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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—V.

ON "INSPIRATION."—Continued.

To the Rev. Robert F. Horton, M.A.

You are too sagacious and well-informed not to see that the Bible *does* bear these incontestible marks of a human production. Consequently you are anxious to get rid of the "cast-iron theory of inspiration," according to which every book, every chapter, and every verse of Scripture is directly inspired by an infallible mind. You declare it "almost incredible that any reasonable person could entertain" such a theory. But I must remind you that this is still the official theory of nearly all the churches. Just as the Church of England insists on its Articles being taken in the "plain grammatical sense," so the ministers of almost every denomination present the Word of God as textually inspired. They make reservations in controversy, and subtle distinctions in books for educated readers, but the "cast-iron theory" is implied in the majority of their sermons, and openly taught in Sunday Schools. There are, indeed, some eminent ministers who are accounted "reasonable persons," and who nevertheless teach what is "almost incredible." Mr. Spurgeon, for instance, has recently declared his solemn conviction that every word of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is absolutely true. It must be allowed, however, that this view is becoming more and more impossible in these days of general education; and if your Bible *is* to be saved out of the storm of debate, it can only be by changing the old theory of inspiration. Whether the change can be successfully made, or whether the success can be permanent, is quite another matter. You have your opinion, I have mine, and we must agree to differ.

There is one aspect of the question which you overlook, and the point it involves is more vital than any you have considered. If the Bible is inspired at all it must be inspired in the *original tongues*. Those who cannot read Greek and Hebrew are without an inspired Bible. A translation is the work of fallible scholars. However accurate they may be, they must make mistakes; however honest they may be, they will be influenced by prepossessions; however learned they may be, they must find it impossible to overcome the difficulty which arises from the diverse genius of different languages. Sir William Drummond was unacquainted with any two Hebrew scholars who translated any two consecutive verses alike; and although Greek is more precise in construction, and less obscure in consequence of its varied literature, there are a host of conflicting readings of texts in the New Testament. In any case, therefore, unless we meet with the miracle of an inspired translator, it is absolutely impossible for an ordinary Englishman—who must be saved or damned in English—to have an inspired Bible. What is revelation to the reader of Greek and Hebrew is only hearsay to the readers of translations. They may catch gleams of the

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poetry, master the philosophy, and understand the ethical teaching; but they can never be sure of possessing an exact knowledge of the divine or doctrinal parts of the revelation, which may lurk unperceived or appear perverted in an ill-rendered text. The Catholic has a way out of this difficulty, for the voice of God remains with the Church, and enables her to decide infallibly what is the right interpretation of Scripture. But the Protestant has no way of escape, and unless he is a Greek and Hebrew scholar he is without an inspired book. You might call the English Bible an *approximate* revelation, but I regard this as an absurdity. Revelation means certitude, and certitude has no degrees. Besides, it appears to me that an omniscient God is able to speak in English, and that he would do so if he had anything to communicate to Englishmen. I cannot believe he would send his message through foreign channels, and place us at the mercy of translators and interpreters.

My own opinion is that not one Christian in a thousand has ever given five minutes' thought to the question of inspiration. "The point which strikes us," you write, "is that Christians are more certain that the Bible is inspired than they are of the grounds of their certainty." What is this but saying that their certainty is only acquiescence, and their belief only a superstition?

Before I deal with your definition of inspiration I will go to the etymology of the word. I will ascertain what it originally meant, and I will inquire what it still means among savages and barbarians. There is nothing like going to the roots of a question. A religion which comes to us from a remote past cannot be understood without a knowledge of its primitive character.

The term Inspiration comes from the Latin *in*, and *spiro* to breathe. From this also we derive the word *spirit*. Now, among barbarous people, the breath is a symbol of the soul, which is supposed to go in and out of the body, in trance or dreams, through the organs of respiration; and there is nothing more certain than that the primitive idea of inspiration was the actual possession of a human organism by the spirit of the god. "The inspiration or breathing-in of a spirit into the body of a priest or seer," says Tylor, "appears to such people a mechanical action, like pouring water into a jug." The god enters the man's body, and talks with his voice, and "the convulsions, the unearthly voice in which the possessed priest answers in the name of the deity within, and his falling into stupor when the god departs, all fit together, and in all quarters of the world the oracle-priests and diviners by familiar spirits seem really diseased in body and mind, and deluded by their own feelings, as well as skilled in cheating their votaries by sham symptoms and cunning answers."

This view is supported by a study of the Old Testament. Dr. Maudsley is of opinion that Ezekiel and Hosea, to say nothing of other prophets, were mad; and certainly no man in his senses would spend nearly four hundred days besieging a tile, or marry a degraded prostitute. When the Hebrew prophets

opened their mouths they said "Thus saith the Lord." Their messages were plain and peremptory. It was not they who spoke, but the Deity through their lips. Coming to the New Testament, also, we find the primitive theory still current. When the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles they spoke with strange tongues. Paul himself is sometimes careful to distinguish between his personal teaching and the direct commands of God. He ridiculed, though he admitted, the gift of tongues. Doubtless he heard too much of what Tylor calls "the unearthly voice," which still survives in the Christian pulpit, for artificial tones are thought the proper vehicle for the language of inspiration.

Among the Arabs of the Soudan there is an implicit belief in the primitive idea of inspiration. The deity speaks through the dervishes, and the Mahdi, without question, utters the authentic oracles of God. Similarly, the ancient Jews, who were a branch of the same Semitic stem, and in very much the same stage of religious culture, looked to their prophets as mouthpieces of Jahveh. The contention is absurd that this view of inspiration grew up after the time of Ezra. It only became systematised and retrospective. Inspiration ceased to be current simply because a well-organised theocracy set its face against unlicensed traders, and because when the monarchy had disappeared there was no longer room for prophetic dictators.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

"DOD GRILE" ON CHRISTIANITY.

Among "the vagaries of people who pass through what is known as a revival of religion," the Chronicle mentions one zealous woman's action in throwing her parlor organ into the street, and another's in smashing her new buggy. These may be "vagaries." Possibly one may be truly religious while in possession of parlor organs and buggies. I do not say that one may not; I only say that the imagination which can conceive the founder of Christianity playing a parlor organ or driving a buggy would be an invaluable intellectual equipment to a man of letters. To be a Christian is, I suppose, to be like Christ—not merely to believe in him, but to act as he acted, to live as he lived, in all things possible to be as he was. Always and everywhere he taught the duty of poverty—taught it by precept, taught it by example, taught it so plainly, lucidly, bluntly, that more than eighteen centuries of ingenuity have not been able to pervert the meaning. Perhaps Christianity with all the modern improvements and conveniences is a better religion than the Christianity of Christ. As to that, having neither, I cannot say; it seems to me more "practical;" but if there is a reader of these lines who owns a parlor organ or a buggy or any other property in excess of his actual present need, I tell him plainly that he is not a Christian in the sense in which Christ was a Christian. There is not, in my judgment, a Christian living to-day. If there were he would be arrested as a lunatic or a tramp.—

AMBROSE BIERCE, (*San Francisco Examiner*.)

A MAN OF EXPERIENCE.

"Did I understand you to say that you had had considerable experience with the Indians in the West?" inquired a man on an Eastern train of a tall stranger.

"Yes, I suppose I have."

"What do you consider the outlook for their civilisation?"

"Poor, very poor. They don't seem to learn anything. Why, sir, only last week I traded one of the most intelligent of them, an old horse blind in both eyes and all crippled up generally, for two good ponies, and he never knew he was cheated. I can't understand why it is the Indian doesn't improve more."

"Well, that looks bad for them, sure enough. I suppose you have a ranch near one of their reservations?"

"Oh, no, I'm no rancher," replied the stranger, as he threw his leg over the arm of the seat; "no, I'm a missionary. I was sent out by the William Penn Missionary Society of Philadelphia, and have been laboring among the red brethren for the last twenty years."

BUDDHISM IN THIBET.

Just as Christianity, when it spread through Europe, assimilated itself to much of the pre-existent Paganism, so Buddhism, which arose in India, in extending itself among the Mongolian races, took up many superstitious elements which formed no part of the original teachings of Gautama. There it has little of the characteristics of a moral reform which belonged to it on its first rise. It is an established religion, an instrument of priestly despotism, and its worship has degenerated into the senseless invocations of spirits and reliance upon magical charms. Yet, from its inaccessibility, and the residence of the Dalai Lama, or Buddhist Pope, at Lhassa, Thibet is sacred ground to Northern Buddhists, and there the Theosophists have located their Mahatmas. Let us look, then, at what some reputable travellers, among whom I do not include Madame Blavatsky, tell us of the country.

