

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MR. BRADLAUGH RESIGNS.

THE possibility of Mr. Bradlaugh's resigning the presidency of the National Secular Society has been apparent for a considerable time. When he was re-elected, at the last Conference, he threw out a very broad hint that the Society would have to find another leader. Since then his determination has been precipitated by illness. Mr. Bradlaugh has written a letter to the Executive, announcing his intention to resign immediately on his return from India. We could wish it otherwise, but we understand that his resolution must be regarded as definitive and unalterable.

It would be idle to blink the importance of this event, but it comes upon us too suddenly for a calm and impartial view of the situation. Next week we shall devote a special article to the subject. Meanwhile we beg the Freethought party not to be depressed. The loss of Mr. Bradlaugh is a very great one, but no man is absolutely indispensable. The Freethought movement is one of ideas, and not of personality. It has survived many many previous losses, and it will probably survive this one, although the blow could hardly have fallen at a more unfortunate moment.

On Wednesday evening a special meeting of the Executive was held at the Hall of Science, Mr. Foote, a vice-president, being in the chair. Mr. Bradlaugh's letter was read by the Secretary, to whom it was addressed. He desired a special members' meeting to be called for an early Sunday in February, so that he might state his imperative reasons for resigning. He assigns no reason at present, but we believe he has practically to make a choice between political and Secular work, and he elects the parliamentary career.

After a good deal of discussion, but all very friendly, the following resolutions were carried:—

"(1) The Executive of the National Secular Society receives the notice of Mr. Bradlaugh's intention to resign the Presidency with the deepest regret. It feels itself to be expressing the universal sentiment of the Freethought party in heartily thanking him for his many years of leadership, and in deploring the great loss that must be entailed by his resignation."

"(2) That a meeting of the members be convened early in February to receive the President's statement."

"(3) That the duties attached to the office of President be discharged until the next annual Conference by the Organisation Committee, the Chairman of that Committee being authorised to sign any documents on behalf of the Executive."

"(4) That copies of these resolutions be sent out by the Secretary to all the Branches."

The Organisation Committee, of which Mr. Foote is the Chairman, had been summoned to meet on the following evening, the second Thursday in the month; and the arrangements for the February meeting were of course left in its hands.

No. 433.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—VII. ON "MIRACLES."

To the Rev. Brownlow Maitland, M.A.
(CONCLUDED.)

I WILL pass in a moment to your "direct evidence of the Christian miracles." But, before I do so, I wish to point out that you have forgotten to deal with, or even to mention, some of the principal antecedent objections to the miraculous. And yet, at least on one occasion, they lay right in your path. Speaking of the unbelieving Jews, who attributed the miracles of Christ to the power of Beelzebub, or were provoked by them into a passionate hatred, you say that "To all of these alike the miracles were real, according to the testimony of the Gospels." Surely the reflection must have occurred to you, while you were writing this sentence, that it was not the custom, in those ages, to dispute *any* body of miracles. Every religion, every sect, had its special supply; and the question at issue was, not which were real, but which were superior. Satanic, as well as divine, miracles are recognised in both the Old and the New Testament. Nor did the primitive Christians, or even the Fathers, ever dream of denying the miracles of Paganism. They ascribed them to the agency of demons, and simply vaunted their own as manifestations of the true God. It is beyond question, therefore, that the belief in miracles—good, bad, or indifferent—was then universal; and extravagant stories derived from an age of such abounding credulity, and gross ignorance of the laws of nature, are antecedently *improbable*. I would also observe that all the New Testament miracles, from the Incarnation to the Ascension, and from the first prodigy of Peter to the last prodigy of Paul, were believed and related by Jews, a race of men famous for their superstition, and laughed at on that account by the Roman satirists. To accept a supernatural story on *their* testimony would be like going to the madhouse for a jury and to the gaol for a judge.

Not only have all religions had their miracles, but the miracles of all religions diminish and finally disappear in the light of science and civilisation. Then we behold the spectacle of a people laughing at the miracles of to-day, and staking their faith on the miracles of yesterday. Distance lends enchantment to the view. But only for a time. In the long run men will argue that miracles *do not* happen, and therefore they *never did*. The student of human culture will see the miraculous in its true perspective, and understand the laws of its birth, development and decay; but the ordinary man, who lives and thinks in the present, will always use it to interpret the past and the future. What happens, did happen; what happens, will happen. Such is his logic, and in the main it is sound. But whether sound or unsound, it cannot be shaken by sermons or apologies.

You say there is a God. Let it be admitted for the sake of argument. The question then arises, *why* did he work miracles in the past? The answer

is, to prove and convince; that is, to prove the doctrine and convince the spectator. But does not the same necessity for the miracles still exist? Is not the doctrine more doubted, and even rejected, than ever? Are not the leading minds, in science and philosophy, outside the fold of faith? Are not the Darwins, Mills, Huxleys, and Spencers as influential as the twelve apostles? Why then are no miracles wrought to convince them? You can only reply that the Age of Miracles is past. Yes, and the Age of Reason has come.

I now come to the only pertinent chapter in your little volume. Even there, however, you cannot refrain from your besetting sin. In the very first paragraph you seek to prejudice the reader's mind in favor of what you desire him to believe. You remark that the miracles of Christianity are "sufficiently probable to be believed on such testimony as in other serious matters would carry conviction with it." The phrase is an artful one, and does credit to your subtlety. You insinuate that miracles are to be judged of like "other serious matters," as though there were no degrees in seriousness, as though the testimony that would convict a man of petty theft would suffice to prove that he raised the dead. Surely you must be aware that the more *wonderful* an allegation is, the more rigorous is the evidence which is required to substantiate it. Suppose, for instance, it were alleged that a dead man had come to life again. Would not the evidence of such an extraordinary occurrence need to be, not only "adequate" but *overwhelming*, before any sensible man would believe it? The testimony of persons who saw him die, and who witnessed his being placed in a tomb, would not suffice. Men have sometimes been thought dead, a doctor has given a certificate, the undertaker has made the coffin, and the "corpse" has revived. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to have positive proof that the man was really dead. On this point the evidence of ordinary observers is utterly worthless. "Even medical evidence," as Huxley says, "unless the physician is a person of unusual knowledge and skill, may have little more value. Unless careful thermometric observation proves that the temperature has sunk below a certain point; unless the cadaveric stiffening of the muscles has become well established; all the ordinary signs of death may be fallacious."

Now I ask you seriously—for these are "serious matters"—whether any miracle of the New Testament was ever subjected to such a scrutiny. According to Hume, there is no miracle in human history which is supported by the amount and kind of evidence that would be requisite to establish it. No one has ever refuted this assertion, and I challenge you to refute it if you can. Set aside the prodigies of other faiths, and take your pick of the miracles of Christianity. Select the Resurrection if you will, and see whether you can produce as much evidence as would gain you a serious hearing in any court of law.

What is your "direct evidence" of the Christian miracles? You begin by passing over the Gospels, on account of "the partial obscurity which is alleged by critics of the modern sceptical school to envelope the date and authorship of these records." You select the four "authentic" epistles of St. Paul as "documents over which no manner of doubt hangs;" and upon these writings of a man who was not an eye-witness of the miracles of Jesus, who hardly refers to any miracle whatever except the Resurrection, and who, with respect to this one, flatly contradicts the Gospels and the Acts—you base the colossal edifice of Christian supernaturalism!

