time to speak first, but—with hair disordered—sharply, and in a strange tone of voice, she said:

"Husband, do you think they are dead, the gods who, of old, never failed to answer the prayers of their faithful worshippers?"

"What are you saying, wife?" I replied.

"This is what I say. They are all still living, and not dead. And since Jesus and Our Lady do not grant what we have so long and devoutly asked for, I think we should pray to them no longer."

"I looked at Bertrande with affright. In her eyes, which she did not lower, there was a fire I had never seen, and divining what I would have said, she cried:

"Come with me. On the eve of Saint-Remy, she who knows how to gather simples and cast spells showed me the place where the old inhabitants used to invoke the goddess Dianom; and there stood formerly a temple—thus they named the church—and there lie now only some stones. But the spirit of Dianom comes there every night, hearing whoever prays to her, and demands nothing in return for an answer—nothing, not even gratitude or devotion!"

"For many days I resisted. I was not ignorant that the gods worshipped of old had become demons. Dianom, certainly, is one of the names of Lucifer. But Bertrande, with such sweet words, told me so often that we should have a child if we prayed to the pagan goddess; and that there was no danger in it, nor any harm; and that many had done it without any cause for repentance; and these things she said to me so eagerly by day, and so tenderly by night, that at length I could not but yield; and I followed her on one occasion into the forest before the day broke, for that is the proper time for such invocations.

"We glided furtively through the wet branches. Kneeling together on a stone, which seemed the relic of a temple, we prayed a long while, surrounded by the great, dark, sad forest; and there was an owl who regarded us fixedly; and, certainly, anyone who had seen and heard us must have felt afraid. Bertrande had brought two doves in her dress; I soon noticed

that red drops fell upon the stone; it was the blood of the sacrificed birds.

"Many days passed by. A child was born to us, and no child was ever lovelier than our Jacquinet.

"Ah, I cannot believe he was sent to us by hell. Dandling, kissing, and adoring him, I said to myself, 'Blessed be Dianom, and assuredly since she is good, she must be a goddess.' I even carved a fancied image in beech-wood of her who had granted my desire, and painted it in twenty colors. Always adorned with garlands, the image was the pride of our home; every night I prayed to it, every morning I saluted it with a reverence, and it held in its arms—as Our Lady holds the infant Jesus—a new-born babe, to which I had given the visage of our dear little one. Ah, poor child! Out of gratitude we used to call him Dianom, and it is because of that name that, for ten years, in this hole, I have kissed with tears the lifeless head of my beautiful Jacquinet!

"It was my dearest care to dress the idol to which I owed it that my Jacquinet had opened his charming little eyes to the light. In the fields or in the woods, I never tired of gathering flowers or green-stuff to decorate the inanimate image by whose grace a soul had come into the world. And, lo! one evening, bent under a flowery sheaf, I returned to our little cottage, anticipating the joyous welcome of my Bertrande, and the little antics of my boy on my breeches; for he had grown, and it was his favorite sport to hang on to one of my legs and be carried thus while I walked from the coffer to the trunk, or even from the bed to the fireplace. I opened the door boldly. Ah! sire, I uttered such a cry that the swallows nested under the thatch of my roof fled in all directions with terror; and the statue of a saint in a church-porch is scarcely as motionless as I was at the threshold of my house.

"Bertrande! Jacquinet!"

"The silence replied with a dull echo of my voice. Then I bounded into the room, going to and fro, shaking the bed-clothes, opening the trunk, searching in the coffer, incessantly repeating the names of the dear ones who had vanished.

"In a corner lay the head of the goddess. I seized it, crying, 'Where is my child? Where is my wife?'

"She did not reply, having the smile at her lips I had painted there. The smile seemed to hold me in pity.

"That night! Not more horrible have been the ten years of darkness and solitude I have since endured. Instantaneously I understood that Bertrande and Jacquinet were for ever lost. You might have thought they would return. I did not think so; and that I should never see them again was as clear to me as the day upon the mountain, or the blade of the knife before the eyes of a man being slain.