Bordered on the south and south-east by the Himalayas and on the west by the Karakorum chain, and jealously guarded against the intrusion of Europeans, Thibet is still the least known country of Asia. Many travellers, notably the brothers Schlagintweit, have, however, explored the country, and the Indian Government has trained and sent, in the guise of natives, Indian Buddhists to report on the state of the country, which is year by year becoming better known.

Mr. Charles H. Lepper, in an article in the *Nineteenth Century*, Sept., 1885, gives some account of the social condition of the inhabitants. He describes the houses, and how the animals and people inhabit them together, the fowls roosting with the family in a loft above, while the other animals send up their effluvia from below. "Dirt," he says, "is the ruling feature everywhere in Thibetan households. It pervades their houses, prevails in their customs, and gives a tone to and bears fruit in their speech." He tells an amusing story.

"An European, an English official in India, once desiring to see the real color of the Thibetan skin, paid the parents of a child to have it washed in hot water, several waters, and with an unlimited supply of soap. Every effort was made in vain; the skin could not be reached through such an armor-plating of dirt. It is said with every show of truth that it would be quite impossible to wash an adult Thibetan down to the skin."

Even if we allow for some little exaggeration in this, it seems a pity the Occult Thibetan Brotherhood do not do a little for their countrymen, among whom polyandry prevails to a large extent, and polygamy also among the well-to-do.

But it is with the religion of the people we chiefly concern ourselves. Buddhism appears to have been introduced in about the seventh century of our era. The previous cult of the country was called the Bon religion, which in its earliest form seems to have been simple belief in sorcery and magical charms to subdue evil spirits, but which was afterwards incorporated at first with the Indian Saivaitic religion and then with Buddhism, which for the mass both of lamas, or priests, and people, is still only a system of magic wherewith to ward off evil. Of Thibetan Buddhists there are nine sects whose names are given by Schlagintweit and also by Sarat Chandra Das. Needless to say, the Koot Hoompa are not among them. The confidence in the powerful influence of prayers and ceremonies is so common that every undertaking is begun with the recital of incantations and the performance of certain ceremonies by which to appease the wrath of the demons.

Emil Schlagintweit, in his *Buddhism in Thibet* (p. 55), says:—"The recital of mystical words and sentences, the Dharanis (lib. Zung*), bestows upon

* Do these Zung afford any clue to the Book of Dyzan of *The Secret Doctrine*?

man every kind of bliss, and obtains for him the assistance of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas . . . some impart longevity or accomplish every wish; others cure diseases, etc. It is even assumed that by a mere uttering of the letters of which the Dharani is composed—nay, even by their aspect alone—power may be gained over those beings of which they treat, or for such purposes for which they are thus supposed to grant help." Thibetan superstition indorses the Brahmin saying that the universe is in the power of the gods, the gods are in the power of magic, magic is in the power of the Brahmins, and therefore the universe is in the power of the Brahmins.

Schlagintweit goes on to say "The reciting of Dharanis, if combined with the practice of magical rites and supported by morality and contemplation, leads to superhuman faculties (in Sanskrit Siddhi)—nay, even to the union with the deity. This is a doctrine, which, in all probability, has grown up very recently" (p. 56). Madame Blavatsky speaks of Oriental Kabalists having "seventy thousand years of experience" (*Isis Unveiled*, vol. i., p. 1).

The chief object of Thibetan adoration is Chrenesi known as Padmapani, the Lotus bearer, and the chief observance of their worship consists in the repetition of the magic six syllables, *Om mani padme hum*—Om, the jewel in the lotus, amen! These words are uttered sometimes a hundred thousand times consecutively, the number being counted, as with Catholics by the beads of a rosary, although, like the Catholics with their Latin prayers, the people neither know what the jewel or what the lotus is. They are, moreover, inscribed on cylinders, the famous praying machines, turned by wind and water, so that the Thibetans literally "pray without ceasing." The cylinders are arranged to turn but one way. Indeed, it is most iniquitous to turn the prayer cylinder the wrong way.† This is like the witches spell of saying the Lord's prayer backwards, or dancing round the church Sabbath fashion.

The priests also sell prayer flags, rags or paper printed with the mystic prayers. Travellers purchase these before going on long journeys and deposit them on projecting rocks or other places of danger. Amulets or talismans are universally worn. Relics are also esteemed, especially the teeth, hair or nails of canonised lamas.

Devil-dancing, an unmistakable savage survival, forms a curious feature of their religion, and is thus described by Col. Paske‡:

"The Abbot, in full canonicals, with a scroll of parchment supposed to be covered with sacred music, attended by musicians with large trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, took his position on the ground, and when the musicians were playing the loudest, suddenly from a side door of the monastery there rushed out 30 or 40 monks, attired in the most grotesque and startling costumes, their heads covered with large and well executed masks, representing the heads of wild animals, serpents, and demons; these all danced in a most wild and excited manner, making hideous noises, and every now and then rushing into the monastery to don costumes still more grotesque. These are supposed to represent the demons of the air, who torment the souls of the wicked undergoing the process of transmigration."§

Col. Paske says "The spirit dances cause great terror among the ignorant and superstitious people of the country, and form a means by which the lamas exercise their hold upon their minds."

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

† Initiates, I mean persons of learning, can guess why the *padme* must never come before the *mani*.

‡ "Buddhism in the British Provinces of Little Thibet," *Anthropological Journal*, vol. viii., p. 206.

§ Mrs. Besant contends Theosophists do not believe in transmigration of souls. Re-incarnation is something different. Certainly both Buddhist and Hindu Theosophists believe what usually goes by that name. My master in Hindu Theosophy, a Kalin Brahmin, regards the idea of a European woman catching it with an effable smile. DAIR.

AN ESOTERIC ADEPT.

Studying the book of Dyran
I got fairly in a mist;
This alone I know, that I am
Now a deep Theosophist.

By the magic charms of Thibet
My five senses all have ceased;
A sixth sense I now exhibit,
And the Wisdom of the East.

Crossing o'er the bridge of Fohat,
By the aid of astral light,
Guru-initiated, know that
I'm a bold Blavatskyite.

Manvantara and Pralaya,
Parabrahm, Mulaprakriti,
Dhyani Chohans, and Purusha
Now are clear as mud to me.

Of the whenceness of the whatnot
I have found the Perfect Way;
Wandering with the wild Mahatmas
O'er the hills of Himalay.

My Prana, Linga-Sharira
And Rupa soon will flee;
I hold on by my Manas
To my Atma and Buddhi.

With the Blessed Occult Masters
I'm a chela Kabbalist;
My Ego thus re-incarnated.
I'm a deep Theosophist.

F. T. S.

TALMAGE BLASPHEMES.

SPEAKING of poor shows, I went to hear Rev. T. de Witt Talmage this blistering Sabbath afternoon. He was billed to speak to a "mass meeting of young men" at the Y.M.C.A. Hall. No ladies were admitted, so the public supposed that things unfit for publication would be said. The hall, therefore, was well filled.

Any clergyman earnest in his profession would have been inspired by such an audience. Mr. Talmage wasn't. He faced a couple of thousand men, mostly young, and instead of talking to them like a man, and pointing out the superiority of a life of self-restraint and cleanliness over one of self-indulgence and dirt, he put himself on exhibition as an attraction for more than an hour.

The Bible as a book was his theme. He said things about it that he knew were not true, and that every man with the merest smattering of knowledge of biblical criticism knew to be untrue. He has a dreadful voice—worn, harsh, and stridulous. Yet with this organ, as discordant as a keg of nails, he essayed flights of rhetoric rivalling the rainbow in gorgeousness. You could see that they were not spontaneous, nor even prepared for the occasion, but were bits of old refuse garreted in his memory.

He drew pictures. One of his chaste and reverent imagings was the Savior on the world's stage, with the Old Testament prophets as an orchestra—Moses leading—and the twelve apostles as footlights. The greatness of God was illustrated by Mr. Talmage posing as David wielding the baton and leading a grand choir composed of men at the bottom, angels at the top, and clouds and mountains—the latter endowed with musical rocks and cedars—between.