Supposing there is any truth in the Acts, it is incontestable that St. Paul disbelieved the Resurrection *on its merits*. He regarded the followers of Jesus with hatred and contempt. And how was his conversion effected? You audaciously assert that "he was won over to it [Christianity] by irresistible

evidence of its truth." But what is the fact? His conversion occurred on the road to Damascus. And how? Did he sit down and say to himself "Paul, you had better think the matter over; this Jesus may be God, his miracles may be real, his Resurrection a fact, and his disciples the witnesses of truth; ponder the evidence once more, and carefully, before you proceed with your persecutions"? Did he calmly review the whole case, and rise with a conviction that he had been deceived? Nothing of sort. The "irresistible" something which turned the current of his life was not the weight of evidence or the power of argument. It was apparently a miracle or a sunstroke; whatever it was, it was not an operation of reason. To assert, therefore, that he was won over to Christianity by "the irresistible evidence of its truth," is to fly in the face of your own records, and to presume too openly on the mental negligence of your readers.

St. Paul's scepticism before this physical convulsion is neglected in your argument. You simply dwell on his subsequent belief. But is this ingenuous? You describe him as a man of "powerful intellect." How was it, then, that his powerful intellect led him to believe that Christianity was false? Setting aside the miracle, which you cannot assume, as miracles are the question in dispute, what single scrap of fresh evidence was presented to his mind during the rapid process of his conversion? The evidences of the Resurrection remained the same throughout. Before the shock, his unbiassed mind regarded it as fabulous; after the shock, he regarded it as true. But which of these mental states is of the most importance to an unprejudiced inquirer? Assuredly, if you were not arguing in favor of your prepossessions, you would allow that the Resurrection was more damaged by St. Paul's early scepticism than benefited by his later belief.

In any case, St. Paul was not an eye-witness of the Resurrection, and the testimony of eye-witnesses is indispensable. For the rest, I have only to remark that you are ill-advised in claiming those "five hundred of the brethren," many of whom were known to St. Paul as having "seen Jesus alive after his death and burial." The statement is absolutely inconsistent with the Gospels, and especially with the Acts, where we are told (I, 15) that the total number of the brethren, *after the Ascension*, was only "about an hundred and twenty." You cannot expect to take advantage of a point on which your own witnesses flatly contradict each other.

There seems no limit, however, to the assumption of Christian apologists. You not only claim those five hundred brethren, but actually parade them as "hundreds of persons who knew Jesus personally, and went forth at the risk of their lives to testify of his Resurrection," and this in connection with a graphic picture of the sufferings of the early Christians! Again I complain of your disingenuousness. The Christians of the first century must not be credited with the martyrdoms of the second century. With the single exception of Stephen, who lost his life in a religious tumult, as thousands have done since, I defy you to prove that a single witness of the Resurrection, or a single disciple of Jesus Christ, suffered martyrdom. Upon this point the apologists of your faith have systematically deceived their readers. If we reject the fantastic legends of the travels, achievements, and deaths of the twelve apostles, we are compelled to doubt with Gibbon "whether any of those persons who had been witnesses to the miracles of Christ were permitted, beyond the bounds of Palestine, to seal with their blood the truth of their testimony." Your own records prove that the first Christians found the Roman tribunals an assured refuge against their Jewish persecutors. Not until the reign of Nero (A.D. 64), more than thirty years after the Resurrection, did the Christians fall

under the stroke of cruelty; and, as Gibbon is persuaded, the "effect, as well as the cause, of Nero's persecution, were confined to the walls of Rome." The martyr-witnesses of the Resurrection, therefore, are the mere offspring of imposture and credulity.

The fact is, you cannot produce the testimony of a single eye-witness, good, bad, or indifferent. You are unable to trace the Gospels beyond a period "early in the second century," and, although you refer to "a pre-existing narrative," you are unable to tell us what it was, or indeed to assure us that there were not a dozen. Such documents, if they ever existed, which I admit is probable, are irretrievably lost. The four Gospels remain. Two of these do not profess to be the account of eye-witnesses, and the other two—Matthew and John—cannot be so in the light of your argument.

You appear to think that the early Christian writers could not be "weak-minded enthusiasts, open to hallucinations, or carried away by marvellous stories which had no foundation in facts." But why not? Why should they, and they only, be exempt from the common frailty of their age? When cultivated Greeks and Romans were deluded by fables, and a grave Roman historian could relate a public miracle of the emperor Vespasian, is it conceivable that the ignorant and superstitious Galileans should be superior to such weakness? You are ready to ascribe the ecclesiastical miracles to "ignorance, superstition, or craft." But such miracles were unhesitatingly accepted by the very Christian writers you must appeal to in support of the antiquity of your Gospels. Miracles did not cease with the apostles, but continued without interruption. Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, and St. Augustine, all declared that miracles were wrought in their ages. You believe they were all mistaken, and I believe that the first Christians were all mistaken. Honesty is quite consistent with delusion. History shows that the best men have been deceived.

That the Gospels are "free from any marks of conscious embellishment" I will not now dispute. Men who honestly believe in miracles will relate them as matters of fact. The supernatural is only "dished up" when belief is waning. Simple-minded believers, in former ages, were satisfied with the Gospels; but in this age of refined credulity the Gospels have to be manipulated by theological cooks. Hence the ponderous Lives of Christ that are constantly streaming from the press.

You conclude by remarking with regard to miracles that "since the establishment of Christianity, they have, as we believe, ceased to be wrought." By we, of course, you mean Protestants; excluding the Catholics, who form the majority of Christians, and who believe that a stream of miracles has flowed through the history of their Church. But although you hold that miracles have ceased, you hint at the possibility of their resumption. Should some "terrible anti-Christian power" arise to persecute Christianity, and "muster the forces of earth and hell to crush it out of existence," you venture to hope that God will "bare his arm" and come forth to "avenge his own elect." For my part, I smile alike at your fears and hopes. Unbelief will not persecute your Church, but give it fair play, and let it live or die. You need be under no apprehension of Freethought imitating the vile example of Christianity. But, whatever happens, I do not think you will be assisted by miracles. They do not occur in an age of Science and Board Schools. What Schopenhauer said of religions is particularly true of miracles—they require darkness to shine in. Science is daily revealing to us the most marvellous truths, which dwarf the wonders of theology into insignificance. Instead of raising one man from the dead it saves millions of lives; instead of curing one blind man with clay ointment it places ophthalmic hospitals at the service of a myriad

sufferers; instead of feeding a casual crowd, once in a millenium, by the supernatural multiplication of loaves and fishes, it enables us to carry on a gigantic system of commerce, which sustains multitudes who would otherwise be unable to exist; instead of smiting a rock, and calling forth a spring for a single thirsty crowd, it brings a regular supply of water, year after year, to the great cities of our modern civilisation; instead of enabling one man to walk the waves in a tempest, it constructs gigantic ocean steamers that ride the wildest storms, and convey their passengers with comfort and safety across the trackless ocean.

Truth is greater than fiction, and science is mightier than miracle.

G. W. FOOTE.

TALMAGE AND HIS TABERNACLE.

TALMAGE seems almost triumphant over the loss of his Tabernacle. He thinks that "if Satan really did burn that Tabernacle down, as some people say he did, he will find it the poorest job he ever undertook." In his sermon on this "Baptism of Fire," as he calls it, Talmage says:

"I come now, and place both of my feet deep down into the backened ashes of our consumed church, and I cry out with an exhilaration that I never felt since the day of my soul's emancipation, 'Victory! victory! through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

The reason for this exultation is not far to seek. He sees a new Tabernacle arising out of the ashes in greater glory than ever. He sees it "as plainly as though it were already built!" Contributions are to be sent in "from the ends of the earth" till 300,000 dollars are raised to erect the "great monument to the mercy of God." Why the destruction of a church should be considered a "mercy of God" is not easily understood, but it seems probable that Talmage will get the money and that he will have a bigger Tabernacle than ever. He urges young and old to put their soul into this work. He promises the women "benedictions for their dying hour and everlasting rewards" if they will consecrate themselves to this cause. The insurance money is not sufficient to build a church as large as he wants for his voice to fill. He complains that he has been wearing himself out for the last sixteen years in trying to keep his voice in. He believes that "a hundred thousand souls were born" in the old Brooklyn Tabernacle, and he wants more "room" to increase the number by preaching "the glories of Christ and the grandeur of heaven" to larger congregations than ever.