(To be continued.)

## ON TOUR.

It is just five years ago this month since I did my first important lecturing tour, travelling as far north as Glasgow and delivering numerous lectures on the road. A lot of changes in the Freethought movement have taken place since then, and Secular propaganda has been for a time "under a cloud." A healthy revival, however, has just begun, which gives promise of early fruition.

On Friday, July 26, I started by night train on my second holiday tour, going first to South Shields, and thence to a colliery district in Northumberland called Bedlington. On Saturday evening at this place I delivered a lecture on "The Bible God" to a small but very appreciative audience in the Co-operative Hall, Dr. Rutherford presiding. There was some slight discussion, and one gentleman among my audience, who I was afterwards told was a medical man, could not be made to understand what was meant by the "indestructibility of matter and force," and the necessary eternity of them, but insisted that matter and force must have had an origin, although it was not quite clear that the originator was God.

Sunday found me back again at Shields, and in the Free Library Hall I delivered during the day three lectures; in the morning I discoursed on "Progress without Poverty," and endeavored to show that Henry George's scheme for nationalising the land would not, if adopted, be effective in diminishing poverty, unless it was taken in conjunction with a scheme for checking the too rapid increase of population. In the afternoon I delivered an address on "The Church and

the Stage," and Mr. Appleby, proprietor of the Theatre Royal, honored me with his presence, and expressed his approval of my discourse. My evening lecture was on "The Spirit of the Age." The local papers noticed each of my lectures. At Shields I was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Peacock, and was treated with the utmost liberality and kindness.

On Monday I started for West Auckland, a village about three miles distance from Bishop Auckland in the county of Durham; and in the evening, from a great waggon, I delivered a lecture on "Why I reject Christ," to a very large crowd, among which I was pleased to see several ladies. One young gentleman came ten miles to hear me. A blind gentleman offered some feeble opposition. I was afterwards entertained by the friends, who looked after my every comfort in a perfectly admirable way.

On Tuesday I journeyed to West Hartlepool, and received a splendid reception from the friends. My lecture, which was delivered to about six or seven hundred people by the sea-shore, was entitled "What does Man Owe to God?" A local scribe, who evidently was not present, reported that I lectured "to a small audience"; although the friends assured me that they had never seen a larger crowd at a lecture in that place.

On Wednesday two intelligent members of the Branch showed me over East Hartlepool, and in their company I made my first appearance in a lighthouse, and admired the wonders of nature on sea and land through glasses of extraordinary power. The same day I returned to South Shields, and in the evening addressed the sailors in their own hall on "Some Shams and Delusions." Mr. Thos. Thompson, an old Chartist, presided and made a stirring speech.

My next address was delivered in the Bigg Market, Newcastle, on Thursday evening, to nearly a thousand people. I am told that it was the first open-air Freethought lecture delivered in Newcastle, and it was certainly a great success.

Friday evening found me at Chester le Street, a small mining district a few miles from Durham. Here I got a most hearty welcome. My lecture was delivered from a waggon on the Parade ground. There was a large and very intelligent audience, consisting mainly of pitmen. I had also one very attentive listener in an inspector of police. The opposition was of a very slight character. Afterwards I was entertained at the hotel by the friends and their genial secretary, Mr. Thomas Birtley. Then I had a two miles walk in the dark, through the country, to the house of Mr. William Pace, where I stayed the night. In the morning, in company of Mr. Hall and Mr. Pace, I inspected the Pelton Fell colliery, Busty Pit, and dived into the wonders of the coal mines, without, however, descending, as I had previously done a few years ago.