He even gave imitations of the varying tones in which the Almighty calls back sinners who have wandered from the fold, fifty, a hundred, and a thousand miles.

I never heard anything so blasphemous before, so cheaply and prosaically blasphemous. Talmage is an actor, but a very bad one. He is pitifully self-conscious. He knows he is a humbug, but in addition to that he has the egotism of a Guitau. A more unpleasant person can't be fancied. But he understands the crowd and succeeds with it. He is the tank dramatist of the pulpit.—*Evening Post* (New York.)

A country vicar, who, appealed from the pulpit to his congregation for funds wherewith to repair the roof of the church, said he really could not preach in the damp old church any longer, but found it reported, to his unutterable horror, on the following Saturday, "that he had declined to preach in the old church any longer."

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

IN her pamphlet *Why I Became a Theosophist*, Mrs. Besant says "Mr. Wheeler wrote, saying that my adhesion to Theosophy would cause interest in the subject to be felt by Freethinkers, and asking for a copy of the book for review. This was an unusual course to take as preface to a bitter personal attack, but, waiving the question of literary courtesy, the point is that the initiative came from the *Freethinker*, not from the Theosophists." A word of explanation seems necessary. In my letter to Madame Blavatsky, which was sent unknown to Mr. Foote, I said if she cared to send me a copy of her work I would notice it in the *Freethinker*. The book was sent "with Madame Blavatsky's compliments for review." It would be a reflection not only on that lady's occult powers, but on her good sense, to suppose she expected the notice must necessarily be a favorable one.

The only fair implication was that I should give my honest opinion. This I did. My review of the work, to which I gave over three columns, was kept distinct from my article on "Theosophy and Madame Blavatsky," which Mrs. Besant construes into a bitter personal attack. Madame Blavatsky, like Mrs. Besant, is a public character, and when the latter credits the former with the exercise of abnormal faculties it seems to me no more than fair to mention that her intimate daily companion and housekeeper accused her of trickery, and that the accusation has been investigated and endorsed by the Society for Psychical Research. To withhold such important facts out of a sense of courtesy would be to pander to superstition.

J. M. WHEELER.

ACID DROPS.

A correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* gives an account of the recent executions in Paris, and gushes over the two priests who attended the murderers to the guillotine. Freethinkers who attack the Church are told that "they should watch her ministers on such occasions and then they would love her and them for all time afterwards." This correspondent forgets that the Church, which has forgiveness for murders, would deal out imprisonment and death to Freethinkers.

This is how the Church acts in Spain. A little girl died in Montejon, near Toledo. Her father and all her friends were Protestants, and permission was obtained from the Alcalde for her to be buried in the Protestant cemetery. But the priests found out that the mother, who died four years before, was a Romanist; accordingly they claimed the body, the father had to give it up, and it was interred in the Roman Catholic cemetery.

Under the heading of "A Sweating Rector" the *Star* reports a case in the Marlborough County Court, in which the Rev. Robert Leamon sued the Rev. and Hon. H. P. Bouverie, the rich rector of Pewsey, Wilts, for allged arrears of salary. The plaintiff was engaged as an assistant at £3 per week, but the "boss" went abroad for a holiday and left the assistant all the work of the parish. On Good Friday, it is said, he preached no less than nine sermons! But the "boss" declined to pay him anything extra, and the dispute ended in the county court, where the plaintiff recovered a part of his claim, namely, £4 5s. Considering that the rector gets £1,275 as the annual value of his living, and has recently come into a legacy of £30,000, his generosity is not excessive.

Canon Liddon preached one of his "beautiful and eloquent" sermons on Sunday in St. Paul's Cathedral. According to a newspaper report it had such an elevating effect on the congregation that a crowd of "gentlemen" allowed "a tall, beautiful woman in the garb of a nursing sister, pale and tired-looking," to stand through the whole of the service.

The newspapers report the suicide of the Rev. Joseph Smith, vicar of Middlezoy, near Bridgwater, at the advanced age of 83. The reverend gentleman cut his throat with a razor. Another fact for Talmage!

And her clerical suicide, and on Sunday night too! It happened at an hotel at Malling. The parson's name was Ramsden. Oh Talmage, Talmage!

In the pocket of another suicide who jumped over Westminster Bridge was found a letter with the words "God preserve my mother." Very human, but not an Atheist, Mr. Talmage.

Frederick Smith, barman, arrested for burglary and caught on the premises, is apparently a student of Scripture. To one of the witnesses against him he called out in court, "You don't read your Bible: you don't know the Ninth Commandment. I know."

The Rev. J. D. Clarke is a queer customer. He was found at Monkwearmouth in a state of intoxication, and his pockets contained a bottle of chlorodyne and a bottle of whiskey. The reverend gentleman said he was "ill," and the illness entailed a fine of five shillings and costs.

Archbishop Eyre fainted in St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral last Sunday while consecrating the Rev. C. Gordon as Bishop of Jamaica. The heat, crowd, and incense were too much for him, but he recovered by the application of unholy water.

"Captain" George Perfect, of the Salvation Army, Castleford, writes to the *Castleford Gazette* to explain his Christian love towards Mr. Bradlaugh in calling for volunteers to help duck him in the river. He says that he mentioned how an infidel fell headlong into the river Aire, and threw up his arms and cried O Lord! "On the spur of the moment I said I would make one of six to put him in the river, and asked for volunteers, and got them. I believe, sir, I should have been as ready to get him out as I should be to put him in, as soon as the desired effect was accomplished, which I believe would not be long." "Captain" Perfect is not like the kind Christian who held a drowning Jew out of water till he said the creed, and then let him go, saying he could die saved. He would throw Mr. Bradlaugh in the river, but would not keep him there a minute longer than necessary for his conversion. Here is indeed a perfect Christian.

Under the heading "Rascally Persecution of Holy Men," the *Ironclad Age* records how Ira Porter, a minister of All Saints' Church at Lisbon, Indiana, was arrested for alleged criminal assault, and was placed under bonds. This is the second minister arrested on this same charge within two weeks in the same township.

Said the Rev. Samuel Jones, the popular American revivalist: "My grandfather was a good man, as good as ever breathed the breath of life, and he went straight to heaven. My grandmother was a bad woman; she never attended church and did not take any stock in the Bible, and I know she went to hell." About this time a young man left his seat and started toward the door. This did not please the rev. gentleman, and he remarked, "Yes, there is a man who is going to hell too." This young man proved to be a commercial drummer, and, whirling round, politely answered, "Well, if that is the case, is there any message you wish to send to your grandmother?" The congregation roared while the young man went on his way to hell.

They had some bad weather in Switzerland recently. Incessant rain kept tourists from going about, so Bishop Mermillod ordered special prayers to be offered to heaven to send better weather. The answer was worse torrents than ever.

At Palhouse City, U.S. America, R. D. Johnson, a well-to-do citizen about fifty years of age, killed his wife and son about 14 years old, fatally shot his seven-year-old daughter, and then killed himself. He left a note saying that he did not want to live in this sinful world, and could not leave it without his family, so he thought he would kill them too. He said he and all his family were going to heaven, and that he first gave them strychnine, but could not bear the sight of their agonies, so he killed them with a revolver. The bodies were all in the house upstairs, and were not discovered till the morning. He never had any

domestic trouble and his terrible crime is supposed to be due to religious fanaticism,

The Holy Ghost is looking about for a successor to the present head of the Roman Catholic Swindling Company (no liability). The present head, Mr. Pecci, is 79, and the ghost is expected soon to send him to Purgatory, where, for several hundred thousand years, he will have his sins grilled out of him. The ghost, who is no respecter of persons, will not, it is thought, elect a Frenchman—doesn't like 'em.—*Liberator*.

The *Irish Catholic* says: "Every lover of historic truth will be glad to learn that a new and authentic life of Giordano Bruno, the Atheist and libertine, whom the Italian Revolutionists have been glorifying, will soon be published. It will be based on official documents in the Vatican Library." Every lover of historic truth will, we venture to think, desire that any defence of the atrocious murder by the Church should be carefully sifted, and that the official documents at the Vatican should be examined by impartial and competent historians. We should not class the Duke of Norfolk with the impartial and competent historians. In the address to the Pope, signed on behalf of English Catholics by his grace, he says of Bruno: "His monstrous opinions, put forth concerning human society, government and state, and the truth of philosophy, exceed in perversity all others." How moderate and temperate.