Among these "grandeurs of heaven" the one that strikes him most during his sermon is the assurance that heaven is incombustible. "Heaven never burns down!" and never can burn down. "Fires may sweep through other cities," but Talmage is "glad to know that the new Jerusalem is fireproof." There will be no engines rushing through the streets, and no "cries of fire." Perhaps if the selfish saints *did* raise a cry of fire as they beheld the torments of the lost, and if they dragged fire-engines by thousands through the streets of the holy city to extinguish the flames of hell, one might think better of them.

If heaven never burns, however, earth will. "The fires of the last day," we are warned, "are already kindled in the heart of the earth, but are hidden because God keeps down the hatches—those internal fires will after a while break through the crust, and the plains and the mountains and the seas will be consumed, and the flames will fling their long arms into the skies." Of course we can avoid "all the terrors of a burning world" by helping Christ and Talmage with our hearts and with our purses. A little terrorism is very useful when funds are needed.

Talmage wants a "religion as wide as heaven." Baptists, Episcopalians, Catholics, Methodists, are all to send him funds. "All Christendom" is to help him. To liken his blazing Tabernacle to the "Cross

of Christ" as far as possible, he invents the following: "On the dark day when Jesus died, the lightning struck it from above, and the flames of hell dashed up against it from beneath." The Gospels say nothing of this conflagration of the cross, or of any attempt to burn it either by fire from heaven or from hell. Talmage probably gets his information direct from the Holy Ghost as he wants it.

Talmage in want of money is a strong supporter of universal toleration and brotherhood. He protests that "if all the Brooklyn firemen and all insurance companies should search among those ruins on Schermerhorn Street, they would not find a splinter large as the tip end of the little finger marked with bigotry." He says he "cannot be a sectarian." The appeal which he has issued is "to all denominations, to all creeds, and those of no creed at all." Believers and unbelievers alike are to come to his rescue. After the virulent slander and abuse which he has poured upon unbelief in the past he now turns to the leprous abomination for help. So wide are his sympathies, so grand his universal toleration and brotherhood, when it comes to collecting cash.

Various congregations have placed their churches at Talmage's service, their friendliness in this respect being not lessened by the self-evident fact that he would prove a great attraction and would materially assist the church he favored with his extravagant sermons. A burnt-out preacher, and the most popular preacher amongst the Christian worshippers, would draw a splendid congregation. Talmage is so affected by these offers from the various sects that he declares that "A millenium has come." He says, "The lion and the lamb lie down together, and the tiger eats straw like an ox." This may be accepted as metaphorically true to some extent, for the sects are no longer allowed to prey upon each other as formerly; but I should like some Christian friend to explain which sect is to be regarded as the lion, and which the lamb, and still more which is the treacherous, bloodthirsty and insatiable tiger, and what is the straw which it now eats instead of its natural food, and how long the tiger will maintain its vitality on such poor and unsuitable nourishment.

The conflagration is attributed to lightning. "Well," says Talmage, "the Lord controls the lightnings. He managed them several thousands of years before our electricians were born. The Bible indicates that, though they flash down the sky recklessly, God builds for them a road to travel." So it is the Lord, seemingly, who caused the "appalling disaster" early on Sunday morning, and those good Christians who wrongfully accused Satan ought to apologise and blame the real author of the mischief.

Was Talmage so foolish as to believe his own teachings? Had he really neglected to provide a lightning conductor for the house of God? Did he trust to the Lord instead of science? I, for one, cannot believe it. It is certain that he did not trust to prayer, or faith, or divine providence, as far as risk of fire was concerned. He preferred to pay a premium to a fire insurance company. He knows that prayer is no protection against fire *in this world*. He knows that hundreds of churches are burned to the ground every year in spite of prayer and providence. So he trusts to the insurance company rather than God, and his trust will be justified. His appeal to the public is merely for extra funds to raise a larger and finer building than the one which the Lord has destroyed. Meanwhile Talmage puts his fingers to his lips, "throws a kiss to the departed church," and starts off for a ten weeks' holiday in the Holy Land by way of showing the great sacrifice he is prepared to make on behalf of the grand "national" temple for which he urges others to do so much. "None of these things move me," was the text of his sermon, and while he can so successfully exploit the religious

sentiment of mankind, we cannot expect him to trouble over a calamity which is no misfortune. Faith in God enables him to bear with becoming fortitude the prospect of a tourist's ramble abroad and an improved position at home.

W. P. BALL.

ACID DROPS.

The Republican triumphs at the recent French elections has greatly disgusted the Catholic clergy, who fought tooth and nail for the reactionist candidates. One of these black gentry, the Abbot of the Monastery of Solesmes, writes to the *Univers*, admitting that the clericals have had a bad beating, but calling on them to resist the torrent of impiety which has been let loose over the land. He deplures that Gambetta and his followers have carried out the programme of 1789. The Rights of God have been trampled upon by the Rights of Man. The Deity has been hunted from civil society. His name was never uttered during the progress of the great Exhibition, and he is ignored by the President and his Ministers. In short, there is the Devil to pay, and nothing to pay him with.

The poor God-concerned Abbot winds up by calling upon the clergy to bear their persecution like the martyrs of old, overlooking the rather important fact that their "persecution" only consists in being prevented from interfering with other people's business.

Mr. Conybeare has climbed down, and Sir Edward Clarke has let him off. Under a threat of prosecution for libel, with a claim for heavy damages, Mr. Conybeare withdraws his silly slanders. No doubt he would withdraw his abuse of Atheism under a similar pressure.

The contumacy of the Rev. P. G. Benson, vicar of Hoo, who refuses to obey the order for his suspension for having refused the sacrament to a parishioner, only reflects the general spirit of the clergy, who receive the emoluments of their office without fancying that they entail any reciprocal duties. The Rev. F. W. S. Le Lievre, curate of a neighboring parish, presented himself at Hoo with the Bishop of Rochester's mandate authorising him to conduct the service. He showed the mandate to the vicar, but the latter refused to recognise it, and the service was conducted by the vicar without interruption. It now remains to be seen if the law will be put in force, and the Church supplied with another "martyr."

At the recent Mormon conference in Utah it was resolved that all revelations given to the saints, including that of plural marriage, have come direct from God himself, and must be maintained by the Church in spite of all trials and perils. To incur prosecution for divinely sanctioned polygamy they regard as persecution, and the pretences of Christians to believe in God's revelation they denounce as hypocrisy.

The Ockbrook ghost has been "run in." It turned out to be a young woman living in the village, who pretended to have been looking for her father's grave in the churchyard. Had the great Jerusalem ghost story been investigated in the same fashion, there would have been no Christianity. What a thought! Fancy Europe without priests, and England without the Salvation Army. Perish the notion! The Resurrection for ever!

Cardinal Gibbons, of Baltimore, boasts that while there were only 40,000 Catholics in the United States a hundred years ago, there are now 9,000,000, with ten thousand churches. He forgets to explain, however, that the increase is purely physical. It simply means that the Irish are good breeders. Catholicism makes no headway among the Protestant population.

"Clelia" has written a book, called *God in Shakespeare*, to prove that the great poet was the Messiah, and that his plays are a new revelation written in a sort of cryptogram. We shall want a few hundred years, if the Lord spares us, to make up our mind on this subject. Meanwhile we say straight off that if Shakespeare was the Messiah, the second

Incarnation of the Deity was a great improvement on the first. Even gods, apparently, live and learn.

Sir Henry Peek has published some statistics relating to the City of London churches from which we cull a few particulars. There are sixty churches in the City, and the total value of the livings is £41,814, according to the Clergy Directory and £36,685 by the Clergy List. The population in 1861 was 113,387, in 1881 it had fallen to 50,578, and now is probably smaller still. The church-going population is of course vastly less, for even if we include St. Paul's and the Temple Church there is only an average of 6,731 people scattered through a number of buildings which were designed for 32,455 sittings.