Saturday's lecture took place at the Co-operative Hall, Ox Hill. It was the first lecture of the kind in the district, and was pronounced by all as a "grand success." In this part the people are still very bigotted, and one of the friends who tried to get a lodging for me tried a dozen places in vain. They could not, under any consideration give shelter to "an infidel." Thanks, however, to the kindness of a sturdy miner, the president of the Ox Hill Branch, I was able to pass the night comfortably at his house.

Sunday was the North-East Secular Federation Excursion. Our contingent started from Ox Hill by brake shortly after nine o'clock, and met several other branches, also in brakes, at Chester le Street. We had a capital manager general in Mr. Birtley, and it was really remarkable the amount of energy and good feeling displayed by this gentleman during the day in the promotion of the comfort and happiness of the excursionists.

About twelve o'clock most of the brakes arrived at the cathedral city of Durham, and we soon found ourselves in very pleasant company in the pleasure gardens, where we joined in the sport provided until the time announced for tea. We had singing, dancing, musical chairs, "Kiss in the ring," and other old-fashioned sports, and it was quite clear to everyone present that Secularists understood the art of enjoying themselves. About fifty of us then paid a visit to the cathedral, and listened to a considerable portion of the afternoon "service"; then after tea we repaired to the Market Place, where, with the kind permission of the Mayor, I delivered the first Freethought address in that ancient city.

Mr. Peacock prosided. My subject was "The Mission of Freethought," and between three and four hundred persons, mostly Freethinkers, listened to the address. After the veteran Freethinker of Shields, Mr. Thompson, had delivered a powerful speech on the labors of Freethinkers in the past.

a vote of thanks to the Mayor for allowing us the privilege of speaking there was carried unanimously, and with plenty of hand-shaking and good wishes we bade the friends farewell.

On the whole, I am assured that my tour was most successful. Mr Forder will doubtless be apprised of an increase of strength in the Northern Branches of the National Secular Society.

My thanks are due to so many friends for their kind words and generous actions that I must thank them here "one and all," and hope I may have the pleasure ere long of renewing their acquaintance.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

REVIEWS.

*The Glory of Infidelity.* By SAMUEL P. PUTNAM. San Francisco: Putnam and Macdonald, 504 Kearny Street. Price 10 cents.—Mr. Putnam is proud to say he is an infidel. The infidel, he says, is he who is unfaithful. "Unfaithful to what? To that which is established, accredited; to that which almost everybody believes to be right. He is the unfashionable thinker; the minority of one." Mr. Putnam sees that it has been the doubter who has been the cause of all the progress of the world. Even orthodoxy he finds must thank infidelity for keeping it "a live corpse," since such life as it has to-day consists in its efforts at defence. It shows its greatest activity in refusing to be buried. Mr. Putnam's essay or lecture has the right ring. It is crisp, healthy, and straight to the point. We hope it will have a wide circulation.

*The Case for Agnosticism,* by B. Russell. London: Watts and Co., 17 Johnson's Court.—By Agnosticism, B. Russell appears to mean suspension of judgment on speculative ques-

tions. The case for a modest and temperate attitude of this kind is not difficult to make out. But the author is excessive in his caution. He will not say that "miracles do not happen," but "that they are very unusual things and call for proportionately cogent testimony." A little later on he says, "To us genius may well seem miraculous, whatever it appears. I believe that Agnostics will cheerfully and reverently attribute the highest genius to Jesus, and readily grant that without such a substratum the Gospels could never have been written." Agnostics may take this position, but it is quite another question whether it is the result of full and free inquiry. Nor do we understand in what sense Mr. Russell writes of Jesus as the Savior. Superstition will not be eradicated by being gently handled with kid gloves.

*God.* By "Humanitas." Freethought Publishing Co., (6d.)—This writer has the refreshing merit of thinking for himself. His pamphlet is interesting and suggestive. "Humanitas" stands up for the old-fashioned Atheism, and regards Agnosticism as a timorous compromise. Many will think he goes farther than logic warrants, but they would do well to give his arguments a fair and full consideration.

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