The Rev. C. Sharpe, of Southampton, has drawn up rules for instituting a Brotherhood of the Church of England, to be called the Order of St. James. Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are to be taken. Let us hope they will keep them.

James Hibberd gives in *Notes and Queries* a translation of the old Latin verse, which doubtless reflected the genuine spirit of monkery.

Mihi est propositum
In taberna mori;
Vinum sit oppositum,
Morientis ori;
Ut dicant, cum venerunt
Angelorum chori
Deus sit propitius
Huic potatori!

The translation runs:

My intent is to die
In a tavern lying;
With the wine cup closely nigh,
When my spirit's flying.
That the angel choir may cry
When they come a spying,
God have mercy by-and-bye,
On this toper dying.

This may be taken as a specimen of monkish blasphemy. But the monks could defend themselves from the words of the institutor of the sacrament, who "came eating and drinking," and promised his followers that they should drink new wine in the kingdom of heaven.

The Rev. Dr. Milligan gives a new explanation of Crazy John's "666." The number six, being one short of the sacred number seven, was taken to represent a hopeless falling short of grace, and the three successive sixes represented a dreadful potency of evil. According to this theory, if Crazy John had been a dapper at arithmetic, he would have given the number of the beast as 6,666,666 at the very least.

Sequal, the peripatetic vendor of Indian medicine, has been doing a roaring trade in the North of England. His cures are "wonderful," and his popularity is amazing; which proves the old saying, "great is the mystery of faith." One of his attendants, a Mohawk Indian—the last of the last Mohawks—rejoicing in the name of Moses Carpenter, proved the efficacy of his master's medicine by dying. The funeral took place at Middlesborough, where such an outery was raised the other day against cremation. The coffin was covered with flowers, a full choral service was conducted by the vicar of St. Paul's, and the route to the cemetery was lined by thousands of people. In all probability, if Jesus Christ himself visited Middlesborough, he wouldn't attract half as much attention.

On Mrs. Besant, the Theosophists and the "scientific Socialists" *Liberty* is tempted to exclaim, "O science, what nonsense usurps thy name."

Superstition indeed dies hard. There are not only followers of magic and astrology, but the Superintendent of the British Museum Library tells of a person who seriously asked for an introduction to a student who could raise the Devil.

One of the most curious superstitions, still common in many parts of the Scottish Highlands, where the influences of Christianity have been at work for ages, is the *corp cre*, which is regarded as a secret and infallible method of bringing about the ill or the death of an enemy.

Corp cre means a body of clay which is rudely shaped into the likeness of the person whose hurt is desired. When a tolerably correct representation is obtained the operator, with the murderous thoughts in his heart, sticks pins, nails, and broken bits of glass into every part of the figure. He then takes it and places it in a running stream with its head towards the current. As the clay image is worn by the water the person whom it represents will, it is believed, also waste away in the most excruciating agony, as if every part of his body were pierced by invisible probes. Should, however, anyone by accident find the *corp cre* in the stream its spell is supposed to be immediately broken, and the intended victim, unless too far gone, might recover.

A writer in the *Scotsman* declares this savage custom, which was widely extended in the middle ages, has been practised within these last four years, as the result of the agrarian strife and bitterness.

According to the Lunacy Commissioners' report, there are 3,769 inmates of our asylums suffering from "religious excitement"—1,693 males and 2,076 females. We commend this fact to the attention of the Church Congress. It is better worth discussion than anything at present on the agenda. We don't mind opening the discussion ourself. Mr. Terry is going to read a paper, as a specialist, on the theatre; and it would be quite as proper for the editor of the *Freethinker* to read a paper on "Religion and Insanity." We may add that the subject stretches out in all directions, far beyond the walls of lunatic asylums.

The ordeal by boiling oil still obtains in Ceylon. Quite recently three persons, including a village headman, were sentenced to a fine of 100 rupees, or ten months' imprisonment, for trying to find out by this process who had stolen some rice and plumbago. Several suspected persons had to dip their hands in boiling oil, and the one who cried out was reckoned guilty. Everyone was more or less injured, and the Court took a stern view of the proceedings. Of course the superstition is honest enough; indeed, it is not so very long since the same nonsense obtained in England. But science has taught us better, and religion has to give way before the spread of knowledge.

The Pope is requested to confer posthumous honor on Christopher Columbus by giving him the title of "venerable." Cannot some of the Spiritualists or Theosophists ascertain whether the great discoverer is willing to accept the title? It would be a pity to give him what he would rather not have.

Nathaniel Chase, the famous Millerite, has gone to glory at the advanced age of eighty-nine. He reckoned that the world was going to end in October, but couldn't wait to see the show. Those who do wait will see—what there is to be seen.

Nearly £10,000 has been raised to prosecute the Bishop of Lincoln for burning candles in church and similar enormities. The same sum of money, or more, will no doubt be raised for the defence. All the cash will be spent on non-sensical litigation, instead of being devoted to some useful purpose, say the development of co-operative production. But thus it ever was, and thus it ever will be. Religion is simply a waste of time, means, and energy in a world where all our resources are needed to redeem us from physical and moral evils.

George Lee, *alias* the Rev. Sinclair Glenwood, B.A., who has been establishing evangelistic work in Guernsey, preaching from a van on Sundays in the open air, besides holding other religious services, has been arrested. It appears he has undergone a term of penal servitude for fraud, and being on a ticket-of-leave, failed to report himself to the police. Of such are the kingdom of heaven.

They claim to have "Samson the strongest man" at the Royal Westminster Aquarium. He can break iron chains and rope cords with which he is bound, and do a number of feats like his prototype, but no one supposes that his strength lies in his hair. We fancy the feat of catching three hundred foxes and tying their tails together would puzzle the modern Samson.

Notes and Queries, Dec. 22, 1888, gives an extract from the Rev. J. B. Morris, who, writing in 1840, defended the belief in the phoenix, and asked, "Is not the external evidence for the phoenix greater than that for the darkness at the Crucifixion?" Certainly. The early Christians believed in the mythical bird which died and rose again, and many of the Fathers of the Church, from Clement of Rome to St. Gregory, adduce it as the great natural type of the resurrection of J. C. This was the kind of Christian evidences in vogue in the early days of the Christian Church, and the Rev. J. B. Morris exhibited a curious survival of belief in an old fable.

Spurgeon says he got nearly the whole of his theology a good many years ago from an old woman. We can quite believe it. There is any amount of the old woman in Spurgeon's theology.

Jahveh has been visiting the South of Spain with a hurricane which destroyed the gardens around the Alhambra and damaged a number of church spires. No doubt it's all the fault of those Spanish infidels. They put the old gentleman upstairs into such a rage that he ruins his own property in quite a reckless fashion.

Samuel Lewis, a messenger in the employ of the G.W.R., Swindon, is charged with stealing a large number of articles from the guards' van. The prisoner has a pious reputation and when arrested said "I will give in; make it light for me, as I know the chapel people will stick to me." Piety and pilfering often go together by those impressed with the idea that "the Lord has need of them."

Theosophists who don't believe in the transmigration of souls ought to study the Nepaulese Buddhist Sutras. There they would read the story of the whale who, wiser than that of Jonah—having both swallowed and vomited some Buddhist merchants in the situation of the Hebrew prophet—was led to reflect on their miraculous deliverance, and "ceased to be a carnivorous animal, and died for want of proper food." The whale was born again (as Christ says we all must be), and turned up as a male child in the family of a Brahman. But, alas! some taint of his prior existence yet clung to him. He was distinguished by a remarkable voracity. He ate up all before him. But the Lord Buddha, in his infinite mercy, took him to the bonehill, where his whale's carcase had been thrown after death, and reminded him of his doings in his previous existence.

Madame Blavatsky tells a good yarn, of what she herself calls "an adept's soul in an infant's body," and which she pretends she witnessed herself in Thibet. A child was placed on a carpet and after some ceremonies the "Superior" fell into what seemed a sort of profound meditation. "Suddenly to our great consternation, we saw the child, not raise itself but as it were violently jerked into a sitting posture! A few more jerks and like an automaton set in motion by concealed wires the four months' baby stood upon his feet!" This was not all for the baby began to speak, declaring "I am Buddha, I am the old Lama; I am his spirit [N.B. not his soul] in a new body," etc. The dove descending on Jesus and saying "This is my beloved son" is small game to this, and Madame Blavatsky is such a dear simple creature that we should as soon think of questioning the one statement as the other.