Omitting these special churches which find visitors from all parts, we find the congregations in the churches proper reach a total of 3,853, with about 1,200 officials and choristers, and 1,300 school children. But the superabundance of sittings is made still more obvious by the details. Thus the "congregation" of one church is given as "two." In another case the average attendance is four, in another eight, and so on. There are twelve churches which are attended by less than five-and-twenty persons, seventeen others where the attendance is below fifty, and only ten out of the sixty can boast of a weekly gathering of more than a hundred. St. Dunstan in the East has room for 700 people, and its congregation on the day when the record was made reached the ridiculous total of four, while there were fifteen officials present.

One clergyman gets £2,400 a year for ministering to a parish which at the last census only had 327 inhabitants. Of course the clergy are prepared to resist to the uttermost any attempt to interfere with their rich sinecures.

The "Gnostic Theosophical Society of Washington," under the presidency of Dr. Elliott Coues, wish it to be known as widely as possible that they repudiate all connection with Olcott's and Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. The latter wish it to be known that Dr. Coues' Gnosticism is entirely a spurious article.

The question of the legality of church concerts has recently been tried in Leeds. The Rev. F. S. Baines, vicar of St. Cuthbert's, Beeston Road, Hunslet, was charged with "playing public music without a license." This was on a week-day evening. The magistrate held that the offence was technically proved, and imposed a nominal penalty of one shilling. An appeal will be made to a higher court.

Jesus Christ is supposed to know everything, except the day and the hour when he will bring all things to an end, so we did not send him a copy of our *Letters to Jesus Christ*. We find, however, from the *British Weekly* that a pious reader of the *Imitation of Christ* has sent a most encouraging letter to the Rev. Thomas à Kempis, care of his publishers. Such is fame.

Barnum will have his little joke. He says that the red fire displayed at the scenic representation of the destruction of Rome by Nero typifies "the dawn of Christianity." Barnum knows that Christianity ushered in fire, flame, and red ruin on Pagan civilisation.

"A Churchman" writes to the *Times* in despairing fashion on the non-attendance of males at church. Fifty years ago, he says, it was the rule for the head of the family to be at church; now it is the exception. Look in an ordinary London church, and you find that, even when youths and boys are included, the males are not one-fifth of the congregation. If you take a less favorable case, the number will sink to one-tenth or even one-twentieth. If "A Churchman" is right, what we want most now is Freethought missions to women.

Here are a few facts for the ministers who boast of what Christianity has done for the poor blacks. According to the New York correspondent of the *Manchester Examiner*, the Young Men's Christian Association, one of the largest corporations in the United States, refuses to admit colored youths to membership. Most of the Conventions of the Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist

Churches refuse to admit any colored ministers to their deliberations. All through the States the Christian whites refuse to mix with the Christian blacks. Fred Douglass, the black orator, who is the United States minister at Hayti, was refused hotel accommodation at Jacksonville, and three captains of the frigate "Kearsage" had to be discharged before one could be found to sail with him as a passenger. At the theatres the only seats allowed the blacks are in the upper gallery; and at Ashbury Park, a fashionable sea-side resort near New York, they are forbidden to bathe in the ocean at the same time as the whites.

There is already a law against blacks marrying whites, and it is now proposed to disfranchise them. Nay, there is a movement on foot for the purpose of driving all the blacks out of the country. Is it any wonder, then, that the Rev. W. B. Johnson, a colored Baptist preacher, advises his race to secure homes in the South and West, and to hold them, if need be, with Winchester rifles?

When the Christian apologist talks so unctuously about the way in which the Gospel has lifted up the poor blacks, and brought them within the brotherhood of Christ, he should be reminded of these facts. We hope our readers will bear them in mind, and use them on every opportunity.

Dr. Macaulay writes to the *Christian World* about the Rev. Stewart Headlam's wicked question at the London School Board anent the age of the world. He states that the date 4004 B.C. is not given in the Bibles of the Religious Tract Society as that of the creation of the world, but as that of the creation of man. This, however, is just as absurd, as the Board School teachers would soon declare if they were not gagged. Dr. Macaulay's position is a queer one. He says, in effect, "We shall keep 4004 B.C. until the scientific men are agreed as to the exact antiquity of man"—in other words, "Until you tell us the precise truth we shall go on printing a lie."

Pere Didon is issuing a new *Life of Jesus* in France to controvert that of Renan. Why does not Jehovah controvert Renan himself? He could do it convincingly with a thunderbolt, or a ha'p'orth of the brimstone and treacle—we beg pardon, the brimstone and fire—he rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah.

October 25 had been fixed by many of the American Second Adventists as the day on which their long-delayed Jesus would positively appear. And sure enough, on the morning of that day at Bridgeport, Connecticut, where there are great numbers of this sect, something acrayed in white flowing garments and blowing a long horn approached the expectant group. At first they believed the object to be a pioneer of the angelic host come to announce that the bottom of all creation had fallen out, but it proved to be Colonel O. B. Hall, who tooted loudly, flaunted the folds of his robe, and so ridiculed the group that they got mad and immediately postponed the event which they had gathered to see.

One would have thought this old Bible folly of the speedy coming of Christ and the end of the world would have been played out long ere this by those who can read that Jesus promised the events to come off in the lifetime of those standing around him. But it almost seems as if each fresh generation was just as ready to be deceived as the last. Indeed Prophet Baxter can, in this age of enlightenment, boast a larger following than Jesus Christ himself.

Singing of the love of the Lord often leads to love of another sort, and the Californian papers report a marriage. Annie Louise Cushing, "a pretty woman of twenty-four," and Eddie Fray, "a boy of fourteen." The bride has been for some years organist of St. George's Church, Utica, and the bridegroom was a member of "the boy choir." After some little difficulty they found a complacent Congregational minister to unite them in the bonds of wedlock and instruct them to "increase and multiply."

Great Thoughts—a goody-goody paper with a fine title—has been printing some pious lies about Heinrich Heine.

Here is one of them. A friend called on Heine, not long before his death, and the bed-ridden, paralysed Freethinker said he longed to go out if only on crutches. "Do you know where I should go?" he asked. "No," said his friend. "Why, straight to church." "You jest." "No, no; straight to church." There our pious contemporary ends, and so far the story is true enough. But half a truth is often a very bad lie, and this is a case in point. Let us continue the story. Heine added, with a malicious laugh, "Yes, to church; where else should a man go on crutches?" He meant, of course, that church was a place for cripples, not for sound, healthy people.

Dr. Newton the vicar of Barnstaple has been lecturing to to the Y.M.C.A. on "Doubts, Scepticism and Atheism." Dr. Newton seems to have uttered the usual commonplaces, "God was falsely represented as a tyrant, bloodthirsty and revengeful," etc. We take it that those who have so represented him have derived their authority from the Bible. Then Dr. Newton went on to say that God was the first cause without explaining words which are a contradiction in terms. "Reverence" according to the Doctor is very necessary in regard to religion. True! You must shut your eyes, open your mouth, and take what the parson gives you.

What on earth is the poor old Peace Society about? Here it is solemnly printing that antiquated story about the Queen holding up the Bible to an African king, and exclaiming, "This is the secret of England's greatness." The story has been officially contradicted, and the Peace Society should cease playing Rip Van Winkle.

At the monthly meeting of the Presbytery of Manchester, the Rev. W. Young characterised a statement made by the Rev. John Reid of Salford, as "unkind and unchristian." Mr. Reid, curiously objected to the latter term only, and asked its withdrawal, declaring that if a retraction were not made he would seek his remedy by the ordinary ecclesiastical means. Personalities having been exchanged, the Rev. B. Bell said they "ought to engage in prayer to ask God to help them to speak like gentlemen to one another."

