

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



BOOTH'S WEEK OF SELF-DENIAL.

(1) As he should be at the finish.

(2) As he was at the finish.

MR. CONYBEARE, M.P., ON ATHEISM.

Dear Mr. Conybeare—It is some years since we first met, and much has happened in the interval. You have become a comparatively rich man and a member of Parliament. Not satisfied with this honor and its exacting duties, you crowned the edifice of your greatness by obtaining a seat on the London School Board. I am still pursuing my humble career as a lecturer and a journalist. Yet I enjoy one signal advantage. I speak my own thought and echo no man's. I think for myself on the most profound and vital questions, I express my views in the frankest manner, and thousands of people do me the honor of listening to me. It may sound strange to you, but I am perfectly sincere in saying that I would not exchange this position of honesty and usefulness for any seat in the House of Commons.

You have, indeed, earned distinction as a prisoner for liberty in Ireland. I honor your courage, but I was unable to shed a tear over your sufferings. Three months' imprisonment as a first-class misdemeanant did not strike me as an afflicting sentence. I could not help observing that as much noise was

made over it as possible, and considering the notoriety it brought you I thought it might turn out a profitable investment. Had I been an ordinary citizen, totally ignorant of prison life, I daresay I should have been more impressed by your calamity. But you may remember—and, if not, you will pardon me for reminding you—that I have been a prisoner for liberty in England. My sentence was twelve months instead of three, and I was dressed in prison clothes, fed on prison fare, and subjected to every prison indignity. It is very natural, therefore, that I should not be so dreadfully impressed by some recent martyrdoms. I respect every man who suffers for principle, but I cannot shout "Prodigious! Unparalleled!" at every hero of the minute. Experience, you know, brings discrimination, and saves us from imposture and surprise.

Let me recur to our first meeting. It was at Mr. Storey's chambers in Northumberland Street. We were both on the Executive of the People's League, with which Mr. Labouchere and Sir Wilfrid Lawson were connected. I was a pretty regular attendant—more so, I think, than yourself; and I spoke at our great St. James's Hall meeting, when you had the

honor of proposing a vote of thanks to the chairman. Perhaps you forget that I sat on the Council as a representative of the National Secular Society. Such was the fact, however, and you will see presently my reason for mentioning it.

During the London School Board contest I was unable to give you my support, although I am an elector in the Finsbury division. You forsook the good old Radical programme of free and *secular* education, and resorted to the paltry subterfuge of *unsectarian* education. I did my best, therefore, to secure the return of Mr. Hubert Bland, who polled a very respectable number of votes. You gained the seat, and I kept my principles; and if you are satisfied, I have no reason for regret.

In the early part of this year I met you at the annual dinner of the Metropolitan Radical Federation. I represent the National Secular Society on the Council of that body, and I am a not inactive member of its Executive. Had you looked upon the festive scene with *my* eyes, you would have seen a large number of Freethinkers. I will not specify names, but if you take the trouble to inquire of some of my colleagues you will find that nearly every active worker on the Federation is tainted with religious heresy.

Some time afterwards I met you on a Committee appointed by the advanced Clubs and Societies in London to consider the question of Trafalgar Square. The Committee included Mrs. Besant, who was at that time an Atheist, and with the single exception of yourself, I am not aware of a single member who could be honestly called a Christian.

When you were imprisoned the Radical Federation called a demonstration of protest in Hyde Park. I attended at considerable inconvenience, and spoke to a very large gathering against the imbecile injustice of your sentence.

Before I come to the point of this letter a few other facts must be brought to your notice. History, you know, is a very large subject, and I will not dwell on the fact that Freethinkers have been conspicuous as social and political reformers. I will simply remind you that Grote and Mill, who guided and inspired the old school of Philosophical Radicalism, were pronounced unbelievers. But even this, you may say, is history; so I will bring you down to our own time, and I will confine myself to the one question of Ireland. Long before you were known to the world Mr. Bradlaugh wrote and spoke in favor of justice to that unhappy country. In my humbler way I espoused her cause, and an article of mine, advocating Home Rule, appeared in *Progress* before Mr. Gladstone took up the question. Some years earlier, when England was startled by the Phoenix Park murders, I went out of my way to write in the *Freethinker* (May 14, 1882) on the subject. The article was on "Mr. Gladstone's Duty," and I quote a few appropriate sentences.

"Many people cry out that Ireland should at once be put under martial law; in other words, they demand a stronger dose of the wrong remedy. . . . Where is the use of more coercion when what we have has so signally failed? Where is the use of persevering with a remedy which does not in the least touch the grievance we wish to redress? Let the Government be armed with ample powers against secret societies, but let the constitutional rights of the Irish people be respected. Above all, let not the guilt of a few villains be charged against a whole people. We do not, in these columns, frequently meddle with politics; but in a crisis like this our duty is clear. Freethinkers should oppose themselves to the momentary madness. They must show regard for the permanent interests of humanity. They must resist any attempt to gag, oppress, and imprison a nation."

Freethinkers did their best in the spirit of these words, on which I look back with a pardonable pride. But the popular madness was too strong, and the Christian statesman (Mr. Foster) had his way.

You, my dear Mr. Conybeare, are not the only Englishman who has suffered imprisonment in Ireland. A *bonâ fide* English working man was one of the first to suffer. I refer to Mr. H. Snelling, a member of the National Secular Society. Mr. Ben Ellis, another working man, who went over as a delegate of the Radical Federation with Mr. Neiss, and who risked imprisonment though he happily escaped it, is also an avowed Secularist. If I may speak of myself again, I may add that I was one of the Committee of eighteen, which organised that magnificent reception of Mr. T. D. Sullivan when he came to London after his imprisonment at Tullamore. One of the Irish Tory papers made capital out of the fact that I stood by his side in Hyde Park.

Imagine my astonishment, then, on reading the following passage in your recent speech at Redruth, as reported in the *Western Daily Mercury*:

"In conclusion he said: Mr. Balfour has chosen in his *atheistical* policy—for a policy which depends upon butchery and murder can be called nothing but *atheistical*—to trample the Divine commands of Christ under his feet. He has substituted for that command of the Decalogue 'Thou shalt do no murder' the telegraphic command to his subordinates in Ireland 'Do not hesitate to shoot'; and for that other command 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor' the command 'Do not hesitate to lie.' As he has acted on these *atheistical* precepts, and as, at this moment, noble heroes like William O'Brien and others are languishing in gaol through the perjured testimony given by the constabulary in Ireland, and scores of innocent Irishmen have been done to death, shot down mercilessly in obedience to his commands, it is all the more imperative to go over and sacrifice, if need be, freedom and life itself to show that we will not, without a struggle, give up the heritage of liberty handed down to us from our ancestors, nor allow the fair fame of our country to be stained by the obliteration of every Christian consideration, and the substitution of a policy which is *atheistic* and devilish."

The most merciful view I can take of this rhodomontade is that you hardly knew what you were saying. I should be sorry to think you were currying favor with a Methodist population by deliberately libelling Atheists and Atheism. Every reader of the first part of my letter will see the utter absurdity of your remarks, and I fancy you must feel compunction yourself when you read your own slanders in cold blood.

It is very kind of you to make Atheists a present of Mr. Balfour, but the gentleman is not at your disposal. He anticipated your generosity by appearing at the Church Congress in Manchester, and reading a paper against the Religion of Humanity. I have his paper in book form; it betrays more ability than I think you possess; at any rate, it is the utterance of an uncompromising Christian.