"Anglo Indian," writing in the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle*, says: "Not long ago a Mussulman, named

Ally Khan, was converted by Mr. Jones, a missionary in Calcutta, and shortly after his conversion obtained an appointment, with a salary of 100 rupees a month, in the Baptist Mission Society. Here he contrived to embezzle 1,600 rupees, for which offence he was indicted in the Supreme Court, found guilty, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment in the Calcutta gaol. On hearing the sentence he exclaimed: "In the name of the devil, is this the reward of renouncing my religion? Farewell, Christianity! From this hour I am a Moslem again!"

We read that a Special Commissioner sent over from Japan to report upon the condition of Great Britain under Christianity has made a special feature of our drunkenness, and recommends the Japanese not to adopt the British religion.

If the Japanese get hold of the Bible, and read it, they will find that Jesus Christ turned a vast quantity of water into wine at a marriage feast, to keep the spree going after the guests were already three sheets in the wind.

According to the *St. Pancras Gazette* there are religious meetings in Regent's Park which "offend no one," but there are "others of a very different type," and "the inhabitants around the park are seriously considering the best way of putting a stop to the nuisance."

Put a little more plainly, this simply means that the Park is used by Freethinkers as well as by the Christians, and that the latter want it all to themselves. Don't they hope they may get it? They had better recognise the fact that Freethought meetings cannot be stopped unless *all* meetings are stopped. As for the "inhabitants around the park" they have no more interest in it than the rest of the public. If they think otherwise they will find out their mistake.

The Lord laid his heavy hand on the town of Spokane Falls, destroying twenty-five blocks by fire. The loss is estimated at fourteen million dollars.

The old forgery of the pretended letter from Publius Lentulus to the Senate of Rome describing the chestnut hair and beautiful nose and mouth of Jesus Christ has been once more reprinted and this time by the *Liverpool Weekly Post* with the heading "Remarkable Description of Our Savior." No doubt it goes down with pious old ladies as a perfectly accurate description written upon the spot.

Alack and alas! The ancient Egyptians took great care of their mummies, believing the soul would want its body again some day. Now these embalmed corpses are being hawked in Europe. A fine mummy, warranted 5,000 years old, can be purchased at Berlin for £17 10s. It is even said that they can be used to produce a fine pigment for painters, so that a Pharaoh may be spread on canvas, which is nearly as bad as Hamlet's tracing Cæsar to a bung.

A negro has just been ordained a Catholic priest. Humanity has taught the infallible Church something since it sanctioned slavery by excluding the blacks from the descendents of Adam.

THE clerical fraternity all agree in one thing, namely, that you should all go to church. Even an advanced Unitarian like the Rev. J. P. Hopps censures the young men who think they can worship God in the fields. And naturally so, for this kind of worship would soon ruin the clerical business.

"I am humble," said the minister; "anything is good enough for me." "I believe you," replied the listener. "I have heard your sermons."

Sister Theysay—I grievously regret you leave our church, dear pastor. Pastor Peacefully—You should not grieve. No doubt the Lord will send you a better servant to fill his place. Sister T.—I have no such hope. Of the last thirteen pastors we have had every one has been worse than the other.

At a wedding the other day the officiating clergyman, having concluded the marriage service, mounted the pulpit and gave the young couple a suitable address. He had not, however, proceeded far in his oration when the bridegroom left his pew, and going up to the verger whispered in his ear: "Tell your governor to cut it short; I've got the cab by the hour."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 25, at 11 30, Battersea Park Gates (open-air), "The Devil"; at 7.30, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., "FREETHOUGHT AND THEOSOPHY: A REPLY TO MRS. BESANT," concluded.

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.

H. PENNELL.—Any Dictionary will give you the meaning. *Ogilvie's Imperial Dictionary* gives, Theosophy—(1) the Divine wisdom; godliness. 2 A general name given to those systems of philosophy which profess to attain to a knowledge of the Divine Being by spiritual ecstasy, direct intuition, or special individual relations. Dr. George Wyld, president of the British Theosophical Society, in his *Theosophy and the Higher Life*, says, "Theosophy signifies knowledge, or the science of the wisdom and will of God, and his relation to the external universe and to man."

L. STANLEY.—No doubt there is a field for open-air lectures in Birmingham, but it is a matter for the Branch. We know nothing about the Town Hall lectures. You take no "liberty" in writing to us. We are always glad to hear from our readers.

A. WHEELER.—Vote of thanks from the Finsbury Branch received. Mr. Foote is always happy to help the Branches, and wishes he had more time at his disposal.

COGITO.—We could not print another edition of last week's *Freethinker*, but we always print over our sale to allow for returns, and there are two or three hundred copies left if anyone wishes to circulate our article on the Maybrick case. With regard to the Rev. Mr. Matthews, we fancy his recantation was printed in most of the English papers. Still, it might, as you suggest, be serviceable as a tract. What do other readers say?

HENRY ARTHUR.—Thanks for the cuttings. Mind is not exactly a function. It is a general term for all the phenomena of consciousness, and has no more separate existence than the whiteness of white objects. Still, your statement is correct enough for ordinary purposes.

REGENT'S PARK.—We believe Mr. Leekey sells our literature there on Sunday afternoons. Probably the explanation of your being unable to get some of our *Bible Heroes* is that only the most recent publications are kept on sale. It is, of course, impossible to take a very large stock into the open air.

W. B. (Plumstead) writes: "I think your appeal for the circulation of the *Freethinker* ought to be responded to. I cannot do much, but I will for the future take two copies instead of one, and if others did the same the sale would soon go up."

S. STANDRING.—It is exceedingly stupid to have no literature on sale at Columbia Road. The Central London Branch really ought to get buried. It has been dead a long while.

F. GOODWIN.—The gentleman is quite out in his figures. No doubt the wish was father to the thought. We have frequently pressed on our regular readers the necessity of their joining the N. S. S. Those who cannot afford to let the world know are enrolled as passive members, and their names are kept private.

W. HOLLAND.—Cuttings are always welcome.

E. CLARK.—Yes, there ought to be a strong Branch at Swindon.

INCOG.—Received.

P.—We are obliged for the Newcastle cutting.

E. M. VANC.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops"

P. B. (West Ham).—The past participle of hang is either hung or hanged. What you complain of cannot very well be helped. Articles will get printed on both sides of one leaf. In such cases, if you wish to paste them in your scrap-book, the only plan is to buy two copies. We hardly think there would be a sufficient sale of any of Southwell's pamphlets.

E. SIMS.—Received with thanks. Messrs. Foote and Wheeler will have no difficulty in expressing your view as to the vital necessity of maintaining the French Republic. The education question is also a burning one. Fortunately for France, the French Government is ahead of ours in this matter. The priest and his book are virtually excluded from the French primary schools. In England it is next to impossible to secure for a child a purely secular education.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Edinburgh Evening News—Lichtfreund—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Western Figaro—Castleford Gazette—Ironclad Age—Liberator—Echo—Liberty—Swindon Advertiser—Scotsman—Sunday Chronicle—Secular Thought—Church Times—Bolton Evening News—Freethought—Birkenhead News.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a very large audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. Mr. Foote lectured on "Freethought and Theosophy" in reply to Mrs. Besant, and it is undeniable that his views met with almost universal sympathy. Several questions were asked, and one gentleman offered some curious opposition. He told such monstrous stories of what the Theosophic adepts could do that the lecturer was obliged to say that in comparison with such things the Resurrection was a respectable superstition. This evening (Aug. 25) Mr. Foote continues his treatment of the subject, dealing with the questions of body and mind, Pantheism, re-incarnation, Karma, and Theosophic morality, and concluding with a review of Mrs. Besant's new position in relation to Secularism.

MR. FOOTE had a big audience on Clerkenwell Green on Sunday morning. A fair collection was made for the London Secular Federation. Some distance off Mr. Dunn, of the Christian Evidence Society, was "challenging" Mr. Foote to come to Hyde Park every Tuesday and Thursday in September to discuss with him. Modest Mr. Dunn!

• FUND for sending Messrs. Foote and Wheeler to the International Freethought Congress at Paris in September: W. J. Birch, £3; A Friend, £1; F. W. D., 2s. 6d.; F. Smallman, £1; Plymouth 5s.; E. Sims, £1.