Rabbi S. Freuder, a Jewish theologian, has handed us a tract written by himself entitled "What shall we do to be Saved?" According to the distinguished rabbi the answer is, "Join the Francisco Nationalist Club." Doubtless nationalism is better than damnationalism, but we do not know how much.—*Freethought.*

Last Sunday a minister dropped dead in his pulpit while preaching to his congregation. On the same day an employè of the R'io Grande was drowned while in bathing. How inscrutable are the ways of—heart disease and cramps—*Denver Eye*

In an affiliation case before the Thames Police Court, it transpired that in a certain house in Crescent Road, where the parties met; "the downstairs part of the house was used as a mission hall, and the upstairs part as a brothel." Very handy for the servants of the Lord.

A sailor, fresh back from Jaffa and a jaunt through Palestine, was invited home by a sky-pilot to meet a pious circle of old ladies, who were anxious for authentic information concerning the Holy City and the paths trodden by the Blessed Savior. All they could get out of Jack, however, was the asseveration that "Jerusalem's the cussedest, meanest one-horse town I ever saw. The people swarm with vermin, and you can't get a drop of good liquor in the whole confounded place."

The Rev. Dr. Harrison, of Halifax, has been lecturing on "The Logic of Atheism" at the Public Hall, Preston. He holds that if Agnosticism is included under the head of Atheism, it is very widely spread indeed. He said: "There were a good many Agnostics in the Church of England, and there were a good deal in all denominations. They went to church with almost unflinching regularity, but they did not believe in God. He had in his possession almost 200 confidential letters on that very subject from all sorts and conditions of men, and he had had conversations with hundreds of others, who had told him their want of conviction on the subject of God, but had never opened

their lips to others." If Dr. Harrison is right, the Church is more honeycombed with unbelief and hypocrisy than we suspected.

Dr. Harrison said, "By Atheist, he meant intellectually one who did not trace the government of the universe to an intelligent being." This strikes us as rather an artful avoidance of the question of the origin of the universe, upon which the old-fashioned Theists used to insist. We do not think it makes Dr. Harrison's case any the easier. It is for him to trace the government of the universe to an intelligent being—a sufficiently difficult task; and then he leaves it open to an opponent to say that a governor is not necessarily a creator any more than the man who winds up a watch is necessarily its fashioner or the creator of its materials.

Dr. Harrison says, "There never had been, and there never could be, a scientific Atheist." Like most of his arguments, this seems to be a mere matter of words, for he allows that "There might be scientific men who might also be Atheists, but there were no scientific Atheists." Laplace, for instance, said of the being of a God, "I have no need for that hypothesis." Dr. Harrison would call this the Atheism of a man of science. We should call it scientific Atheism.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has climbed down, and done it publicly, under the threat of a prosecution for libel. Captain Molesworth pointed his gun, and Mr. Hughes said "Don't shoot, Captain; I'll come down."

Pauper bodies are not worth much, apparently, but there is a fierce competition for their souls. Down at Evesham Workhouse an evangelist from the "Gospel Tent" was allowed to do a little soul-saving business; whereupon the chaplain, who regarded it as poaching on his preserves, wrote to the Guardians strongly protesting against such malpractices.

We also read that a lady teacher of the national schools in the village of Shaw, near Oldham, was compelled by the vicar to leave her home with a Wesleyan family, and to lodge with Church people.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis calls upon Convocation to purge the marriage service in the Prayer Book from the coarse expressions that shock the ears of ladies in the nineteenth century. But this is straining at a gnat after swallowing a camel. The Bible is far coarser than the Prayer Book. It puzzles us to understand how a lady, who reads St. Paul's vulgarities on the subject of marriage, can be shocked at the comparatively mild allusion to "babies" in the Church of England marriage service.

Yes, it *will* come, only we shall have to wait a little longer. By-and-bye there will be a strong Bible Reform Association. The end will be that all the peccant parts of Scripture will be cleared out, and twenty years afterwards the clergy will swear they were *never in it*.

The Archbishop of York bids the faithful to cast out fear. Christianity is going through a frightful tempest, but it has weathered many a storm before. It nearly foundered in France last century, but now it is as flourishing as ever. So says the Archbishop, and he must know that he is circulating a falsehood. Christianity still survives in France, it is true; but the intellect of the country is dead against it, and avowed sceptics are numbered by the million.

Spurgeon is just off to Mentone, where he intends, as usual, to try the effect of prayer, in combination with the Mediterranean air and sunshine, on his constitution. Before giving the world this convincing proof of his faith, he has delivered himself of another jeremiad against unbelief. Modestly comparing himself to Moses, he beseeches the "brethren" to "hold up his hands," for "if the standard-bearer falls what will the weaklings do?" He declares that to the best of his ability he has "held the fort and kept the faith," but his protest "seems unavailing, and Amalek prevails by reason of scientific unbelief." Poor Spurgeon!

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, November 17, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C. at 7, "Saint David: a Study in Bible Ethics."

Nov. 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.

No 12.—Delighted to hear from you again. Will see about the Tracts.

W. ANDERSON.—It reached us too late for last week. Thanks.

H. J. BARTER.—The Plymouth Secularists are quite justified in showing resentment at Mr. Conybeare's insults. Your letter to the Secretary of the Radical Association, declining to attend the Conybeare meeting, is pointed but dignified.

SENEC.—Thanks. Shall always be glad to hear from you.

A. R. ATKEY.—The Nottingham half-yearly report is creditable, but we wish you had a larger budget. May you have a good winter season.

S. SMALL.—Mr. Forder has shown us your cheering letter. Your opinion of *The New Cagliostro* is worth having. Mr. Foote is in excellent health, and is very seldom otherwise.

NEMO.—See "Acid Drops" on Heine. Glad to hear you introduce the *Freethinker* to your family circle, and find it useful. Your trouble with the newsagents is, alas, nothing uncommon. They seem afraid of the very name of this journal. Still, in spite of such terrible obstacles, our circulation is larger than that of any other Freethought journal.

C. TOMLINSON.—Thanks for your amusing account of the New North Road clergyman and his queer defence of Scripture. We hope the "saints" will continue to heckle him. You are evidently under a mistake as to the other matter. The Branch at the Hall of Science had nothing to do with the Sunday lectures.

E. COX.—We have nothing to add.

H. ROTHERA.—Glad to hear of your new convert who finds the *Freethinker* suit him "down to the ground." Thanks for the cuttings.

J. E. ROOSE.—Those penny editions of Dickens are sold at a loss for advertising purposes. Look at a copy for yourself. A penny edition of the *Age of Reason* would be impossible.

C. JONES.—Cardiff should have a good, flourishing Branch. Pleased to see you are moving in the matter.

A. PATER.—Peg away, and give the parson plenty to answer.

JOHN KING.—Douglas's *Religions of China* is a cheap volume. Legge's *Teachings of Confucius* is fuller. There is also the *Confucian Analects* by the same author.

L. STANLEY.—For Paul's view of obedience to the powers that be see Romans xiii., 1, 2.

No 9.—(1) We have spoken to Mr. Forder on the subject. Your newsagent could get the *Freethinker* from his wholesale agent if he insisted on being supplied. (2) We have no such statistics by us. You can get statistics of prisons and their inmates. (3) We hope to issue the second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* before next summer. Pleased to hear you find the first volume so useful.

A BATH FRIEND.—It will be announced when ready. Thanks for your good wishes.

MR. ROBERTSON, newsagent, 178 High Holborn, now sells the *Freethinker* and displays a copy in his window.

W. M. G.—Many thanks. The address of the Fabian Society is 180 Portsdown Road, W.

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.—North Devon Herald—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Freethought—Der Arme Teufel—Fair Play—Bulletin des Sommaires—Las Dominicales—Star—Twentieth Century—Open Court—Freidenker—Liberator—Religio-Philosophical Journal (Chicago)—Secular Thought—Christian World Pulpit—Preston Herald—Echo—Western Figaro.