May I ask you to give me your authority for asserting that Atheism is a gospel of butchery and murder? It is easy to make rash assertions in Cornwall. Are you prepared to substantiate them in London? I should be loth to regard you as a reckless libeller, so I ask you to explain. I will also ask you whether it requires any courage to insult an unpopular party. Freethinkers are outlawed, they are incapable of holding any corporate property, they are liable to contumely in courts of law, and even to imprisonment for their opinions. For a long time they have been seeking redress, and you assist them by holding them up to hatred and contempt in a political speech in your own constituency. Is this honest, is it manly, is it wise? I believe every honorable man will answer in the negative, and I trust, for your own sake, that you will withdraw your expressions. For the Freethought party I do not appeal. It bows to no one, and knows how to defend its honor.

Yours faithfully,

G. W. FOOTE.

THE DISTINCTIVE TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY.

NOTHING is more common than for Christians to invest their blessed God and Savior with the thought and character of a European gentleman of the nineteenth century, and to ascribe to him the credit of all the improvements that the world has seen from the first century of the Christian era to our own. How false is this claim is at once seen if we endeavor to separate in Christianity that which is distinctive and peculiar to itself, from that which it holds in common with other religions. It is often said, for instance, that Christianity teaches the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Without staying to question the assertion (although Jesus said to those who believed on him, "Ye are of your father, the devil,") it is sufficient to point out that these doctrines were commonplaces of the Stoics from Cleanthes to Marcus Aurelius. Again, it is said that Christianity brought immortality to light, although this doctrine had been taught ages before by the Egyptians. The golden rule, too, is claimed as Christian, though it was previously expressed by Confucius and Mencius in China, and by many Greek sages. The doctrine of forgiveness of injuries is also claimed as peculiarly Christian, though it was taught before by Lao-tse and Gautama Buddha. There is, however, an exaggeration of this doctrine which probably may be fairly claimed as peculiarly Christian. It is not easy to find such an assertion as "Resist not evil" in the teachings of any moralist. Most persons, indeed, who have reflected at all on human conduct, have seen that the prime duty of man is resistance to evil in every shape and form, to contend against it daily and hourly by example as well as by law, since it is only this constant resistance to evil which prevents mankind from being overwhelmed by it. This distinctive doctrine of Christianity is then a grave error which the experience of the world forces it to reject.

Another distinctive teaching of early Christianity, and one which accounts for much of its impractical morality, is the doctrine of the near approach of the end of the world. Jesus is described as, in the plainest manner, prophesying that this event should happen within the lifetime of the then existing generation, and this belief explains the early community of goods among the Christians, the doctrine of taking no thought for the morrow, selling all and giving to the poor, and many other items which Christians constantly preach but never think of practising.

In the face of the increasing knowledge of pre-existing religious teachers and moralists, it is becoming customary with a considerable section of Christian defenders to say that their religion is solely centered in the person and the character of Jesus, and it is this which constitutes its distinctive feature, separating it from all other faiths. Now, apart from the evidence afforded by the different characters ascribed to Jesus in the different gospels, proving that the character is an ideal, it must be said that the ideal is not the one which commends itself to every one in the present age. Prof. Newman, with praiseworthy courage, has spoken out on this matter and given plenty of reason for disagreeing with the view that Jesus, as represented in the Gospels, was a perfect moral character.

Mr. Voysey, too, although he sometimes speaks in high praise of certain of the teachings of Jesus, yet says, "Looking at Christ as a man and a teacher of religion, I must confess that I have never met with a more signal example of dogmatism, presumption and conceit." In the Gospels, he assumes the air of one immeasurably superior to ordinary mortals; and when his authority is challenged, he scornfully refuses to give any answer or proof. He distinctly places

himself between God and men, and declares that no one can come unto the Father but by him. He calls himself the way, the truth, and the life, and, contrasting himself with the other teachers and prophets, he says, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." Such claims, as even some of the orthodox will urge, are difficult to explain, on any other hypothesis than that of mental derangement.

Jesus moreover stands alone among the great founders of religion in making eternal punishment a characteristic and essential feature in his teachings. Buddhists and Brahmins had both taught that there were hells, or rather purgatories, of future punishment; but in their doctrine there was no eternity of torment. In Buddhism every state is bound to change until Nirvana is reached; while the Bhagvat Gita of the Brahmin distinctly declares that no one who does any good goes entirely to a wicked place. Yet, according to the Gospels, Jesus speaks of punishment as everlasting in the same breath with his speaking of eternal life. He divides men into two classes, the saved and the lost, and declares that "Many are called but few chosen." He places, moreover, salvation in faith, and declares, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." A more immoral doctrine or one more pernicious in its influence upon human conduct it would certainly be difficult to parallel.

The distinctive doctrines of Christianity then, those which differentiate it from the other great faiths of the world, are those which Christians themselves are becoming anxious to get rid of. In the effort to rid themselves of beliefs no longer in harmony with the intelligence and conscience of man, they are, however, obliged to throw away the very essentials of Christianity, its distinctive doctrines by which it must be judged and condemned.

J. M. WHEELER.

ROBERT PORTER.

On Friday, Oct. 18, this veteran Freethinker died at his residence, Montpelier Cottage, Beeston, Notts, after fifteen weeks of painful illness. Starting life devoid of education, as a ploughboy on 2s. 6d. per week, he succeeded in raising himself by persistent study and indomitable perseverance into a scholar worthy of the friendship of Mr. Spencer, his son Herbert Spencer, Harriett Martineau and the leaders of Freethought and philosophy a generation ago. In the village of Beeston, with which he has all his life been associated, many are the advantages that were due to his efforts. He was the first to introduce newspapers there, and the laying of gas was mainly through his influence on the Local Board. He was an uncompromising Atheist and an ardent Malthusian, ever ready to discuss and disseminate the opinions he held to be true. Fond of "blasphemy," he always relished the Comic Sketches in the *Freethinker*, often buying extra numbers for distribution. He was very unmerciful to the "black army," being at great trouble to compile statistics proving their morality to be lower than any other professional class. He was a familiar figure at Conferences of the Freethought party, and although so ill as scarce able to walk, he journeyed to London in May last, his sole object being to propose the President for re-election. Ever jovial, always ready with a witticism, joke, yarn or song, Robert Porter's company was enjoyed and appreciated wherever prejudice and bigotry had no footing. A quiet, earnest worker in the cause of Progress, he is one whose influence will exert itself long after his name may be forgotten.—A. R. ARKEY.

Christianity boasts of procuring men a happiness unknown to preceding ages. It is true, the Greeks know not the divine rights of tyrants and usurpers. Under paganism, it never entered the head of any man to suppose that it was against the will of heaven for a nation to defend themselves against a ferocious beast, who had the audacity to lay waste their possessions. The religion of the Christians was the first that screened tyrants from danger, by laying down as a principle that the people must renounce the legitimate defence of themselves.—*D'Holbach*.

ACID DROPS.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes comes out very badly in his correspondence with the chairman of the Royal Aquarium. He declared at the St. James's Hall meeting, amid vociferous cheers, that "He had undoubted evidence that a young girl who recently visited the Aquarium with her father had placed in her hand a card asking her to accept the escort of a gentleman on leaving the place." Anyone but a blind fanatic would see that such a story was absurd on the very face of it. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Hughes shuffles out of his untenable position. "Recently" was "two years ago," the "father" has faded away into a "friend," and all the rest of the pious yarn turns out to be equally authentic. This friend of purity does not scruple to circulate the most infamous libels in order to put down places which successfully compete with the gospel shops. We are glad to see there is a prospect of his having to prove his words or pay for them in a court of law.

Mr. Hughes is just as scrupulous with regard to Free-thought. Some time ago he reported the conversion of a noted Bradlaughite, and when he was tackled on the subject he had nothing to say for himself. Since then he has written a long "true story" of a converted infidel in the *Methodist Times*. Many Freethinkers have written to him for information, but he puts them off with the paltriest evasions. Our opinion of Mr. Hughes is that he is a shallow enthusiast, with one eye on the main chance and the other on notoriety, and not very particular as to the means he employs to promote "the glory of God."