MR. LENNSTRAND has appealed to the Swedish Supreme Court, and will be free till the end of October. He is in the meantime lecturing with vigor. We have strong hopes of meeting him at the International Congress at Paris next month, and also his worthy coadjutor, Captain Otto Thomson, who is both helping on *Fritankaren* and also lecturing himself. Mr. Lennstrand's defence against the charge of blasphemy is, we learn, to be translated both into English and German.

DR. MONRO'S *Ironclad Age* (Indianapolis) reprints our article on Atheism and the French Revolution. In this fashion our writings sometimes reach a wide circle of readers in America and elsewhere.

MR S STANDRING reports that a new open-air station was opened at Tottenham on Sunday. Mr. Couchy is the leading spirit there, and he means to form a Branch without delay. Sunday's audience was a good one. The natives were shy at first, but they gradually gathered round Mr. Standring, and asked him a variety of questions after his lecture.

AT Southgate there was another good audience. Mr. Hillier sold 45 *Freethinkers* during the day, besides other literature. There being no other way of getting the paper, Mr. Hillier will take orders for it at Cromwell House, and have it delivered regularly at subscribers' addresses.

THROUGHOUT the northern district the Christian bigot⁹ are getting wild at the Secular successes. They are beginning to resort to disturbance and rowdyism. But they will find the game won't answer. Last Sunday's disorder in Finsbury Park, for instance, must not be repeated. Freethinkers must rally round the lecturer, and assist in maintaining order.

FREETHOUGHT is making rapid progress at Grays, partly owing to the ability and tact of the lecturers, and partly to the energy of Mr. Munro. What is wanted everywhere is a capable, active man, who will devote some of his time to the work of organisation.

Secular Thought announces a written debate between Mr. C. Watts and the editor of the *Toronto Evening Mail* as shortly to appear in its columns.

THE Convention of the Canadian Secular Union will be held in Science Hall, Toronto, on Saturday and Sunday, September 14th and 15th. That of the American Secular Union will take place at Philadelphia, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 25, 26 and 27. We trust that both Congresses will result in increased activity.

Secular Thought begins the publication of "A Code of Morals," by the Hon. John Stuart Hittell, of San Francisco. Mr. Hittell is the author of two volumes, but little known on this side of the Atlantic, bearing the title *Evidences against Christianity*. They were published in 1856.

The Committee on the Bill of Rights for Washington Territory recommends that appropriation of public moneys to religious bodies for any purpose whatever be forbidden.

CALIFORNIA prides itself on having no Sunday law, and no law exempting church property from taxation. But they are not satisfied in San Francisco. They find that the churches are greatly under-assessed and this valuation is only made on the land on the plea that the buildings are of no value for other purposes.

THE Hall of Science Children's Annual Summer Excursion starts to-day (Aug. 25) to "Ye Robin Hood," Loughton. Mr. Cookney, 1A Willow St., Paul St., Finsbury, acknowledges the following:—Collection, Hall of Science, £2 8s.; Columbia Road, 2s. 6d.; Woillaume, 5s. and 10lb sweets; R. A. Cooper (Norwich), 14lb sweets; Swaagman, 5s. Per R. Forder: Temple, 1s.; Mrs. Mensbier, 2s. 6d. Per Mrs. Cookney: Mrs. White, 1s.; Sunderland, 1s.; Roberts, 6d.; Mrs. Roberts, 3d. Per Davey: Shrimpton, 6d.; Sutton, 1s.; Turner, 6d.; Cooper, 6d.; Thurlow, 3d.; Burton, 1s. Per J. Fagan, 1s.; E. Cousins, 2s. 6d.; J. A. M., 1s.; Shelph, 1s.; Moore, 2s.; S. B., 1s.; A. B., 1s.; J. E. M., 6d.; Sleigh, 1s.; Randal, 6d. Per Mrs. Green: Mrs. Richardson, 1s.; Mrs. Kemp, 1s.; Father, 4d.; Allen, 4d.; Hill, 1s.; Price, 6d. Per Oldfield: Lizzy, 1s.; Moore, 3d.; Mrs. Blundell, 6d.; Jenkins, 1s.; Mrs. Jenkins, 1s.; Haggerty, 1s.; Mrs. Hannaford, 6d.; C. H. E., 6d.; J. G., 6d.; T. D., 6d.; Buck, 6d.; B. P., 6d.; S. P. L., 6d.; Mr. Heale, Madame (Clemetshaw) M. Cilwa, 1s.

THE ex-Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost, in the *Twentieth Century*, alluding to Voltaire's saying that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one, declares that Bakounine, the Russian Anarchist, "said a far truer thing for our time in the world's day. He said: 'If there is a God it will be necessary to annihilate him.'"

"The first time I read that sentence," says Mr. Pentecost, "I felt as if I had been struck with lightning. I was shocked by the daring blasphemy of the man. But the more I think of what the bold Russian said, the more I see how true it is. Bakounine discovered just what I have discovered, that you cannot turn to the right or to the left in trying to do something for the happiness, the comfort, or the good of the people but that you run plump into a kind of faith in God that is thrown across your path like an impassable barrier. 'God made me as I am.' 'God has placed me where I am, and I must be contented with my lot.' 'Things are as they are according to a Providential arrangement.' And so on to the end of the tiresome chapter."

THE *Westminster Review* this month is a very interesting number for Freethinkers. It opens with a long article on "Giordano Bruno: his Life and Philosophy," by Mr. C. E. Plumptre, author of a *History of Pantheism*. Mr. Plumptre deals largely with Bruno's work on the Infinite Universe and World as showing how far he anticipated modern science. Mr. Plumptre thinks that "in their

essential natures, the poet Shelley has more in common with Bruno than any other writer with whom we are acquainted." An anonymous article on Agnosticism refers to the Biblical passages in which God is declared to be unsearchable and as doing great things past finding out. The writer might have instanced his showing his back parts to Moses as a proof that he could not be fully revealed. There is also a paper on Miracles, by the Rev. Walter Lloyd, which we have dealt with in another column.

IN a recent speech on educational subjects at Poonah, India, Lord Reay referred to an interesting letter from Henry Thomas Buckle to Lady Reay, giving a list of the most important authors. He specifies Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Grotius, Locke, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, and Comte. Mill's *Logic*, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Ricardo's *Political Economy*, with *Don Quixote*, *The Pilgrims' Progress*, and Goethe's *Faust*.

A NEW work by Mr. Samuel Laing, author of *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, is announced by Messrs. Chapman and Hall. It will be entitled *Problems of the Future and Essays*.

THE *Edinburgh Evening News* has a very outspoken article on Mrs. Besant's new departure. "If Theosophists," it says, "are allowed to enroll themselves under the Secularist banner, the distinctive term Secularist should be dropped. Secularism is essentially anti-supernatural. It rests on the thought that the guide of humanity is reason, and that all statements relating to other forms of existence, being unverifiable, should be left out of account as motives, sanctions, or consolations in human life. Secularism substitutes time for eternity, science for providence, and devotion to humanity for prostration before Heaven. Naturally, therefore, Secularism is the foe of all forms of religious belief. Now, Theosophy is essentially religious, inasmuch as it demands from its devotees adhesion to beliefs which cannot possibly be verified by reason. . . . Theosophy in fact substitutes for the positivism of modern science, which has been so fruitful in results, mysticism and intuitionism, which as John Stuart Mill has pointed out, whether in religion or philosophy, have been the great obstacles to progress. The two theories of man's place in Nature are antagonistic, and cannot be accepted by those who, above all, desire to rest their minds on a well-reasoned and coherent system of thought. When present in the same mind the history of the Secular and the Theosophist ideas will repeat the history of the Kilkenny cats—they will devour each other to the tails."

THE *Manchester Sunday Chronicle* pokes fun at the Theosophic doctrine of re-incarnation. Now that heaven and hell are getting played out, it hopes that Mrs. Besant will bring the swells and capitalists to her way of thinking. Mr. Stanhope and the Duke of Cambridge might be taught to believe that they will be re-incarnated as Balacava heroes begging for a crust, and the Queen that she will reappear as "the proprietress of a laundry and flat-iron rink at the East-end."

THE Vicar of All Saints, Battersea, having last Sunday preached on the boys who were drowned on Saturday offered their friends the consolation that they were good Christians. The *Star* says "They had better have been good swimmers."

When the railway line from Rustchuk to Varna was first established the Turkish peasantry thus accounted for it. They said the English had caught a devil and put it in the engine mounted on wheels, and the carriages were propelled by means of this devil whose sufferings were from time to time mitigated by giving it cold water.