SUGAR PLUMS.

WE understand that Mr. Bradlaugh's journey to India commences on the 28th inst. He will leave by the P. and O. steamer "Ballarat." His stay in Bombay will only be of twelve days duration. He will then return by the same vessel, which is due again at London on the 27th of next January. We wish him *bon voyage*.

THERE was a splendid audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on the "Follies of Theosophy." It was a long lecture, lasting an hour and fifty minutes, but it was followed with the closest attention to the end.

THIS evening (Nov. 17) Mr. Foote lectures at the London Hall of Science on "Saint David: a Study in Bible Ethics." This should be an attractive subject, now that the character of Old Testament saints is engaging the attention of the Court of Queen's Bench.

BEFORE the lecture Mr. Foote will speak for a few minutes on a subject which will be uppermost in the minds of Freethinkers—namely, Mr. Bradlaugh's resignation of the presidency, and the prospects of the Freethought party in the immediate future.

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND:—C. Heaton, 1s. 6d.; W. Anderson, 3s. 6d.; D. Baker, £5.—This fund is commended to the attention of the millionaires of Freethought, and all others who want to see the *Freethinker* increasing in circulation and ceasing to be a burden to its editor.

THE London Secular Federation has resolved to organise some good social gatherings during the winter. On Sunday, December 8, a tea, followed by an entertainment, will take place at the Camberwell Secular Hall. Richard Carlile's birthday falls on that date, and the gathering will be associated with his memory. The tickets (1s.) are on sale, and can be had of any Branch secretary in London.

ON January 29 the Federation will have a Thomas Paine birthday party at the Hall of Science. There will be a first-rate entertainment, followed by a ball, and the profits will go to the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

THE chief event will be the Federation's annual dinner on Monday, January 6. The last dinner was a splendid success, and there is every prospect of this one outshining it. Full details will be given as soon as possible.

DIRECTLY after Christmas the Federation will start some classes at the Hall of Science, under the conduct of Messrs. Foote and Wheeler. Christian Evidences will be taken in detail, as well as the religious, ethical, and social questions that have to be more or less dealt with in the propaganda of Freethought. Outdoor lecturers, aspirants to the platform, and all studious Secularists are invited to attend. At the end of the season an examination will be held, and prizes will be awarded to the most successful students.

IT is also contemplated to organise a course of free public lectures, but that, of course, will depend on the finances. The Federation is urgently in need of funds, and we earnestly appeal for subscriptions. They can be sent to the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, or to the Treasurer, Mr. R. O. Smith, 142 Old Street, E.C. All subscriptions will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

REVIEWING *The New Cagliostro*, our Canadian contemporary, *Secular Thought*, says—"We strongly recommend all our friends to purchase this caustic letter. It will afford them an abundant return in amusement: but, while it will enlighten them as to the real nature of Theosophy, it will perhaps add to their mystification as to the cause of Mrs. Besant's adhesion to such a sham."

MR. A. T. WILSON, a Melbourne newsagent, has a big advertisement of Mr. Foote's publications in the *Liberator*. This is very gratifying, but why is the *Dictionary of Freethinkers* included? Mr. Wheeler, and not Mr. Foote, is the author of that valuable work.

By the way, the *Dictionary* is now at the point of completion. The last sheet is in the press, and we hope the volume will be on sale by the end of the month. It will be handsomely bound in cloth.

SIR RICHARD OWEN, who is nearly as old as the century, is not a thorough Darwinian. He represents the older school of biology. Nevertheless he is far from being completely orthodox. Many years ago he replied, in the name of science, to the nonsense of Canon Cook about the longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs. Now, in an interview with a *Pull Mall* reporter, he says he is quite convinced that there is positive evidence that man lived 18,000 years ago, and that there is evidence of his greater antiquity, only there is no method of deciding its extent. This must be comforting to the orthodox school, which relies on the shifts and evasions of Sir William Dawson.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON was not a believer in the inspiration of the Bible, at least in the ordinary sense of the word. He was frequently called "infidel," and he had to explain why he allowed a discussion on the Bible in the *Liberator*. According to his sons, who are publishing his biography, he was asked by his daughter, when a child, if she had ever been baptised. "No, my darling," he replied, "you have had a good bath every morning, and that is a great deal better."

"STANDS Scotland where it did?" Principal Cunningham, of Edinburgh, has declared himself in favour of opening of museums and art galleries on Sunday.

* LOUISA M. ALCOTT, whose *Life and Letters* are just issued, speaks highly of Theodore Parker, the great American universalist, who was so lustily railed at by his orthodox countrymen. "He is like a great fire," she writes, "where all can come, and be warmed and comforted. Bless him! Had a talk about him and fought for him when W. R. said he was not a Christian. He is my sort; for though he may lack reverence for other people's gods, he works bravely for his own, and turns his back on no one who needs help, as some of the pious do."

THE leader of the Freethinking or Reformed Jews of America is Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, of Cincinnati, Ohio. Born in Bohemia in 1819, and educated at Vienna, he went to America in 1846 and officiated at Albany. At Cincinnati he published *The Israelite*. He has written a *History of the Hebrews' Second Commonwealth*, in which he deals with the problem of the origin of Christianity in a very rationalistic manner; also *The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth*, in which he shows that the Gospel stories of the trial and crucifixion are not in accordance with Jewish customs; and *The Cosmic God*, in which he shows a tendency to Spinozism.

THE Cardiff Branch of the N. S. S. is to be revived. A meeting for that purpose will be held to-day (Nov. 17) at Northampton Villa, Arran Street, at 6.30 p.m. We hope to hear a good report of the result.

A SUCCESSFUL Convention of the Freethinkers of Oregon State has been held at Portland, and addressed by Mr. S. P. Putnam, C. B. Reynolds, W. S. Bell, Prof. Seymour, and others.

THE Summary of Herbert Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy made by his disciple, Mr. F. Howard Collins, is now out. It is a thick volume, published at fifteen shillings, and has been the labor of five years. Mr. Collins gives, section by section, a condensation of his master's teachings, and the sections being numbered the same as in Spencer's works, the student who desires further explanations and illustrations can at once turn to the fuller volumes—that is, if he has the good fortune to have access to them.

THE recently published *Reminiscences of a Literary and Clerical Life* has some good stories. One is of a relative who knew the elder Disraeli. On one occasion the following conversation is recorded to have taken place. "Well, Mr. Disraeli, what do you do when you go to church?" "Oh, I put my head into my hat." "And what do you do when you put your head into your hat?"

"Oh, I begin counting a number." Like Sheridan's Jew, either Disraeli (Father and Son) might have aptly been compared to the blank page between the Old and New Testaments.

ANOTHER story is of John Robert Green, author of the *History of the English People*. At a meeting of white chokers he scandalised the brethren by saying that he looked upon the prophecies of Israel in much the same way as upon the prophecies of Merlin.

ONE of the last things Mr. Lennstrand did before being imprisoned for blasphemy was to establish a Secular Sunday School at Stockholm. We trust that both this and the Freethought movement generally will be well sustained during his imprisonment.

A NOTE from "A. de M." in *Las Dominicales del libre Pensamiento*, one of the chief Spanish Freethought papers, calls attention to a recent lecture by Mr. Foote, and also to Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*.

IN an article on the "Natural Evolution of Man," by Mr. A. Dewar, in the current number of the *Westminster Review*, he says: "The quaint conception of man's divine creation some six thousand years ago in the garden of Eden has, in our own day, been discredited by criticism, disproved by geology, and discarded by all intelligent men; and, now, recent discoveries of pre-historic human remains come to establish conclusively the existence of man in the Miocene epoch of the Tertiary age. This implies an antiquity of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of years."