During the "week of self denial" recently undergone by the Salvation Army, "General" Booth gave up a private residence at Hadley Wood, for which the rent was £120 per annum, and purchased a house and grounds at Potters Bar for £4,000. Rare self denial this!

Elizabeth Tickett, Job Gill, Christian Gill and James Tickett are charged with burglary and the receipt of stolen goods at Battersea. Each of them has a Bible first-name, and has had, it is to be presumed, a religious training.

A full-blooded Maori patriarch named Nganah, of Te-Aute pah, was asked his opinion of missionaries. He thus expressed himself: "Missionary very good man, yes, very good man—for himself. He hold one hand up to the sky; you look up, then he collar your land, your crop, your horse, cow, and pig with the other. Oh, missionary very good man."

Some of the advertisements in the religious press are a caution. A lady requires an accomplished governess, but she can give no salary, because her husband's vestments are very costly, so she offers "a comfortable home, washing, and Church privileges." Another audacious flea-skinner requires a finishing governess, who is thorough mistress of French, German, music, singing, and drawing, and she has the inconceivable effrontery to offer £12 a year, as she "cannot afford more, having a son at college," but she can promise "full Church privileges." Another wants a lady help, who is to be a proficient in all work and in many accomplishments, and she is offered £10 a year and the inevitable "Church privileges," which it is really too postposterous to hold out as a bait.

The Rev. Ambrose Jones, of Ruthin, was called as a witness in a kissing case, but refused to be sworn, because his conscientious scruples would not permit him to take an oath on a New Testament printed in any other language than Welsh. The papers cruelly express a suspicion that he had more reasons for not testifying than his Anglo-phobia.

The Rev. G. W. James is a Californian man of God of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who stands charged with sleeping with his children's nurse and threatening to murder his own wife. Although employed to watch against the wiles of Satan, the tempter proved too many for him.

A Catholic priest named Father John J. Boyle is charged at Raleigh, North Carolina, with a rape upon Geneva

Whitaker, a young Catholic girl of that city. It is suspected that these things happen more often than the public are ever aware of.

Another man of God who calls for sympathy from the elect, is the Rev. Chas. Woodruff, pastor at Boyleston, Indiana, who has eloped with Mrs. Louisa Calvert, the wife of a well-to-do farmer. The Rev. Woodruff leaves a wife and five children to the care of the Lord.

The Rev. John Huges of Castleton, has taken his solemn affidavit that there has never been any impropriety between himself and Kate McKenna. The Middlesborough magistrates, however, have come to the conclusion that he is the father of her illegitimate bairn, and ordered him to pay five shillings a week for sixteen years.

Henry Maude is five pounds poorer than he was a week ago. He went to St. Peter's church, Elgin Avenue, on Sunday evening, and having taken too much wine or something for his stomach's sake he felt the spirit move him at the same time as the parson, whom he ordered to "shut up." For this little ebullition the magistrate fined him five pounds. He knows now that only one kind of spirit is allowed in church, except on Communion Sunday, when the two spirits go amicably together.

Christian charity again! A man entered a church at Llantrissant somewhat the worse for drink. He was pushed out, and falling against a tombstone he received a fatal injury. Evidently the sheep do not waste much love on the goats, and the tender mercies of Jahveh and his worshippers are very much alike.

An inquiry into the charities of the parish of Mitcham, Surrey, which are administered by the parsons and churchwardens, shows that many charities left to the poor have been applied to religious and not charitable objects. Thus Fenning's charity, left to the poor, has been paid to Scripture readers, mothers' meetings, etc. Other charities, providing considerable sums for the poor who have not received parish relief, have been given to the members of the church clothing club, etc; while one sum of five pounds yearly left to the poor has never been disbursed or accounted for. The committee give a very mild report that the parson and churchwardens have not exercised proper supervision. The truth is, there is scarcely a place in England where the charities do not require overhauling through their having been extensively used as buttresses to the Church.

David Gilmour's *Pen Folk*, now in its third edition, tells a story of a Scotch mother who gave her minister this "dig in the ribs" with respect to the good old doctrine of infant damnation:—"Could I believe that my faithlessness prevents the entrance o' my wee, sinless lamb into the Redeemer's kingdom, I wadna ever bend a knee nor ca' him Father."

Dr. McPhail, of Glasgow, is going out as a missionary to India. Before leaving he received a characteristic Scotch testimonial—a Bible and £80. "Carry neither scrip nor purse" is an obsolete text. Jesus Christ did not look ahead to the days of ocean steamers and expensive berths.

The Bishop of Salisbury is a rare old Churchman. He says he will not allow a Board School to be introduced in the city while he has a penny in his pocket. But he forgot to say of whose money. As a rule, bigots are fond of indulging their passion at other peoples expense.

A young woman hurried to service at St. Peter's Church, Colchester. After the second lesson she coughed violently, blood gushed from her mouth and nostrils, and she died in less than a minute. The poor young woman went to church once too often.

At the Conference of the Catholic Truth Society, a paper on popular infidelity was read by Mr. H. Cotterell, who declared that artisan objections to religions were usually learned by vote from Secularists, lecturers at the Hall of Science, or from tracts of the Ingersoll type, or publications like the *Freethinker*. "With the lowest class," says Mr. Cotterell, "who go so far as to deny the existence of God and soul, it is almost useless to argue." Perhaps the

gentleman writes from the depths of a personal experience and has been worsted in an encounter with "the lowest class" for he goes on to declare that "Primarily the cause of the prevalent unbelief is the natural depravity of man, who, wishing things not to be true, is easily persuaded to disbelieve or deny them." On wicked sinners of this kind argument is thrown away. Nothing but the grace of God can save them and probably even He will let them go their own course to everlasting damnation.

Canon Baker declared, at a recent Temperance meeting, that "he used to believe in original sin, but now he believed in original goodness, the native impulses of an unspoiled heart." This, of course, is creditable to the Canon's feelings; but, on the other hand, it is a sad reflection on his orthodoxy. As a matter of fact, he is paid to teach the doctrine of original sin, and if he disbelieves it his proper place is outside the Church.

A few weeks ago the Primitive Methodists of Middleton-Teesdale felt a pious desire to glorify the Lord with a "pie supper" and a dramatic performance of "A Love Feast in Heaven." This free-and-easy title offended the more sensitive Christians, who poured out their souls in the local paper, and brought upon themselves the retort courteous. The correspondence shows the Christians of that part as a remarkably happy family. Not only do they accuse each other of "outrage," but they are at sixes-and-sevens over every point of their belief in regard to heaven, when they will get there, and what will happen when they do. It appears to us that J. C. is wanted once more to explain his explanation.

The Rev. Chas. Llewelyn Ivens is reported as giving a sermon "to men only" at Christ Church, Sowerby Bridge. From the goody-goody character of the discourse we should have imagined it was intended for children only. Mr. Ivens took as his subject, "Friends: good and bad." "O be careful how you choose your friends," says the man of God, with much wisdom, and he went on to give some specific advice. "Do not make a friend of the cynic," and, "Lastly, don't make a friend of the man who denies the truth of the Christian religion." Mr. Ivens, of course, implies that such a person is certain to prove disreputable and immoral. He does not venture to say outright that sceptics are all bad, but only drops his grandmotherly advice not to consort with them. May we not suspect that his advice springs more out of regard for his hearers' faith than their character? Friendship with unbelievers is pretty sure to lead to unbelief, just because familiar intercourse proves that they are just as good fathers, husbands, citizens, and friends as the worshippers of religion.

The advice of the Rev. C. L. Ivens is the utterance of a bigot who sees danger to his own faith should any of his flock make the acquaintance of the unbelieving. It is sheer bigotry; but it is none the less good Christian doctrine. "Hath Christ any fellowship with Belial?" asks St. Paul; and St. John expressly says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house neither bid him God speed" (2 John, 10).