Sir Charles Bowen tells a story of a nameless American town. The town contained three places of worship. All three were crowded Sunday mornings with worshippers. One Sunday, however, the devout people of the three churches found the pulpits empty, and they dispersed without hearing the sermon. The explanation was given by a fun-loving young lady who had addressed to the clergyman an anonymous note, containing this sentence: "Fly; all is discovered." They fled.

THE MERCY OF PRIESTS.

A STORY OF "THE GOOD OLD TIMES."

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

CONCLUDED—IV.

You may imagine that such language, so different from what was expected, did not fail to astonish those devout personages. Like a plantation of young trees bent under a sudden gust, all the heads, with wide-open mouths, were thrown back in a confusion of uplifted arms; the monks themselves, opining that the Devil was in the well, took to their heels; but this one's foot caught in that one's frock—so great was their haste—and they fell upon one another, striking their noses on the paving-stones. Even the venerable Benignus Spagnuolo, although he remained standing, could not maintain the countenance which becomes an ecclesiastic in presence of the greatest perils. One would have deemed him fever-stricken, his limbs trembled so; his face was livid like that of a corpse; his very nose had paled were such a thing possible. Indeed, recollecting his vision, he was persuaded that this was a fresh trick of Lucifer, and doubtless all the devils in hell would sortie from the pit, as the wine-froth from the neck of a bottle.

Meanwhile the voice did not cease, but grew louder and more furious:

"Yes, I tell you so, you liars and assassins. What have you done with the mother? She howls like a chained wolf in the silence of the nights; and your remorseless sleep is so heavy, O well-fed beasts, that even this cry does not waken you. What have you done with the father? For ten years he has splashed in the mud, lower than the roots of the trees, with only one companion, a little bare skull and a skeleton bitten by rats. You, however, fat and full of ease, and red with health, enjoy yourselves, like roysterers playing dice on corpses or the groaning bodies of wounded men. But now your crimes shall be revealed, like the thief's leprosy when his dress is rent, since I who am sworn never to lie, I speak from the bottom of the well and tell the truth!"

Hearing this, the abbey vassals thought the firmament would crash upon their heads or the earth open under their knees; for it was impossible that Saint Gorgon would tolerate such outrages on his worthy servants, without showing his wrath in some catastrophe. But Benignus Spagnuolo, being a shrewd man, gradually regained his courage. "This voice," he thought, "is a man's, and not a devil's." Some facetious heretic must have concealed himself in the well to injure the good monks. The best thing to do was to throw upon the speaker all the stones of the mouth of the well, seeing that the most resolute babblers, when their heads and backs are broken, soon cease to gabble.

"My brethren," cried the abbot, like a general haranguing his army, "whether it be Satan or one of his imps who defames us, such a great offence shall not go without chastisement. Everyone to the well! Tear off the stones, and fill up the hole whence issues this accursed voice!"

Scarcely was the order given when all ran forward together—monks, tradespeople, artisans, and laborers—for fear easily passes into rage—and certainly, in return for his free speech, the truth-teller would soon have been broken, crushed, and flattened, like a weasel under the stone of a trap.

But suddenly, as they shook the stones, a man bleeding from his arms, hands, and legs through climbing up the wall, bounded out of the well with a great shout; and, upright, with his feet upon the stonework, naked, dishevelled, superb, Peter the Truthful regarded the crowd with such an air that they fell back as before the apparition of an archangel.

"Brute beasts!" he cried to the people, "are you then dogs whom the foxes teach how to bite, and will you defend those who abuse you by stoning those who are incapable of deceit? What these men are I have told you, and I will repeat it. It is by your misery that they are rich, by your weakness that they are strong, by your leanness that they grow fat. For whom sow you, peasants? For whom do you traffic, merchants? For whom do you work, artisans? For them, not for yourselves. What do you possess which does not belong to them? They steal your bread, they beg your money; they caress your wives and daughters; you kiss on your pallets the leavings of their cells! You toil and moil in hunger and thirst in order that they may strut in idleness stuffed like sacred swine who subsist on pious offerings. As for their prayers, if God hears them he despises them, these liars with lucre-soiled hands and greasy mouths;

better were it to be recommended to the divine justice by praying hyenas, with clasped paws, and mouths still stinking with their filthy meat."

If anything could add to the wrath of Benignus Spagnuolo it was this impudent discourse.

"No quarter!" he yelled; "all the wretch's blood cannot wash the abbey of this sacrilege!"

He had not finished before Peter, despite a splendid resistance, was seized, flung on the ground, scratched with a hundred nails, bitten by a hundred mouths, like a plucked bird swooped upon by a flock of vultures; and he thought, as he felt the fury of the crowd, that people are very ungrateful to those who do not deceive them.

But amidst all the tumult a sweet voice cried:

"Stop, and take care you do not hurt him."

The speaker was a pretty monk, with a face as fresh as a rose; and as all knew how, for his gentleness and sweet manners, he was dear to the abbot, the most enraged tormentors interrupted their work, asking "What?" with voice and gesture, not knowing what to do.

"Go on!" cried Benignus Spagnuolo, whose fury had not subsided.

But the little monk, having drawn him aside, said: "Good father, it is my desire that the madman should be spared."

"And why, I pray?" the abbot asked, softening a little. "Did you not hear? . . ."

"I heard, certainly, but hearing does not prevent one from seeing."

"Well, you see a naked man!"

"Exactly," said the monk in a burst of laughter, "and you will admit, I think, that the young fellow is admirably fashioned. No monk or abbot ever had so white a skin."

"What of that?"

"Much of that! Rely on it, if he is ill-treated, I shall bear you a long grudge; I may even go and sojourn in the Benedictine convent at Avignon, whose prior has often pressed me to visit him."

The menace had something in it which greatly troubled the venerable Benignus Spagnuolo, for lowering his head he said graciously:

"No, no, do not go! I will do as you bid whatever it cost me."

Then, turning to the crowd, he declared that he had reflected, that God willed not the death of the worst sinners, that the best plan was to leave the wretch, resigning to heaven, which judges us all, the chastisement of such arrogance.

In the twinkling of an eye Peter de Pierrefeu was upon his feet. In sooth he was delighted to escape such a peril, and fearing that the abbot might repent his clemency, he was about to pack off as fast as possible, when the idea came into his head to thank the pretty monk to whom he owed his safety.

"Pretty youth," he said. . .

He did not finish the phrase, but opened his eyes wide, and distended his nostrils like a gourmand who sniffs a well-cooked fat quail on a dish. As some with subtle noses will say in the darkness "There is a rose here," Peter had not failed to detect a woman under the monk's frock.

"Pretty youth," he resumed, "nay, but rather pretty maiden. . ."

He stopped again, thinking of what might happen if he irritated the abbot of Saint-Gorgon with a fresh indiscretion. But he remembered his oath.

"Yes, pretty maiden, rather," he finished in a burst of laughter. "And I could not wish a better chorister to say the mass of love!"

The abbot grew so red that his nose seemed to have over-spread his face. Verily the case was grave; the proclamation of the presence, in the Abbey of Saint-Gorgon, of a handsome girl, was calculated to injure the fine reputation of the monks and their worthy prior. Already the curious had approached, gazing on the pretty monk, who, very much disconcerted, pulled the cowl over his eyes, and drew back under the frock his too-small feet.

"Brethren," cried Benignus to his troop of monks, "no mercy for the blasphemer who persists in his falsehoods! Carry him into the chapel, and let him be judged and sentenced according to the enormity of his crimes!"

Quicker done than said, Peter the Truthful was lifted and carried through the crowd by the obedient monks, and the doors closed behind them.

[Here the episode ends. The rest of the story is of no special interest to our readers.—EDITOR.]

THE THEOLOGICAL CAULDRON.

A PARODY ON ACT IV., SCENE I., "MACBETH."