MR. DEWAR argues in favor of the possibility of spontaneous generation. If, says he, the Creator implanted in germs the seed of infinite evolution, he could also implant in inanimate matter potencies sufficient to produce the germs themselves. But, he continues, this being so, why not assume matter's possession of these properties as inherent constituents of its very existence, rather than its inoculation of them by a Deity? The assumption of an inoculating Deity actually introduces greater difficulties than it removes. Thus, if we have a right to ask how matter became possessed of these assumed inherent properties, we have an equal right to ask how the Deity became possessed of His inherent properties, and so on interminably. Present intelligence, therefore, demands that we stop our questionings at the barrier we know something of—Matter; not the barrier we know nothing of—Deity.

MR. DEWAR proceeds to argue that "any Deity cognizable by or knowable to us could only be so known to us by other matter communicating with our matter through the motion of our material senses, the divine matter impinging on our human matter; this practically implies that divine matter and human matter are identical."

THE Catholic Committee at Rome decided to abstain from action in the municipal elections. The truth is they are afraid of showing their own weakness. In recommending this course the Committee declares it will abandon the Administration to its own evil fate. Needless to say the Administration is well content to be abandoned by its enemies.

THE Naples correspondent of the *Daily News* writes:—"Signor Mariotti, State Secretary to the Minister of Public Instruction, has found a document proving that Giordano Bruno was stripped naked, bound to a pole, and burnt alive, and that he bore his martyrdom with great fortitude. The document is to be published officially."

CLERGYMAN'S SORE THROAT.—This puzzling ailment has been long the bewilderment of one profession and the terror of another. Why should the clergyman have a special sore throat of his own? A medical man offers this explanation—that the organs of the throat are constructed for speaking as though you believed what you say; whereas the clergyman, even in uttering unquestioned verities, often acts more like a town crier than a talker. But a wicked wit maintains that the throat loves conviction, and that the worst form of clergyman's sore throat is caused by speaking what is not really believed.

TRI-THEISM.

CHRISTIANITY is usually classed as a monotheistic religion. In reality it is less entitled to that distinction than any faith with the same pretensions. Judaism, though, even in the name of its deity "Elohim," retaining clear traces of the polytheism whence it has emerged, is strictly monotheistic. Many and many a Jew has suffered martyrdom at Christian hands repeating his simple creed "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God,"* Mohammedanism has from the outset been a pure monotheism. The most esteemed chapter of the Koran recites "Allah alone is God, the Eternal; He begetteth not, and He is not begotten, and there is none like unto him,"† and in another place declares, "Those surely are infidels who say 'God is the third of three,' for there is no God but one God."‡ Even Hinduism, with its myriads of gods, has, as the inner essence of its teaching, the postulate "There is but one Being, no second." But Christianity, while pretending to be monotheistic, is really polytheistic. The largest section of the Christian Church not only pay worship to saints, but address the mother of Jesus more often and in more exalted language than that addressed to God the Father. But, putting aside Catholicism as having little influence in this country, it must be admitted that the distinctive historic feature of Christianity is worship of Jesus Christ as a deity. This was so strongly felt by Coleridge, who had himself been a Unitarian, that he denied that Unitarians could properly call themselves Christians, and boldly made a present to the infidel world of the great names of Milton, Locke, Newton, and Priestley.

The worship of Jesus is absolutely incompatible with pure monotheism. The very terms Father and Son imply a distinction of nature and difference of position in time. The phrase Eternal Son is a contradiction in terms. To assert of three persons, of whom the second derives his being from the first, and the third from the first and second, that they are co-equal and co-eternal is—well it is sound theology. The phrase "three persons in one God" is like "Eternal Son," "First Cause," and so many theological war cries, a contradiction in terms. Three persons, each equally possessing divine attributes, are three gods. The doctrine virtually affirms there are three gods, and that there is but one. It is the deification of absurdity.

Although in theory the Christian proclaims his belief in one God only, in actual worship he addresses himself to three different deities, or indeed often only considers the Son, to the exclusion of the Father and the Ghost. He, at any rate, is the most conspicuous object of Christian worship. It is at his name that worshippers bend the head and bow the knee. To him the majority of Protestant hymns are addressed. As to the Holy Ghost he is, as was once lucidly explained by a distinguished prelate "a sort of a something." The position of this nebulous third person is, judging by hymns and prayers offered, very subordinate. Sometimes he is treated as only a kind of emanation or influence. Yet the personality of a being who procreates a son on a virgin can scarcely be disputed, even though he, she,§ or it occasionally appears in the shape of a dove, or as "cloven tongues as of fire." It is curious that whereas John is said to have been "filled with the Holy Ghost; even from his mother's womb" (Luke i., 15), his disciples "had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost" (Acts xix., 2).

Many Christians have professed to find the Trinity in the Old Testament, although the Jews had never heard of it. A favorite text was Isaiah xlvi., 16, "And now Jahveh Elohim," (the original Deity)

"and his Spirit" (the Ghost) "hath sent me" (J. C.) Here it was said were the three members of the Godhead as plain as a three pronged fork. But the Jews explained that the expression "and his spirit" issued by the Jewish prophets to signify the direct command of God, so that all the passage means is that "Jahveh hath expressly sent me," and the Jewish Trinity vanishes.

Not only is the word Trinity absent too from the New Testament, but it must be confessed it is only a theologian who can screw the dogma from such texts as Matt. iii., 16, 17. John xiv., 26, 2 Cor. xiii., 14, 1 Pet. i., 2, and the other odd verses adduced in its support. The one clear passage is 1 John v., 7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." This verse, though in the Authorised Version, and appointed to be read in churches for the benefit of the faithful, is well known to be spurious, existing in no ancient Greek version.

Yet although neither Old Testament nor New give any decided support to this doctrine of the Christian religion, it must be confessed that it was anticipated by the heathen faiths. Triads appear in many ancient Pagan mythologies.|| In Osiris, Isis and Horus, considered as husband, wife and child, we have the one true, intelligible, enduring and most worshipful trinity. The male and female principles of nature with their product were among the first organised forms of religious worship. In Egypt every city had a local triad of its own, of whom Amen-Ra, Maut and Khonsu, of Thebes, were among the most famous.¶ One of the most prominent features of Hindu theology is the divine Tri-murti of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, representing creation, preservation and destruction.

When Christianity overcame Paganism, it was in turn largely affected by the faiths it superseded, and this doctrine of the Trinity was really a compromise with paganism effected in Egypt, the land used to the worship of triads. Like all such compromises it contained an element of anomaly. But the most nauseous pill is digested when sugar-coated with the name of religion. Anything goes down. Hence, men have come to assert, and apparently to believe, that two and one, or one and one and one, when added make but one. It would be impossible to find, even in the annals of religion, grosser absurdities, defended with more ferocious zeal, than those connected with this dogma of the Trinity. Human ingenuity has been racked to the uttermost to give some plausible explanation of the hypostatic union of the three in one. Councils have anathematised each other, and wars being actually fought about dogmas and definitions, not only unverifiable but absolutely unintelligible. Hume well said "All popular theology, especially the scholastic, has a kind of appetite for absurdity and contradiction. If the theology went not beyond reason and common sense, her doctrines would be too easy and familiar. Amazement must of necessity be raised: Mystery affected: Darkness and obscurity sought after: and a foundation of merit offered to the devout votaries who desire an opportunity of subduing their rebellious reason by the belief of the most unintelligible sophisms." To those who profess to follow reason the theological juggle with words should not be allowed. The worshippers of Father, Son and Ghost are tri-theists. They object to the name as much as some who have ceased to believe in any current notion of deity object to be termed atheists. But it is their proper designation.

J. M. WHEELER.

|| "The notion of a Triad of Supreme Power is indeed common to most ancient religions." Prichard's *Egyptian Mythology*, p. 285. "Nearly all the Pagan nations of antiquity in their various theological systems, acknowledge a trinity in the divine nature." Rev. T. Maurice *Indian Antiquities*, vol. vi., p. 25.