Dr. Barnardo is a 'cute old file. Having been brought to book in the *Star*, he gets one of his friends to write a long letter to that journal, winding up by charging it with "alienating all true friends of Christianity." We presume a true friend of Christianity is one who subscribes handsomely and asks no questions.

Another hurricane and flood in Japan has caused the destruction of 328 houses and the loss of 400 lives. The captain of a Portuguese gunboat states that for a distance of ninety miles along the coast the vessel passed through masses of floating debris and dead bodies, and that the sight was truly appalling. There were trunks of bodies without limbs, and bodies of little children who had been tied to trees, probably in the hope that they might survive the flood. The fishermen of the province of Mikala were engaged in recovering the bodies and burying them. Altogether some 15,000 lives have been lost and nearly 10,000 houses wrecked by the recent typhoons in Japan. God is good, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Isaiah Kybert is a devout Christian who takes his direc-

tions straight from the Lord. He was charged at Croydon with going to the communion table of a chapel without being a member. Mrs. Kybert said that when her husband came home he complained of the treatment he had been subjected to in chapel, and explained that the deacons told him that they would give him one more chance to go home to his wife and family. His answer was, "Christ is more to me than my wife and family."—The Mayor: There are plenty of vacant seats in other churches. Why does he go there?—Mrs. Kybert: My husband studies the word of God more than a great many do, and he asks the Lord to direct him where to go.—The Mayor: Such people only bring religion into contempt. Mr. Kybert was fined one pound and costs for following the Lord's directions.

A worthy deacon in a town not far from Warrington gave notice at a prayer meeting the other night of a church meeting that was to be held immediately after, and unconsciously added:—"There is no objection to the female brethren remaining." This reminds us of a clergyman who told in his sermon one Sunday of a very affecting scene, when "there wasn't a dry tear in the house."

Jesus Christ does not appear on the ordinary stage, though he does appear in the Oberammergau Passion Play every year. But perhaps his day is coming. Meanwhile it is worth noting that the new play of "Mahomet" is causing a rumpus in Paris. It is not yet produced, but the arrangements are far advanced, and the Turkish Ambassador has lodged a strong protest with the French Government against such "blasphemy" as the bringing of the great prophet of Islam on the stage. The government does not seem to know what to do. It wishes, of course, to conciliate the Turk; but how can it stop the play? Here is a clear case for a miracle. Allah should assert himself, and paralyse the blasphemers.

Wonders will never cease. There is actually a Middlesex Hospital Prayer Union. The president, Mr. Hulke, is chief surgeon of the hospital, and Mr. Pearce-Gould, a vice-president, is the dean. Of course the students are pressed to join this mongrel Union, and we dare say the pressure is strong enough to develop a considerable amount of hypocrisy.

We call it a mongrel Union, and so it is. What connection is there between prayer and medicine? If the former is efficacious, the latter is a fraud. Working the two together, on the half-profits system, is simple humbug.

King Asa of old sought after the physicians in his illness, and the indignant Jahveh settled his hash for doing so. Yet here are the latter-day friends of Jahveh marrying religion and physic together like an innocent and loving couple.

The Rev. R. H. Hadden, the new vicar of St. Botolph, Aldgate, declines to follow the example of his predecessor, who allowed the church to be used for the attempted conversion of the Jews. "It will satisfy me," he says, "if all the Christians in the parish become good Christians, and all the Jews good Jews." Very good, Mr. Hadden; but why, then, did Jesus Christ take all that trouble to start a new religion, if Judaism is good enough?

The *Saturday Review* has an article on "Nonsensical Books." Chief of these it places *The Secret Doctrine*, by Madame Blavatsky, which it calls "sheer, absolute, unadulterated nonsense." Other works included in the same category are *The Influence of the Stars* and *A Handbook of Chiromancy, Fortune-telling and Occult Divination*, also published in first-class style, proving the existence of superstition among the wealthy.

A religious paper thus attempts to describe the new-old superstition: "Theosophy is not a new stove-polish, or a splendid discovery how to save mangling, but a new religion, or rather a hash-up of a lot of ancient delusions or impostures. How to make the spiritual soup called Theosophy: Take a few Buddhists, add Spiritualists to taste, put in as many Freethinkers as you please, flavor with Sanscrit and Aryan, sprinkle with Chinese, serve up hot with Hindoos and Orientals generally, and you have a splendid dish of Theosophy."

A Theosophic tract on Re-incarnation says: "A perfect man must have experienced every type of earthly relation and duty, every phase of desire, affection and passion, etc." This looks like saying everyone must be, or must have been, everything that is vile as well as everything that is noble. The new old savage faith seems to be accompanied by the new old savage morality.

The Utah commission is slowly diminishing the practice of polygamy, but as the Mormon church will not formally renounce an institution it believes to be founded on divine authority, the territory is still refused admittance to the Union.

The American Adventists advertise a meeting at a place with the appropriate name of Screamer ville, Virginia, to meet the Lord who is expected to descend from heaven with a shout on Oct. 22nd. Some of the faithful who intend to go to Screamer ville will not even purchase return tickets, as they fully expect the world's affairs will then be wound up and themselves taken up in the air to heaven, together with their tardy savior.

A writer in the American Microscopical Journal calls attention to what seems to be a real danger in connection with the kissing of the Bible in courts of law. "The lips," he says, "are most sensitive to the reception of disease-germs, and from the motley throng of dirty and diseased person who appear in court what infectious germs may not be obtained through this medium of distribution? It would be interesting for microscopists to examine such greasy and worn backs of court Bibles as they can have access to, and to report the kinds and amounts of bacteria found thereon."

Passenger (to tram-car conductor): "Do you ever go to church, young man?" Conductor: "No, sir; but I always get a load of people coming from church every Sunday morning, so I know all about the sermon. A good many poor sermons preached nowadays, sir."

The *Newcastle Leader* is very wroth at being charged with "burking" reports of Freethought meetings. The editor denies the charge, and loses his temper. He says the Freethinkers are far more intolerant than the Christians, at any rate between the Humber and the Tweed. We suppose he includes Jarrow, where no hall can be obtained for a Freethought lecture, and where a clergyman withdrew his support from the Mechanics' Institute because Mr. Foote was allowed to deliver a political lecture there.

We are glad to see that Mr. Joseph Brown and other correspondents have ably written on the Freethought side in the *Leader*. They stick to their guns, and do not withdraw the charge of editorial neglect. Perhaps the *Leader* will do better in future. Anyhow, Freethought will go on and prosper. It has made its way hitherto against a conspiracy of silence, and it will continue to do so if necessary.

Someone—we suspect the author—has sent us a pamphlet entitled *Why am I a Christian?* by the Rev. John Parker, who hails from Boulogne. Mr. Parker is very far gone on prophecy, but we hope there is no immediate cause of alarm to his friends.

Our neighbor, Missionary Smith of Clerkenwell, invites the public to hear about "the three L's—Light, Life, and Love." Nothing about the other L that used to have such a lurid influence on popular religion. Oh no, we never mention it.

Poor Signor Pecci is more dissatisfied than ever with his condition. To the deputation of French pilgrims who recently visited Rome he urged the necessity of a restoration of the temporal power. Everywhere he is striving to stir the Catholic population to this end, regardless of the fact that the temporal power can only be restored at the cost of a war. Similarly, by having his allocution on the Bruno celebration read in every diocese, he is doing his best to make Catholics hate Freethinkers even worse than they do at present. The Pope recognises that if the Bruno statue remains up, he will eventually have to come down, and he cannot be expected to relish the prospect.

