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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—IX.

ON "CHRIST AND HUMANITY."

To the Rt. Rev. Edward White Benson,
Archbishop of Canterbury.

[CONTINUED.]

I DO not think, my lord, that you will find Atheism so easy to dispose of; nor do I believe that the beautiful spectacle of Church Union will assist the consummation. You beseech the Church of England to "silence bickerings and postpone controversies," which you are "ashamed to name," to "devote her energies" to social problems, and to "strike out agencies for their solving." Meanwhile you are presiding at the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln for ritualistic practices, and adjudicating on the momentous questions of whether he looked this way or that, stood on this leg or the other, or burnt candles when he could see without them. The prosecution and the defence of Dr. King will probably cost fifty thousand pounds: a sum of money that might have established a large co-operative enterprise among industrious artisans, and helped to solve the great "Social Problem."

I will follow you, however, in your mapping of the "social work of the Church," and see whether Christianity has the promise of human elevation. You refer to Slavery, and its abolition, for an illustration of how Christianity "writes itself down in the Morals of the community."

"To the slave, in all their epistles, the Apostles speak most tenderly. Of him Christianity was most careful. Not in preaching against the institution a crusade which would have endlessly multiplied their miseries, but by instilling such views as would first ameliorate the system, and make it at last impossible."

This is the usual clerical method of claiming for Christianity every moral reform since the days of Christ, on the same principle that made Tenterden steeple the cause of the Goodwin Sands. You admit that Christianity did not preach against Slavery; indeed it is not condemned by a single text in the New Testament. Jesus does not seem to have given it a thought, and Paul and Peter took it for granted as a permanent social institution. After the accession of Christianity to power, under Constantine, the position of the slave was actually rendered more odious and degrading. Century after century the Church passed ecclesiastical laws for slaves, and lived upon their forced labor like their secular exploiters. These facts are undeniable, and all the rest is mere private opinion. According to your view, it took Christianity ever so many centuries to "ameliorate the system," and nearly two thousand years to "make it at last impossible." This is a frightful time to be required by a divine faith to abolish the most flagrant of injustices. Surely the ordinary progress of civilisation and humanity might have abolished it unaided in such a tremendous period of time.

You make another remark on Slavery in a subsequent chapter, which evinces the same priestly propositio.

"From the beginning of the world slavery was an institute of Humanity, until in our fathers' days, in our own vale of Keston, a servant of Christ resolved that the world must know it no more. And now a great nation would sooner suffer a dire war than tolerate slavery in its borders."

As an Evolutionist, I regard this as a childish view of the abolition of slavery. No single man, whether a "servant of Christ" or of any other master, could have overthrown such an institution. But if you insist on discussing individuals, I must point out that slavery was branded before the days of your "servant of Christ" by the sceptical Montesquieu with exquisite irony, and by the arch-heretic Voltaire with mingled wit and passionate indignation. Thomas Paine cried out in 1789, "I despair of seeing an abolition of the infernal traffic in negroes"; but soon after—in the language of Professor Newman—"the first public act against slavery came from republican France, in the madness of Atheistic enthusiasm." Christian England did not abolish slavery in her West Indian colonies for another generation.

Let me ask you, my lord, if Christianity is to be as long in abolishing poverty as it was in abolishing slavery. What a lively prospect it opens to the "suffering population"!

Intellectually speaking, you are alive to their misery, and as a man I dare say you would like to diminish it. "The Apostle," you say, "spoke of a suffering population. We know of one which can only just exist, hanging on a sharp edge of illness, hunger, uncleanness physical and moral, incapacity mental and bodily, in full sight of abundance, luxury, and waste."

Admirably expressed! but what a commentary on Christianity and its methods! If after all these centuries of preaching and soul-saving, a multitude of our people "only just exist" in such dreadful, degrading circumstances, is it not high time that we tried another system than the one which has so wasted its opportunities? For Christianity is not a new, untried thing; it is hoary with age, and colossal it its pretensions. During half the period of definite human history it has held sovereign sway over the Caucasian race, and for many centuries its supremacy was despotic. Yet now, after its use of unlimited power and wealth, the shameful confession has to be made by an Archbishop of the Church of England, that poverty, drink, prostitution, gambling, and other vices are specially rampant in Christian countries.