Dramatis Personæ: Three demons of darkness.—The Devil's Grandmother.**SCENE**: The infernal regions; in the middle a boiling cauldron.—Thunder.—Enter three demons of darkness.**FIRST DEMON**: Thrice old Balaam's ass hath brayed,**SECOND DEMON**: Thrice and once the serpent hissed,**THIRD DEMON**: Satan yells: 'Tis time, 'tis time;**FIRST DEMON**: Round about the cauldron go,
In the poisoned entrails throw;
Great Jehovah's wrathful froth—
Which will do to start our broth—
Blood of Jesus, half a gill,
Certain cure for every ill;
Kidneys of the holy ghost,
Scamp who (c)harm'd St. Mary most,
All the triune godhead's rot
Boil the first i' the charmed pot;
ALL: Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.**SECOND DEMON**: Adam's navel, Eva's tongue,
Done with lectures short and long;
Little skunk from Noah's ark,
Lice from Egypt caught i' the dark;
Brimstone from Gomorrah's plain,
Fingers of the first-born slain,
Lump of salt from Lot's wife's arm
Adds perfection to our charm;
Quail and manna, tempting, sweet
Which the Jews refused to eat;
Skull of Moses, fairly sound,
Which Old Nick at last has found;
Tears of wretched Job, laid low,
Which Mephisto caused to flow;
Blubber cut from Jonah's whale,
And from Abraham's ram, the tail;
For a charm of powerful trouble
Like a hellbroth boil and bubble,
ALL: Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.**THIRD DEMON**: Tripe from stomachs of the swine
Which we drove into the brine;
Root of fig-tree, bare and bad,
Cursed by Christ when he was mad;
Dried up fish-tail from the place
Where five thousand once said grace;
Murderer's scalp, who tired of vice,
Went with Christ to paradise;
Hand that wrote upon the wall,
And the Duke of Alva's gall;
Crooked nose of wandering Jew,
Spittle of the "chosen few,"
Frog and toad from Irish bog,
Which St. Patrick sent agog;
Bladder of St. Antony,
Toes of popes kissed reverently,
Bits o' skin from monk and nun
Who on earth had lots of fun—
Fan away the awful smell
With a wing of Gabriel—
Add thereto a deacon's chawdron
For the ingredients of our cauldron.
ALL: Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.**SECOND DEMON**: Cool it now with Calvin's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good,

[Enter the Devil's Grandmother, speaking to the three demons.]

Well, you are gentlemen, every inch of it,
Though born and bred i' the brimstone pit;
My grandson wished me to come and see
'Bout this theological potpourri,
Your master, indeed, has his hands quite full,
For business is brisk, though it never was dull;
Just now he is gaining many recruits
From theological institutes,
As well as in churches of every color—
Thanks to dear Darwin and the almighty dollar,My blessings upon you! And now, my boys,
After our labors come pleasures and joys,
So now about the cauldron sing,
Like elves and fairies, in a ring
Enchanting all that you put in.Music and a song: "Black spirits and white," etc. The Demons dance and then vanish with the Devil's Grandmother.
H. L. HARLKE (*Freethought*).

MIRACLES.

We do not know of what denomination the Rev. Walter Lloyd is, who contributes an article on Miracles to the current number of the *Westminster Review*, but he is certainly a very broad rationalist. He does not say outright that the belief in miracles is a superstition, but it is a pretty fair inference from what he does say. Mr Lloyd takes in turn the arguments in defence of miracles urged by Cardinal Newman, Archbishop Trench and Dr. Samuel Cox, and has little difficulty in showing the disagreements and inconsistencies of these various defences. The Catholic believes in the continuance of miracles. "What has happened once may happen again" says Newman, a claim neither Trench nor Cox seem prepared to allow. To Trench diabolical and demonical interference rest on as good authority, as divine. Dæmonology is inseparable from a belief in miracles, and if one is not prepared to accept it entire, it is impossible to find a place for miracles in the supernatural economy. Yet the supposed interference of demons with the course of nature is the merest assumption, as the origin of tempests, earthquakes, pestilences, diseases, and the phenomena of "possession" can be explained by natural causes.

Mr Lloyd incidentally remarks that "the only rational way of coming to an understanding of the historical books of the Old Testament is by accepting the fact that they were written in their present form long after the events related had occurred and that a religious and sometimes supernatural coloring was given to them in accordance with the prevailing spirit of the time." Mr. Lloyd examines at some length the defences of the miraculous set up by Dr. Cox, and shows that the ground on which miracles are defended is constantly shifting though it can hardly be said that the objections have altered. Mr Lloyd dismisses the arguments as to possibility. He says "The question is not what might have happened, but what did happen. Whether miracles are antecedently impossible or incredible is a matter of opinion, but whether they actually occurred is a matter for proof. There can be no doubt about the facts of matter, life, and consciousness; but there are all sorts of doubts whether Aaron's rod changed into a serpent, whether the iron axe-head ever floated, or whether the water was instantaneously converted into wine."

An examination of the Old Testament miracles shows they do not differ from similar legends told among other barbarous peoples. In answer to the argument for the Christian miracles on the ground that it was not a credulous age, Mr. Lloyd says: "Admit it was a sceptical age, it does not follow that those who recorded the miracles had imbibed the sceptical spirit. The age of Voltaire was a sceptical age, yet it was during it the alleged miracles occurred at the tomb of Abbé Paris." This is a sceptical age, but many nineteenth century miracles find acceptance with large numbers of people. Marvels happen to the credulous in all ages.

JOSEPH SYMES.

WE regret to notice that our brave and earnest friend and co-worker, Joseph Symes (of Melbourne) has been ill. We can see from the *Liberator* that he does work enough for three men, and the Freethinkers of that city really ought to see if they cannot spare him for a holiday. Of course he has been lied about, but that is nothing out of the common. Here is how he nails down the last lie:—

"I have been informed during the last few days that a young Wesleyan minister once interviewed me and heard me say I once was in the right way, alluding, as I understand, to my past religious life. I am further informed that this falsehood has done duty in one or two Wesleyan pulpits, no doubt to the edification of the faithful.

"Now the whole of this story is as rank a lie as ever was told. I have never supposed I was in the right way when a Wesleyan since the time I left. Had I supposed so, there was no conceivable motive for leaving it. I have never sup-

posed myself in the wrong way since I have been what I now am. If I did, there is no conceivable reason why I should not forsake it at once. Do people imagine, that, if I believed in a God, and in heaven and hell, and that the course I now pursue would land me in endless blazes, I should go on as I do? They give me credit for more courage than I possess. Let those lying, paltry story-tellers take the trouble to show me that I am wrong, and I have moral courage enough to thank them and to change my conduct accordingly. Let the silly fib-mongers convert me; and then I will go to the Hall of Science, tell my friends there what has taken place, tell them I have tacked about, and advise them to do the same. Come, come! who amongst the godly crew, who are so ready to lie for the glory of God, will be equally ready to essay my conversion?

"If they think I am wrong, going to Hell, and leading so many hundreds of others thither, they must be the most paltry set of cowards living, or else the most horrid set of fiends, not to try to convert me."

"Here have I been nearly a fortnight confined to the house and my chair almost, by illness. What a grand opportunity for the saints and the holy ghost! Neither he nor they have come. No one has brought me a pious tract, nor has the holy ghost sent or brought a bit or a drop or whiff of his grave."

"There, confound their stupidity! do they think I would write like that, if I thought the holy ghost would damn me for it! My settled belief is that the holy ghost is a figment, and his agents rank impostors one and all, though some of them are too young, too stupid or too pious to know it. So long as I am of this opinion the salvation-mongers won't get much quarter from me. Still, I do wish they would leave

off telling lies. Well, well! that is too much to expect. If all lying were dropt, no christian sermon would ever be preached again, nor christian tract circulated—the whole apparatus and machine of the gospel would stop short, never to go again; for christianity is a parcel of lies from end to end."

THE SMALL BOY WANTS NO MORE STUFFING.

The small boy had been only a day or two at the kindergarten when he approached his father, showing a great deal of indignation.

"Papa, that isn't a good school. I don't want to go to that school any more."

"Why, my boy?"

"Well do you know what the boys at that school say?"

"What?"

"Well, papa, they say there ain't any Santa Claus; that it's not true; there ain't any such thing. Papa, there is a Santa Claus, isn't there?"

The father thought a moment. Then he concluded to tell the child the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So he took him on his knee and told him how it was a pretty fabrication made up by fathers and mothers who love their children to make them happy, and the fathers and mothers were the real Santa Claus. The small boy listened in silence. This was a shock to him because I suppose, like older and more inexcusable people, he felt he had been making a painful exhibition of his ignorance. He slid down from his father's knee and walked across the room to the door. He opened it and stood holding the knob for a moment in a kind of deep thought. Then he turned and looked at his father.

"Say, papa, have you been filling me up about the devil, too?"—*San Francisco Chronicle.*

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