"Orange" Kane has been preaching a thanksgiving sermon, and telling the congregation that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Well, there can be no doubt that "Orange" Kane is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He simply repeats all the old nonsense we some time ago refuted, and all the old lies we challenged him to substantiate. If anything, he is rather worse than before; for this time he talks about the sanguinary infidelity of Robespierre, who was a friend to religion, and who actually got up a festival in honor of the Supreme Being. Really "Orange" Kane should go to school again, and learn the elementary facts of history.

The Bishop of Lincoln seems to us entirely right in his difference with the Grimsby Town Council. They invited him to "dedicate" their new cemetery, in company with ministers of other denominations, and he replied that he was ready to "consecrate" it, but did not understand what they meant by "dedication." They will therefore dispense with the Bishop's services, and so far so good. But regarded intellectually, he is in the right, and they have not a single leg to stand on. Consecration is a religious ceremony, which can only be performed by a gentleman who possesses the Holy Ghost; while dedication is nothing more than an opening ceremony, without any religious significance. If the cemetery be not consecrated, we fail to see why the ministers of religion should be asked to officiate any more than the undertakers.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has delivered himself of a charge on "poverty, temperance, purity, and lay work." He calls upon the clergy to save England from its growing corruption. Well now, with respect to temperance at least, the Archbishop must have spoken with his tongue in his cheek. His Grace, the Bishop of Winchester, and the Dean of York are the trustees for £20,000 worth of shares in the Worthington Brewery, held on behalf of the Clergy Mutual Assurance Company. The president of this company is the Bishop of London, and the chairman the Dean of Westminster, while the directors include the Archdeacon of Bath, Canon Blackley, the Dean of Bristol, the Archdeacon of Durham, the Dean of Exeter, Canon Grey, the Archdeacon of Llandaff, Canon Lonsdale, the Archdeacon of Norfolk, Canon Prothero, the Dean of York, Canon Elison, who is president of the Church of England Temperance Society, and Prebendary Wace, who insists on calling Professor Huxley an "infidel."

Dr. John Hall, minister of the congregation at New York, where J. Gould and other noted financiers worship, is said to be the richest clergyman in the world. His salary is £5,000 a year, but he denies the statement that it is made up by gifts to £20,000. Even the later sum should not be sufficient for a man of God who condescends to incur the awful responsibility of looking after the souls of such wealthy people.

The American sky-pilots are denouncing the practice of having funerals on Sunday. They should arrange with their heavenly Father that no deaths should happen except at the beginning of the week.

The proclamation of the new King of Portugal, after speaking of the tolerance of his late Father, Dom Luis, expresses his determination to maintain the Roman Catholic Religion. We do not know how he will reconcile this with tolerance, but we are glad to know there is a strong body of Freethinkers in Portugal whom it will be dangerous to interfere with.

The keen, fresh air and the sunlight sweet
Dispel each weary, feverish mood;
With glad some heart and footstep fleet
The pastor, treading the sunny street,
Murmurs with unctious, "God is good."

But the tramp, as he leaves his haystack bed,
And feels the hunger within him swell,
Goes through his clothes without finding a red,
Solemnly waggles his shaggy head,
And mutters sadly, "It's cold as sheol!"

Young ladies should not forget that Goliath died from the effects of a bang on his forehead.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, October 27, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, at 7.30, "Is there a God?"

Nov. 3, Birmingham; 4, Raunds; 10, Camberwell; 17, Hall of Science, London; 24, Huddersfield.

Dec. 1, Camberwell; 8, Nottingham; 15, Portsmouth; 22, Milton Hall, London; 29, Hall of Science, London.

Jan. 5 and 12, Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

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

A. W. J.—Our opinion on phrenology is not that of a specialist. We certainly don't believe in the science of bumps; but it seems to be a fact that special parts of the brain are connected with special functions. This, however, is a very intricate study, and is not to be settled by feeling round a man's skull. You would probably find Bastian's *Brain as the Organ of Mind* a serviceable book.

JOSEPH BROWN.—The correspondence is sure to do good. See paragraphs.

T. W. SMITH.—Glad to hear from you as one of our converts, and to learn that you show your gratitude by promoting our circulation. Mr. Forder, the N. S. S. secretary, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C., will be happy to enrol you a member. We have handed him your letter.

LEONARD JOSEPH.—Mr. Ball takes the responsibility for the opinions expressed in his signed articles. You will see on reflection the impossibility of our accepting every challenge sent us to discuss Atheism. We are always ready to meet a representative man. At the same time, if you send a brief paper against Atheism, it shall be inserted if its merit is sufficient.

W. POWELL.—It is easy for Christian speakers to say "John Burns is not a Freethinker." He *was* a Freethinker; that is certain; and we are not aware of any change in his views. Christians were not so ready to claim John Burns when he was comparatively obscure.

R. J. STIGGELS.—Your letter has gone in the waste basket. You should write to Colney Hatch.

A. BARNETT.—"The Parson's Idol" has for years been included in our Freethinker Tracts. Kind friends send us a copy about once a month. We beg them to note that their labor is superfluous.

H. CALASCA.—Our letter to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes seems to have "caught on." Of course we sent him a copy. Thanks for cuttings.

A. C. G.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. R. ATKY.—We are not surprised to hear of Mr. Porter's death. His age was a ripe one, and he looked broken when we saw him in London in June. He was a brave Freethinker. The world will always be the better for such a man having lived in it.

QUIZ.—An article on Isaiah liii., by Mr. Wheeler, appeared in the *Freethinker* for April 5, 1885. His contention is that the prophecy refers to the people of Israel spoken of in chap. xlv., 1, as "Jacob, my servant; and Israel whom I have chosen" (see also xlv., 4; xlix., 3). There are many particulars which cannot be applied to Jesus.

J. H.—The best translations of the Apocryphal books is in T. and T. Clarke's *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, but it is by no means complete.

B. HARRIS.—It is absurd to ask us to disprove the existence of ghosts. Read Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, or Clodd's cheaper work on *Myths and Dreams*. There is a vast body of evidence on the subject. Tylor's book gave Darwin himself a new view as to the origin of religion. See Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God*, under the head of "Animism."

UNDERGRAD.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

DOLPH.—Rather too long.

J. RANDALL.—By request of the Committee, Mr. Foote will lecture against Theosophy at Camberwell on November 10. Mr. Foote's view of the relation of Mrs. Besant's new opinions to her old ones is given in *Secularism and Theosophy*.

H. ROWDEN.—There is no first-rate Freethought journal in France, nor much need for one, as many of the leading Paris journals

contain Freethought articles from time to time. We see the *Star* and the *Christian World*.

A. Z.—The Bible passages referred to by Mr. Foote in his article "The Parsons and Smut" are the following: Gen. xxxviii., 13—27; Judges xix.; 1 Sam. xviii., 25—27; 2 Sam. vi., 14—16, 20—23; Gen. xxviii., 7—9; xxxix., 7—20; Exodus xxxiii., 23; Ezek. xxiii., 1—44. Other passages may be found in *The Bible Handbook*, Part IV.

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.—Liberty—Open Court—Chat—Bulletin des Sommaires—Le Danton—Seafaring—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker—Freethought—Twentieth Century—La Raison—Sowerby Bridge Chronicle—Light—Halifax Guardian—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags-Blatt—Freeman's Journal—Lichtfreund—Fritänkaren—Consett Guardian—Liberator—Menschenthum.

SUGAR PLUMS.

DESPITE the wretched weather there was a capital audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "New Views of Hell." Several questions were asked, but there was no discussion. The audience was distressed to hear of Mr. Bradlaugh's illness, and gave Mr. Foote leave to express to our President its hope that he would speedily recover. We are afraid Mr. Bradlaugh has been overworking himself. He will probably have to economise his strength in future. There is plenty of life left in him, but, alas, he is not so young as he was.