It is hard to "only just exist," always "hanging on a sharp edge of illness and hunger," to say nothing of intellectual and moral frustration, in "full sight of abundance, luxury and waste." As a man your Grace must feel it, but as an Archbishop it does not seem to disturb your equanimity. Your eloquent words are not corroborated by a still more eloquent example. During the London season your Grace may be seen in Rotten Row, riding a splendid horse, and followed by a mounted groom. Your clerical appearance might attract the attention of a poor wretch, who had left his squalid home, and

wandered into the Park, to see for a moment the pride and pomp of the world in which he was an outcast, and to brood over his inexplicable misery "in full sight of abundance, luxury and waste." He might ask a bystander "Who is that parson on horseback?" and be informed, "That is the great Dr. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury." Your grace would be an object-lesson in practical Christianity. And as the poor wretch on foot watched you and your groom riding among the wealth and fashion of London, and looked down at his own rags and tattered boots; as he thought of your palace and of his own garret; as he contrasted your magnificent salary of fifteen thousand pounds a year with his own miserable pittance; as he dreamed of what your wife and children might be in their luxurious home, and then felt more keenly than ever the pinched and bloodless faces of his own dear ones; I fancy there would surge up within him the elements of a sermon that, if it found fit utterance in burning words, would drive the cavaliers and amazons pell-mell to their homes, and put shameful fire on your lordship's face. Nay, such a sermon, if preached with "the throat of the whirlwind," would blast the bench of Bishops, rock and rend the Churches, fill the people with a passionate, unconquerable hatred of Christianity, and make them see and feel that dogma and priestcraft are the parents of nearly all the evils over which the Church sheds hypocritical tears; and thenceforth they would know Christianity as the Janus of civilisation, with a face of pretended pity to the suffering poor, and a face of sleek connivance to the spoliators and oppressors of mankind.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

CAGLIOSTRO.

THE annals of occultism know no more famous name than that of Cagliostro. While all else advances human folly remains almost stationary. The pretensions and career of all miracle-mongers and those who trade on human gullibility are remarkably similar, and in exposing the life of this notorious impostor we can hardly fail to throw some little light both upon his predecessors and successors.

Anyone who desires to closely study the character of the cleverest charlatan of last century—we cannot say of modern times, for we fancy a living rival outdoes him—may be safely referred to Carlyle's admirable essay, written, as it is, with all the sympathy a detester of quacks can bestow upon a charlatan. A writer coming after Carlyle gleans but a stubble ground. Yet in this case that powerful genius did not quite cover the whole field. Two important English studies of Cagliostro have since been written, one in the *Dublin University Magazine* (1871), and the other by an occultist, Mr. A. E. Waite, in his recent *Lives of Alchemistical Philosophers*. Since Carlyle's essay, moreover, two attempts have been made to whitewash Cagliostro, one by Charles Sotheran in a little tract published by D. M. Bennett in New York in 1875; and the other by Madame Blavatsky in the last number of *Lucifer*. We do not wonder at Madame Blavatsky having made a close study of her predecessor in occult arts. Cagliostro whitewashed, there might be some chance of his successor shining as an angel of light. But the lady's exculpation simply consists in setting down all that he tells against her hero as inventions of the Jesuits, unmindful that a pretty full report of his career can be gathered, apart from that published from his own confession and that of his wife, when finally arrested at Rome.

Cagliostro, like Jesus Christ, seems to have cast doubts on his own parentage, and of course Madame Blavatsky also seeks to make him a child of mystery. Giuseppe Balsamo, as Mr. Waite, another Theosophist, candidly says, "whatever has been advanced to the contrary by himself or his admirers, was the son of

Peter [Pietro] Balsamo and Felicia Braconieri, both of humble extraction." He was born at Palermo, Sicily, June 8, 1743.

His father died a few months after his birth. Left to the inadequate control of his widowed mother, he betrayed even in his earliest years a selfish and indolent disposition. He was sent by an uncle to the Seminary of the St. Roch, where he proved his aversion to discipline by running away. Then placed in a Benedictine Convent he came under the tuition of the convent apothecary, from whom he learnt the first principles of chemistry and medicine. Even then it was remarked that he seemed eager to discover those secrets which could be turned to account by charlatans. After several escapades, scandalous to the fathers, this black sheep escaped from the convent and returned to the maternal fold. Here he is said to have employed his talents, first in forging tickets for the theatre, and afterwards in forging a will; and it is even said he killed a man in one of the many brawls in which he had a share.

After cheating a credulous goldsmith named Marano out of sixty ounces of gold, under pretext of finding a hidden treasure, he fled to Messina, where he is said to have met the adept Althotas, who is said to have been an Armenian, with whom he went to Egypt, there to be instructed in the occult sciences, Egypt then playing the part which has since been assigned to Thibet. Possibly this adventure with the adept and the visit to Egypt is entirely mythical. Certainly he found out a method of making gold, by setting up a gaming house in Naples, for the benefit, that is the bleeding, of wealthy foreigners who visited the city.