¶ S. Sharpe's *Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity*, and Bonwick's *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought* contain much information on this point.

* Deut vi., 4. † Sura, 112. ‡ Sura, 5.

§ In the early Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Holy Ghost is feminine.

IDLE DIETIES.

I AM very much dissatisfied with things as they are. I think the mass of the people are more or less humbugged in religion. They have been made to believe in the kind of heaven and hell that do not exist, and in the kind of God that does not exist. I think the mass of the people are being robbed of their substance. The laborers work and produce things, and other people steal those things. Kings and aristocrats and Land Lords and bondholders live without work, and the legal privilege of living without work on to their children and their children's children. And I know this could not be so if they did not steal what they have from others. You may juggle with words all you like; you may write whole volumes to prove that rent and interest and profit and taxes are right, but you can never make me believe that a man or a woman who does nothing—such men and women as spend their time at Newport and Lenox in the summer and Florida or Naples in the winter, men and women who never produced so much as one pin in their whole lives, and who pride themselves because they belong to the class who do not work—you never can make me believe that such men and women are not simply thieves.

I know that many of them do not know they are thieves, and some of them who do know how they can avoid being thieves, but they are certainly living off the products of other people's labor. I think this. I think that it is a crying shame that it is so. It is enough, almost, to make one insane to know that it is so. It is enough, almost, to make one insane to walk through a tenement house street in New York, and look at the creatures who live there, and how they live, and then think of the people who spend thousands of dollars in luxurious idleness, trying, always, to find new ways to amuse themselves, and to know that these idle people are able to live that way because those working people are robbed of what they produce. It is enough, almost, to make one insane to know all this as clearly as I know it, and not be able to change it, and I am sometimes afraid that I shall lose my reason about it.

O, there is not the slightest occasion to wonder why I do not believe in the existence of a God who can do nothing. There cannot be an active, working, loving, just God and a tenement house in the same universe. There may be some kind of a God for all that I know, but he cannot do anything. If he could he would find a lot of work ready to his hand over on the east side of New York, just the kind of work a good God would like to do, and he would be doing that work.

It is no wonder that I do not believe the story in the gospels about Jesus Christ. He was a tender-hearted person, who is said to be the God of the universe, the one who made it and runs it, and he is said to be able to answer prayers. It is said that if we ask he can do for us what we wish done. It is said that he left this world and went to sit upon a splendid throne in heaven, and that he is still sitting there, while the poor people, whom he loved, are being ruined, bodily, mentally and morally by the schemes of the scribes and the Pharisees, whom he did not love. I do not believe the story. It does not hang together. If he were as good as he is said to have been, and as I believe he was, and had almighty power to do anything he wished to do, he would long since have gotten off that splendid throne and come down here to look after things.—*Ex-Rev. H. O. Pentecost.*

A PROBLEM SOLVED.

Happening to be near a chatty group, the following amusing contradiction was overheard. The speaker was a curious old specimen of pious mien, possessing a really clever facility of clinching every assertion by a quotation from or reference to scriptural authority. He explained the origin of Colonel North's wealth, asserting that it was the out come from the sale of nitrate. "Now," said he, "you must know nitrate is a mineral manure—there are vast mountains of the stuff, formed from the refuse of pigeons, which must have accumulated for millions upon millions of years. The astute colonel at once recognised its use and value, and purchased the land. He fully deserves his good fortune for under providence, he was destined to discover the spot where, after the flood, the pair of pigeons must have landed when issuing from the ark."

BURNING OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN AT PEKIN.

AN event which well illustrates the pernicious effects of superstition has just happened in China, and is recorded in the *Times* of Nov. 12. Peking, it appears, has been visited by an extraordinary storm of hail, rain, and lightning, and the most sacred of its buildings utterly destroyed. The consternation of the Celestials at this manifestation of divine wrath must be imagined. If St. Peter's at Rome were to be burnt to the ground, the impression on Catholics would doubtless be similar. The Temple of Heaven, in which the Emperor himself worshipped once a year, contains the tablets of the Imperial ancestors, extending away back to Shang-Te, the Supreme Ruler himself.

Mr. William Simpson, the archæologist and artist of the *Illustrated London News*, was one of the few Europeans who have been permitted to see even the outside of the building, which he describes as made entirely of wood, and as existing from the fourth century of our era.

An imperial decree has been issued attributing the disaster to lightning. It adds "The event is regarded by the Emperor as a solemn warning, and his mind is filled with awe. He calls upon his officers with earnestness and sincerity to aid him in the increasing efforts which he will make, even more than before, in securing the good government of the country."

It is feared by the foreign residents in China that the many calamities of the present reign acting on the superstitious minds of the common people will seriously affect the dynasty, and this last warning from heaven, it is thought, will effectually hinder the progressive measures of the Government. Heaven is thought to be displeased at the interference with old institutions, and the calamity will be a powerful support to the party of stagnation. It is to be hoped it will be proved that the fire was, as is suspected, the work of incendiaries.

BARNUM'S LITTLE STORY.

Barnum told the following story at the Hotel Victoria dinner:—"My great countryman Wendell Phillips declared that there are only forty-three original stories. I don't know whether or no he was right, but at any rate I am going to relate an original one to you, and one which I believe has never appeared in print. During our great Civil War, or as I think it, uncivil war, which as you know was fought for the purpose of abolishing slavery, Elias Howe, a very rich man, and known the world over as the inventor of the sewing machine, and a man with very long hair, made a great many sacrifices for the cause of the North. He called together his workmen and offered to fit out a regiment to go to the front if they would volunteer. He went himself too, but being an old man he could only be used as a letter carrier. On one occasion the Treasury was unable to pay this regiment so Howe at once undertook to do the paying himself. As he was seated, with little piles of money before him, paying the men as they came along, a clergyman presented himself and asked for a subscription to a new church which he desired to build. Howe thought it a queer time to build churches, but the clergyman pressed the necessity of a church to St. Peter. 'Oh!' said Howe, 'St. Peter's is it? Well, I have a respect for St. Peter, he was the only fighting apostle, cut off a man's ear once, I'll give a couple of hundred dollars, though I've been spending most of my money lately on saltpetre.'

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THE TWO WAYS, AND HOW THEY ENDED.
(Addressed to Sunday-school Teachers and Scholars).

Said honest Tom to pious Sam,
"Ready for a big spree I am,
Let's take a row, old boy I say,
And have a real good holiday ;
A boat's the thing adown the river,
'Tween flowery banks where rushes quiver."

Said pious Samuel, "Nay, not so ;
Unto the house of God I go,
The Sabbath bells call loud to prayer,
To break God's law I do not dare,
So to the church my way I wend,
And you shall come with me, dear friend."

Said honest Tom, "No, boy, not I,
To-day I feel too jolly spry ;
All week I work in musty shop,
And so adown the stream I'll drop,
And get a whiff of country air,
And find my church and prayer-book there."

With many a sigh and many a groan,
Sam hies unto the church alone,
And Tom upon the shining river
Watches the rushes dance and quiver,
And on the water's placid breast
Finds health, and joy, and Sabbath rest.

The rosy sunset gilds the tide,
As Tom's boat home again does glide ;
Of country air he's had his whiff,
And at the landing moors his skiff ;
And as he hastens through the lane
He meets a slowly moving train.

Upon a board, with faces sad,
They bear along a lifeless lad,
And Tom at once, with mist-dimmed eyes,
His playfellow does recognise ;
Who, to his heart so truly dear,
Lies cold upon the blood-stained bier.

The tale's soon told, a frightened horse
Had met him in its headlong course,
And, by its terror driven mad,
Had trampled down the hapless lad,
Striking him lifeless to the sod,
While coming from the house of God.

The moral of my tale is this—
And pray don't take my tale amiss—
The law of accidents holds good
On flood and field, in town and wood,
And there's nor time nor place nor state,
When accidents lie not in wait.

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