IN his lecture Mr. Foote referred to the presence in the hall of a Spanish gentleman, Señor Don Adolfo de Maglia, who on the fourteenth of June was condemned to six years' imprisonment and a fine of 4,000 francs for writing on the occasion of the Giordano Bruno celebration an article which was condemned as an injury to the Pope and the Catholic religion. Señor Maglia obtained permission to return home in order to raise money for the payment of his fine. He, however, disguised himself, while a friend procured for him a passport in a false name, and while the officials were waiting for the fine was on his way to the frontier to take part at the Paris Congress as secretary for the Spanish Freethought associations. Señor Maglia is a gentleman of intelligence, an ardent Freethinker, and altogether too valuable a person for his life to be snuffed out for six years on account of an article. After a short stay in England he will take up his abode in Italy.

MR. FOOTE lectures this evening (October 27) at Milton Hall, London, on "Is there a God?" It is some time since he visited this hall, and we hope our readers in the district will give the lecture publicity. Those who intend coming might try to bring some of their orthodox friends.

THERE was an awkward piece of bad printing on p. 307 of the *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. The sheet has been printed afresh. Purchasers of Part X. can return it to Mr. Forder, and if they write their addresses on the inside he will send them a perfect copy in exchange.

THE N. S. S. Organisation, of which Mr. Foote is chairman, is losing no time in trying to set the Secular house in order. One Branch, the Central London, has been wound up as no longer necessary in the altered condition of Freethought in the metropolis, where so many Branches are now carrying on the work in various parts. Effete Branches will be renovated or dissolved in other places. Mr. Forder, the general secretary, has been instructed to go to Bristol, and convene a meeting of the Secularists there for the purpose of reforming the old Branch or starting a new one. He will visit Bristol on Sunday, November 3. Further particulars will be given in due course.

THE Organisation Committee has also resolved to see what can be done to reorganise Secularism in the Leeds district. Mr. Forder will spend three or four days there as soon as the necessary arrangements can be completed.

MEMBERS of the Central London Branch are requested to notice that the Branch is *now dissolved*. Those who live within reasonable distance of any other London Branch should transfer their support. Those who do not should send their subscriptions direct to Mr. Forder.

WE have received the *Bulletin du Congrès des Libres Penseurs a Paris en, 1889*, containing the report of the recent International Conference. As might be expected, there are a few mistakes in foreign names, etc., but the document is nevertheless of interest in connection with the longest and probably the best attended International Congress yet held. It may be procured for 4d. from E. Pasquier, 6 Rue de Jarente, Paris.

THE Voluntary Schools of London are fast giving way before the School Boards. In 1879 they provided accommodation for 271,314 children; in 1889 they provided for 262,270, while the average attendance during the latter period had declined to 164,321. In several districts Church schools have been relinquished, it being found that the instruction given by the Board is both cheaper and better.

MESSRS PEARSON AND CO., autograph dealers, of Pall Mall, advertise a two-page letter of Thomas Paine to Mr. J. Fellows, New York, dated 1805, for which the price asked is ten guineas. This is high as autographs go, and shows that Paine is held in esteem, but the same firm also advertise an unpublished letter by Shelley at fifty guineas.

MESSRS L. K. WASHBURN and Ernest Mendum being the new conductors of the *Boston Investigator, Secular Thought*, of Toronto, perpetrates the following "goak": "What the new editorial staff of the *Boston Investigator* may be expected to do with theological doctrines—wash, burn, and mend 'em."

Secular Thought contains an able address to the members of the Canadian Secular Union from their newly appointed president, Captain Robert C. Adams, author of *Pioneer Pith* and other able anti-theological brochures. Captain Adams says: "The presentation of something better is the easiest method of reform. If there are only two Secularists in a place let them meet on Sunday and read some instructive literature. As their numbers grow let music, debate, declamation, and pleasant diversion add to the charm of social gathering, which is now the chief attraction of the Church. Gather in the young people to agreeable and profitable classes for entertainment and instruction, and see that the boys who are heroic enough to leave the Church are not deprived of the joy of seeing the girls home from meeting. So weak is the hold of religion upon the people that, if the pleasures of association which the Church provides could be had elsewhere on Sunday, multitudes would leave its dreary services to enjoy rational entertainment."

INGERSOLL'S *Social Salvation* has been out of print for some time. We have just printed a fresh supply, and we recommend it again as a capital lay sermon—a good deal better than the Sermon on the Mount. It is a first-rate pamphlet to put into the hands of an orthodox person, to let him see the spirit in which Freethinkers approach the social question.

THE manual of morals, apart from religion, for which the American Secular Union, through its president, Dr. R. B. Westbrook, offers a prize of one thousand dollars, is to be not merely a code of morals, but a reading book for schools with familiar illustrations of the principles which underlie sound morality. The manual should not contain less than 60,000 words or more than 100,000, and the manuscript should be in type writing or legibly written, with a special mark, and the name of the author in a sealed envelope. Writers of all nations are invited to join in the contest. Dr. Westbrook's address is 1,707 Oxford Street, Philadelphia.

THE Oxhill Branch, only recently started in a colliery district, is now over thirty strong. It has bought a good supply of literature, which can be obtained of Mr. J. White.

THE little band of Freethinkers at Gibraltar send us their best thanks for our previous notices. They have received a large bundle of *Freethinkers* from Berlin, another from Sevenoaks, and a copy of Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses* from God knows where, for all of which they are grateful.

Next September the battalion will be in England, and the "saints" intend to pay us a visit.

THE *Truthseeker* (New York) reprints the greater part of our report of the International Freethought Congress at Paris. We learn from this exchange that Mr. Watson Heston, the *Truthseeker* artist, has had a bad attack of heart disease, but is happily better. Mr. Charles Watts is also recovering from blood poisoning.

TICKETS can now be had for the Richard Carlile birthday party at Camberwell on December 8. They are 1s. each, and any profit will accrue to the London Secular Federation.

MR. J. B. COPPOCK is conducting Evening Science Classes at the Camberwell Secular Hall. The subjects are Inorganic Chemistry and Geology. The fee for the full course, ending in May, is only 2s. 6d. We hope the classes will be well attended. They are held on Friday Evenings.

BLACKBURN Secularists are waking up. They hold a first meeting this afternoon (Oct. 27) in their new premises, Cort Street, near the Market Place, at 2.30. Further meetings will be held on all following Sundays. Freethinkers in the district are earnestly invited to attend.

MR. CHARLES A. H. TUTHILL, in a little book on *The Origin and Development of Christian Dogmas*, published by Kegan, Paul, Trench, and Co., says: "Within the last half century Christianity has declined considerably; Thought and culture have broken loose from it. Fifty years ago the vast majority of the men of letters and science of Europe professed some form of it; now only a small minority do so; and even this minority is steadily growing smaller. We might predict with almost absolute certainty that fifty years hence hardly a single believer in dogmatic Christianity will be found among the leading men of European literature and science. Christianity is dying at the top." (p. 161).

Mind for October contains an article on mental activity from the pen of Dr. Edmund Montgomery, who is notable as a gentleman who boldly takes the position that there is not only no evidence of a God, but evidence to the contrary.

CAPTAIN FFOUNDES, who is a traveller, and has become a Buddhist without becoming a Theosophist, is giving lectures under the auspices of a Buddhist Propagation Society in which it is said the Buddhists of Ceylon and Japan take much interest.

THE Australasian Secular Friendly Society's balance-sheet is a cheerful document, though it deals to some extent with sickness, deaths, and funerals. The expenses of management are wonderfully slight, and there is a handsome balance of over £200 in hand.