At Rome he pretended to piety, and found many illustrious dupes. Here he married the young and beautiful Lorenza Feliciani, in whose charms he saw the pathway to fortune. Balsamo was no beauty. On the contrary, a most dusky, bull-necked, mastiff-faced, sinister-looking individual. Thus is he pictured by Carlyle, from engravings executed for admirers: "A most portentous face of scoundrelism; a fat, snub, abominable face; dowlapped, flat nosed, greedy, full of greediness, sensuality, ox-like obstinacy; a forehead impudent, refusing to be ashamed." Like many another ill-looking man, he gained a pretty wife, chiefly, we may suppose, by his brazen impudence. All his biographers concur in describing Lorenza as a charming person; slight in figure, of graceful bearing and with captivating eyes.

Madame Blavatsky ascribes her hero's misfortunes and ill repute to a bad wife, but his other whitewasher Mr. Sotheran says "Through changing fortunes, in evil and in good report, she remained a true and faithful wife." Certain it is that Balsamo made his wife the principle instrument of his fortune. Henceforth he was known under various aliases, as the Marquis Pellegrini, Don Tischio, Count Melina, Belmonte, Fenix, Anna and Harat were other of his aliases before he finally took to theosophy, and the title of Count Alessandro di Cagliostro. Balsamo sought without scruple to undermine his wife's notions of honor and to make her beauty the means of advancing his own fortunes. They travelled from place to place, he living on her prostitution, setting his honor at the highest price obtainable. But the course of scoundrelism does not always run smooth, and if at one time we find them riding with postillions, at another they are begging on a pilgrimage. Cagliostro, after a brief practice as doctor at Madrid, comes to London—

"The needy villain's general home
The common sewer of Paris and of Rome."

But here he got landed in the King's Bench prison at the suit of his landlord. From this retreat he was rescued by the charity of Sir Edward Hales. Soon after we find him decorating the summer-house of Doctor Benamore, not however to his satisfaction, and

it is also said that he repaid his employer's kindness by seducing his daughter.

Giuseppe and Lorenza, once more friendless and in poverty, decided to return to the Continent. At Dover they met a certain Monsieur Duplaisir, and with him they journeyed to Paris, Madame la Comtesse in the postchaise with Duplaisir, whilst the complaisant count jogged behind on horseback. At Paris, Lorenza became the mistress of Duplaisir, and the three lived together some months, but Balsamo, seeking too much money, Duplaisir proposed to Madame that she should commence business on her own account. What was not sufficient for three, and one of them Count Cagliostro, would amply suffice for two alone. The fair Lorenza agreed. But the Count was not to be shaken off so easily. He obtained an order for her arrest, and she was imprisoned for several months in Sainte Pélagie. Figuiet in his *History of the Marvellous in Modern Times* says that at a later period when Cagliostro, uplifted by notoriety and fortune, returned to Paris with a superb equipage, he strenuously denied his first sojourn in the capital and the disgraceful episode of Sainte Pélagie. He maintained that his wife, to whom he now gave the name of Seraphina, had no connection with the imprisoned Lorenza Feliciani, nor he, the Count Cagliostro, with the quack who had been prohibited from continuing his rogueries. But certain legal documents of irrefutable authenticity substantiate the contrary assertion of his enemies.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

WHY I LEFT THE CHURCH.

BY THE EX-REV. H. O. PENTECOST.

From the "Truthseeker" Annual.

IN 1871, I think, I was ordained as the pastor of a small mission Baptist church down on Long Island, in a neighborhood in which the people were divided into two classes—those who dug clams for a living and those who didn't. Or perhaps I might say those who could read and write and those who couldn't. Being in the bivalve mollusk region, the church over which I was called to preside was naturally of the hardshell variety.

I came very near not being ordained. It happened in this way. I had immersed some new converts in the brook down by an old mill while I was simply a licentiate. In the Baptist church a young man intending to preach is first licensed by some local church and afterward ordained by a council of ministers, and it is supposed that he will neither baptise converts nor administer the "Lord's supper" until after he has been ordained. When I was up before the ordaining council I was quizzed about baptising those people in the brook. I told the small magnates assembled that I thought I was called by God to preach, and therefore had my authority from him to baptise as well as to administer the communion. One of them asked what I thought was the good of their coming all the way down on Long Island to ordain me if I considered myself ordained already. I told him that I thought there was no good in it. Then he wanted to know what I would do if they refused to ordain me, and I told him that I would go on just the same. It was like the firing of a bomb among the members of the council, and I was told afterward that if it had not been for my brother, who was one of the leading ministers in that association, I would not have been ordained.