SIR SPENCER WELLS fluttered the dovescotes at the Church House during a discussion on burial reform. He declared that perishable coffins were really worse than imperishable ones, and that cremation was the only clean and sensible method of disposing of the dead. Of course the pious meeting was rather horrified, though it is difficult to understand why Christians should object to cremating bodies, most of which are to be cremated everlastingly by-and-bye.

THEISM.

One of the chief arguments in support of Theism is the universality of belief in God. We reply: Ignorance is almost universal, and the effect of knowledge is always to remove God farther away. Where knowledge ends, God begins; and the more ignorant a man is the nearer he brings God in connection with present events. The explanation of phenomena by the untaught is, "God did it;" but science finds immediate natural causes, and now has put God away back of the conception of the plan of evolution. The inference is that as God continually recedes before the advance of knowledge, he will reach a vanishing point.—*Robert C. Adams in Pioneer Pith.*

THE CONVERSION OF PAUL.

CHRISTIANITY, like other superstitions, in order to exist requires to be bolstered up by supernatural miracles and juggleries. All miracles on examination can be explained on natural and rational grounds, unless they are outrageous and absurd falsehoods, in which case they prove themselves to be untrue.

Amongst these latter may be mentioned the fable of Christ feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes. The power to conceive such an act is a credit to the human imagination and might make the fortune of a romancist; but to expect people to believe that it ever happened is an insult to the human reason, and the expectation will only be entertained by lunatics, old women like Spurgeon, and professional blasphemers like Talmage, Sam Jones and Co.

On reading these fantastic fables one is inclined to think that had Matthew the Tax-grabber, Mark the Muddler, Luke the Quack and John the Ranter lived at the present day they would have devoted their attention to writing penny dreadfuls and shilling shockers.

The conversion of Paul was by far the most important impetus that was given to Christianity after Christ's own preaching. It is scarcely exaggerating to say that, had it not been for Paul's conversion, Christianity might have flickered up for a short time and then died, just as Mormonism and Shakerism have had their day, and are now rapidly expiring; or it might ultimately have become a third sect of the Jews, living amicably beside Pharisaism and Sadduceism. In support of this contention it may be pointed out that of the peoples of the world Christianity has been adopted as a national creed by the European section of the Aryan family only; that Christianity has failed to make any headway in Asia, even amongst the Hindoos, the second branch of the Aryan family, for they prefer to buy their Bread of Life from the two baking firms of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and Buddha and Co.

To understand fully Paul's sudden conversion and the doctrines which he subsequently preached, a review of his early life is indispensable. Paul, or, as he was at that time called, Saul, was born at Tarsus, the capital of Cappadocia, a wealthy Roman province in Asia Minor; we have no information as to the reason why he changed his name, but in all probability he adopted the name Paul, a common Latin cognomen, as it would sound less foreign in Roman ears, a frequent custom amongst strangers who came to reside under Roman rule.

By birth and education he was much superior to his brother apostles, his father being a Pharisee and a Roman citizen. The citizenship was obtained either by purchase or as a reward for meritorious services. As the Romans governed their colonies pretty much the same as the East India Company governed Hindostan, the possession of the Roman citizenship was no mean privilege.

It may have been conferred on Paul's grandfather by the Emperor Tiberius for services rendered during the troubles with Archelaus, the last King of Cappadocia. Paul availed himself of this privilege on two occasions; firstly, when preaching at Philippi, in order to gain his liberty after being flogged and imprisoned without a trial, although, had he mentioned that he was a Roman citizen, he would have saved himself from the scourging, it being illegal to flog a Roman or to imprison him without a trial; secondly, at Jerusalem, when he was brought before the chief captain for creating an uproar, his appeal this time result in his being sent to Rome.

He also on this second occasion availed himself of the advantage of being a Pharisee, acting on his favorite maxim of being all things to all men.

At Tarsus, where he was born, Paul would see and be impressed by the difference between the licentious luxury of the Romans and the temperate simplicity of the Jews, who prided themselves on their strict attachment to the Mosaic code.

According to the custom of the Jews, Paul was taught a trade, that of a tentmaker, before going to Jerusalem to study law; which afterwards proved most useful to him, whilst preaching the gospel in Asia Minor, where the faithful were more distinguished by their piety than by their generosity.

After spending his youth in Tarsus, Paul was sent to Jerusalem to study law under Gamaliel a Jewish teacher. Gamaliel at that time was one of the most eminent expounders of Jewish law, and, like most cultivated men in an advanced age was probably half a sceptic. In Acts v. we

read:—"Then stood there up one in the council a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people," who advised the people to "refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this council or this work be of men it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it lest haply ye be found to fight even against God."

The teaching of a liberal minded and tolerant man like Gamaliel would make Paul less unwilling to adopt Christianity, if anything should occur to convince him of its truth, than if he had been educated under a bigot.

Brought up amongst narrow-minded Pharisees, who were conservative of their old traditions and who abhorred change, of a passionate and fanatical nature, it was not surprising when the new and subversive doctrines of Christianity were preached, that Paul should throw himself with all the zeal and ardor of youth into the work of persecuting the new sect, who wished to overthrow the time-honored institutions, laws and customs of the Jews, and replace them with the untried theories, which were preached by a crazy carpenter, a detested tax-collector, and a few vagabond fisherman.

We see then that Paul was by birth, training and surroundings one of the most bigoted of Pharisees, but that his bigotry was tempered by Gamaliel's semi-scepticism and liberalism. He was in this state of mind when the gospel was preached in the synagogue at Jerusalem by Stephen, who was immediately taken before the high priest and sentenced to be stoned to death. Paul directed the execution, for we read that the young men laid their clothes at his feet preparatory to murdering the impious blasphemer against the law and the prophets. By this act Paul brought himself into prominence as one of the most zealous of the defenders of the old faith.

His next step was to proceed to Damascus, where the Christians were numerous and undisturbed, in order to strike terror into them and annihilate them by means of persecution, imprisonment and death. In this object he was joyfully assisted by the priests—priests in all ages being distinguished by their bigotry, cruelty, illiberalism, and hatred of innovation—who gave him an escort and furnished him with "lettres de cachet," and power to seize any suspects.

But Paul was destined never to harm the Damascus Christians, for on the journey happened his memorable conversion, Acts ix., 3-9: "And as he journeyed he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

According to the Christian legend, we are given to understand that Paul was suddenly struck by God, and that Christ appeared to him and addressed him. Christianity owes so much to Paul that the fact of his conversion being a miracle is contested by no Christian writer. Even Canon Farrar, who is usually above swallowing such rubbish, accepts it as a miracle. But it can easily be explained on natural grounds and shown to be no miracle at all. There can be no doubt but that the miraculous act was a sunstroke; the sudden sensation of being struck with fire and bathed in light, the strange noises and singing in the ears are experienced by all people who have ever suffered from a "coup de soleil." Worn out by the fatigue of his rapid journey to Damascus, and overcome by the heat of the sun and of an excitable temperament, he would easily fall a victim to sunstroke.

The stories of the miracles performed by Christ during his lifetime, and his appearances to his disciples after death, and the recollection of Gamaliel's advice not to harm these men, coupled with the fact that he was struck down whilst proceeding to Damascus to commence a deadly persecution of the new sect there, would place Paul under the hallucination that he was suffering from divine vengeance.

For three days Paul lay ill with fever and delirium, during which the past cruelties he had perpetrated against the followers of Jesus would no doubt appear in his dreams; all of which he would put down to supernatural agency, and not as the result of a disordered and remorseful state of mind, for the supernatural has always had great power over the Orientals. During his delirious ravings, the attendants round his bedside would gather sufficient to see that he was under the belief that Jesus had appeared to him and had

reproached him for his conduct; and being in all probability as superstitious as himself, they would naturally send for the leader of the Christians. This was a man named Ananias.