I mention this circumstance to show that from the first moment of my entering the Christian ministry I had no respect for the machinery of the church. I knew even then that ordaining councils and all that sort of thing, mean simply that the parsons already manufactured wish to control the market—wish to impress each incoming member of the profession with the fact that he is created by them, and, therefore, to a greater or less extent, amenable to their authority. The regularly ordained clergy of each denomination

constitute a Parson Trust, and even in my callow days I saw and understood it.

I said that "my" church (that is the way ministers habitually speak of the churches of which they are pastors—"my" church) was a hardshell Baptist church. That means, for one thing, that it was a close-communion church—one that would not allow members of any but regular Baptist churches to sit with them at the "Lord's table" and eat a small piece of bread or cracker and sip a few drops of wine in commemoration of the death of their savior. Well, I got into trouble over that doctrine, in which I never did and never could believe.

There was a Congregationalist, whose summer residence was in the neighborhood, who gave almost all the money that built the church edifice. One Sunday this man and his family remained to the communion service, I saw one of the deacons omit to offer him the bread and wine. I knew these deacons and the whole church were mightily glad to get his money, and I thought if they were so ready to establish and maintain financial fellowship with him, they might as well indulge in a little spiritual fellowship as well. And so I took the bread and wine over to the man and his family myself. That was too much. A council of ministers was called and my resignation was accepted on the spot. It looks all very picayune to me now, but it was a large-sized trouble then.

I mention this circumstance, also, to show again that, although I was a firm believer in what are called the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, I never was a "churchman."

Now let us have done with details.

My first disappointment with and grievance against the church was that she was so far away from the teaching of Jesus. He taught plainly (supposing the gospels to be true) that we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless we are poor; but the church teaches that we should save money and accumulate, so as to be able to do good with it. He taught that we should lay up treasures only in heaven, but the church loves the man with a bank account. He taught that we should live without anxiety from day to day, as the birds and the flowers, but the church despises those who follow his teaching. He taught that we should give to those who ask of us, but the church turns such persons over to the Charity Organisation Society or has them arrested. He taught that we should love our enemies, and turn the left cheek to him who strikes us on the right, but the church upholds the shooting of burglars, the hanging of murderers, and war. He associated with the kind of persons with whom the church will have nothing to do, except at incalculably long range, through its Howard and Florence missions—as one who holds his nose and lifts a filthy rag on the end of a long stick. He preached no system of doctrine, and said that they who love God and their fellow-men shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But the church has long creeds, full of doctrines that Jesus never dreamed of, and distinctly declares that those who think they can be saved by simply loving God and serving their fellow-men are heretics. In short, I saw that the church is worshipping Jesus as God, but declining to follow his teachings, on the ground that they are visionary, impracticable and false.

(To be continued.)

Mr. Hugh Price Hughes advocates Methodist Sisterhoods and asks for £1,000 a year for the experiment. He hopes to see to hear some day "hundreds of sisters who at their own cost, without receiving one penny from our churches, will do the kind of work we have indicated," and become cheap advertising touts of the gospel shop run by the author of *The Atheist Shoemaker*.

CHARLES LAMB was once persuaded to attend a Methodist "Experience" meeting in company with a friend. The friend spoke with great fervor and self-abasement, and finally Lamb himself was called upon to address the meeting. He rose and stuttered out, "I have nothing to say as to myself, but I can quite c-c-confirm what my friend has said as to his being a m-m-miserable sinner."

ACID DROPS.

The last blessed Sabbath was Hospital Sunday in Manchester. Three special services were held in the cathedral, and the total of the day's collections reached the magnificent, sublime, unprecedented figure of £39 7s. After this wonderful effort, it is far from surprising to hear that the evening preacher, the Rev. John Henn, claimed hospitals and dispensaries as entirely due to Christianity. Prior to the Christian era, he said, such institutions were unknown. Now, this reverend Henn is hatching a chalk egg. He may deceive ignorant spectators, but people who know what's what are not so easily taken in. Why, even in a little volume published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (*Buddhism*, by Professor T. W. Rhys Davids), it may be read how King Asoka, long before the days of Jesus Christ, established hospitals not only for men, but also for beasts. Then again, if Mr. Henn will turn to Mr. Walter Pater's beautiful *Marius the Epicurean*, he will read that the Grecian temples of Æsculapius—the god of healing—were “really also a kind of hospitals for the sick, administered in a full conviction of the religiousness, the refined and sacred happiness, of a life spent in the relieving of pain.”