Ananias, expecting Paul's arrival, and knowing him to be an implacable and unscrupulous foe, would only be too glad to see him in such a condition—when did a Christian not rejoice at an enemy's discomfiture?—and would do his utmost to keep him under the delusion that he had been miraculously converted. For this purpose he informed Paul that Jesus had appeared to him also, and had instructed him to receive Paul into the Church.

Henceforth Paul was the ablest and most vigorous exponent of the new faith—"the second founder of Christianity" Rénan has called him. Christians attempt to refute the statement that their religion would have died out but for Paul, as it would make Christianity the work of men and not of God, a human and not a divine institution.

RATIONALIST.

THE RICH PEW-HOLDER.

Who is that man with lordly mien
And autocratic air,
Who occupies a gorgeous pew
Within the house of prayer,
And looks as if the world was made
For him, the millionaire?

That's Bullion. He's the richest man
Upon the parish roll;
He more than half supports the church,
Which gives him full control.
He hopes by this to make amends
And save his sinful soul.

When any doubtful dogma brings
Contention in the fold,
The rank and file agree with him
And vote as they are told:
They study policy, and don't
Oppose the man of gold.

The pastor preaches in a style,
To suit the rich man's mind:
It wouldn't do to speak too plain
To men of Bullion's kind:
The camel and the needle's eye—
To those he must be blind.

The rich pew-holder rules them all
Because his purse is long;
They cannot think so great a man
Would ever lead them wrong;
They pin their faith on him, and sing
In chorus to his song.

Oh, what a power the wealthy wield
In churches great and small!
Before the shining golden calf
How men and women crawl!
From grace of God to Mammon's pride,
Alas! how great the fall!

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REVIEWS.

Researches in Oriental History. By G. W. BROWN, M.D., Rockford, Illinois. Printed and published by the Author; 1889.—This book is one of the most thorough and learned of the Freethought works that have come across the Atlantic, and may fitly be put on the same shelf with *The Revelations of Anti-Christ*. Both authors have come to the same conclusion in regard to the mythical character of the Christian hero. The major portion of Dr. Brown's researches are, however, occupied with Judaism and Zoroastrianism, upon both of which he holds opinions which, though not generally accepted, he has a good deal to say for. He maintains that there is no clear trace of the Jews before the Babylonish captivity, and that not only the stories in the books of Moses, but those of the fabulously wealthy Solomon, who is said to have built the city of Tadmor in the wilderness, three hundred miles from Jerusalem, are to be set down as mythical. Saul, David and Solomon, if they ever lived, were, he maintains, probably Phœnicians.

The name Jew, Dr. Brown derives from Idumea, and that from Edom or Adam, so that according to this derivation Adam was the great ancestor of the race. He inclines to identify them with the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings, who remained in Egypt until driven out with violence. Most Egyptologists reject this view, which cannot be made to synchronise with the statements of the Bible. Dr. Brown not inaptly compares the flight of the Jews from Egypt into Palestine with the march of the Mormons to Utah, but the last army of the Lord "subsisting by stealing and plundering by the way, but committing no violence to persons, were infinitely superior to the wandering, pillaging, slaughtering nomads of the mountains and deserts turned loose like infuriated savages upon the peaceful cities and cultivated fields of Canaan, which they found literally flowing with milk and honey, and when they made a desolation, in their own choice language, 'leaving nothing alive that breathed.'"

Dr. Brown holds that Zoroastrianism was a principal factor in the formation of both Judaism and Christianity, and that Jewish legends are but a reflex of those found in Assyria. The Essenes, who were probably the immediate "Fathers of Christianity," he takes to have been connected with or influenced by the followers of Zoroaster, and in this he has the strong support of Bishop Lightfoot. But this cannot by any means be considered settled. The orthodox usually hold that the Essenes were of purely Jewish origin, while I have argued (*Progress*, June, 1887) a possible connection with Buddhism. Be this as it may, Dr. Brown shows that the Messianic idea and other features of Christianity had place in the Persian religion, and that in many respects Christianity is an amalgam of pre-existent systems. We welcome his work as a serious contribution to the elucidation of a difficult question.—J. M. W.

The Spirit of the Matterhorn. By Lord Queensbury. London: Watts and Co.—Written thirteen years ago, and soon afterwards printed, Lord Queensbury's poem is now re-issued in a brochure, with a dedication to the Peers of Scotland who ostracise him on account of his heresy. According to the preface, his lordship does not deny the existence of God, and is therefore not so black as he has been painted. He believes in "an Inscrutable," which we hope the orthodox will find consoling, despite the fact that his lordship believes the Soul to be a product of the Body, and to have no existence apart from it. Of the poem itself it is rather late in the day to speak, except to say it is a wonderful performance for a sporting nobleman, and a striking sign of the philosophy of Evolution even in the most unexpected quarters.

The Agnostic Annual, 1890. Edited by CHARLES WATTS. London: Stewart and Co. (6d.)—This annual is handsomely got up and a good sixpennyworth. Mr. Samuel Laing opens with a paper on Agnosticism and Immortality, declaring that if he must give a verdict on the question of a future life he must say "No," but, like a true Scotchman, he prefers to say "Not proven." Dr. Hardwick's article on Moses is learned but far-fetched. Mrs. Lynn Linton's article is brave and eloquent. Other articles by Constance Naden, J. Wilson, Dr. Bithell, B. Russell, F. J. Gould, and G. F. Underhill, are worth reading. Poetry is represented by Joseph Ellis, W. S. Ross, and W. B. McTaggart.

SWINDLING BY SHAM JESUITS.

A swindling firm of sham Jesuits has lately been brought to justice at Le Mans. These sharpers were six in number, including the wife of the organiser and manager of the "perambulating monastery," a fellow called Théodore Fréville. Théodore gave himself out as a "Jesuit Father," who had unbounded influence at the Vatican, and was the agent of the Superior-General of the Society in France. His wife was passed off as a "Holy Sister," and their companions were all represented as Jesuits in minor orders, but great men in their Society. Funds poured in for church-building and other objects, and the coffers of the sham soul-savers were replete. From an old priest—who at least ought to have known better than to believe their tales—they obtained 15,000fr. (or £600); while, by promising to get the name of honest bucolic *bonhomme* named Joubert on the "Golden Book" kept by Pope Leo the Tenth in the Vatican, they received from this person another round sum of money. After having raised their funds, the firm established a peculiar business, which was compounded of Mysticism and Immorality, Piety, and Pornography. They stocked their shop-window with prayer-books, beads, scapulars, crucifixes, and statuettes of sacred personages, while inside they kept the vilest literary productions which emanate from the printing presses. This traffic was soon discovered, and the sham Jesuits were arrested. Tréville, the leader of the gang, and his chief accomplice were condemned to five years' penal servitude; the others, including the "Holy Sister," receiving shorter terms of imprisonment.

PROFANE JOKES.

My mother was trying to console a poor old cottager on his death-bed by describing to him the happiness of heaven. His reply, however, proved that she had failed. "Ah! well, ma'am," he said, "mabbe it's very nice, but I think I'd rayther be somewhere where I could dig a bit and sich."

"My friend," said a solemn man, "have you ever done aught to make the commnity in which you live the better for your living in it?" "I have done much, sir," replied the other humbly, "to purify the homes of my fellow-beings." "Ah," continued the solemn man, with a pleased look, "you distribute tracts?" "No, I clean carpets."

A clergyman, who owns a farm, found his ploughman sitting on his plough resting his horses. Clergyman: "John, wouldn't it be a good plan for you to have a scythe here and be cutting a few bushes along the fences while the horses are resting a short time?" "Yes, sir," said John, "and wadn't it be weel for you ta hav a tub o' tatties in the poopit, and, when the folk were singin', peel them awhile to be ready for the pat?"

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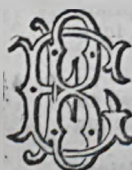
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