O thou Henn, hatching the chalk egg, do get off it and incubate a real one. Cease cackling sectarian bigotry, and perhaps you'll draw a bigger collection for the hospitals. The sum of £39 7s. for a whole day's begging in Manchester cathedral shows you are on the wrong tack. Anyhow, don't lie in the pulpit gratuitously. You have to do a certain amount of lying professionally, but for God's sake—or your own—don't do it *con amore* and give such full measure, pressed down, and running over. Give the truth a chance now and then, and you'll feel the better for it the next morning.

The only item in the Queen's Speech especially interesting to us as Freethinkers is the promise of “A Bill for improving the procedure by which tithe is now levied, and for facilitating its redemption.” Should not this last clause read “and for handing over permanently to the Church of England national property, to which its right of use becomes year by year more imperilled”?

The silly young glutton who is now playing “the young Pretender” in Paris, is very pious as well as a lover of costly wines and *recherché* repasts. After polishing off his sumptuous breakfast on Sunday morning he asked to be allowed to go to mass; but the keeper told him that nobody at the Conciergerie ever made such a request except disorderly women, and that his presence amongst them would give rise to hilarity. So a chaplain was brought in to minister to the young man's spiritual wants, and it is to be hoped that the Body of God, which he no doubt swallowed, mixed up well with the food from the restaurant.

We have often told people to laugh and grow wise. Now we find the *Christian World* siding with the blasphemer. Its advice is “Love God and laugh,” but it pleads for “fun,” and in the long run the bright spirit of laughter will vanquish all the solemn ghosts of mystery and imposture.

The Rev. Bernard J. Snell preached—we beg pardon, lectured—at Manchester on Sunday afternoon on “The New Democracy.” But although the subject was political he gave the lecture a pious twang. For instance, he said that out of mistakes came progress, as out of chaos came cosmos. Out of *chaos!* Fancy an “educated” man, at this time of day, talking such nonsense! Science knows nothing of chaos; can't indeed conceive chaos; and doubts if it ever existed except in the heads of theologians.

Mr. Snell wound up by declaring that politics and religion must go hand in hand, otherwise religion would not be real and politics would not be unselfish. How pretty! But let us work it out. Religion is to borrow *reality* from politics, and certainly it wants it. In return religion is to lend politics *unselfishness*. But how is it to lend what it hasn't got? The fact is, that while religion has been prating about what it would do, political reform has gone and done it; and while religion has been canting about

unselfishness, political reform has been carrying out that big instalment of it known as Justice.

Our parsons are always imitating the sacerdotalism of Rome, and while it only consists in putting on gorgeous vestments and other histrionic accessories, churchgoers are content with it as part of a well-got-up show supplying them with a respectable Sunday entertainment. But how would they like the genuine article as expounded by Priest Harrington to his dupes? He is reported as saying there is as much difference between a priest and a layman as there is between God Almighty and the Devil himself. This is priestism pure and simple, and though our High Church clergy would not venture to say it, there are not a few of them who would like to.

The demand for an Abridged Bible was exemplified lately by the rebuff a colporteur got from a Scotch fisherwoman—“Na, na. We're for nae Bibles here. Bairns hiv nae business t' ken about sic things.” She had probably read some of the stories in Genesis with considerable disgust.

Sky-pilots are always supposed to have a call from the Holy Ghost before entering on any particular office. Such advertisements as the following from the *Church Times* seem to indicate that there may possibly be in some cases other inducements of a more temporal character:—“Advowson for sale, beautifully situated in Berkshire, near the river; net income about £300; excellent house and grounds; small pop.; near a station. Incumbent aged nearly 80.—Mr. Corbett, etc.” Such advertisements may be found in any issue of the Church papers, notwithstanding the existence of a Society for Abolishing Purchase in the Church.

Hypnotism threatens to be held responsible for most of the crimes and all the miracles. An American hypnotiser who calls himself “Prof.” Seymour, explains the miracles of Christ by his own performances. Instead of feeding five thousand, J. C. “psychologised” them into the belief that they had a good square meal, and also we suppose into the belief that twelve baskets full of fragments were left over. We suppose, too, the death on the cross and the ascent into heaven were equally “psychologised.” Our impression is the early Christians were so credulous they did not need much psychologising.

When at the British Museum hunting up the true history of Cagliostro our sub. had twice the fortune to meet Madame Blavatsky, with her arms glittering with golden bangles and her fingers sparkling with diamonds. It may surprise some that a lady who claims to have access to occult knowledge, and to libraries far vaster than the British Museum, should seek for material for *Lucifer* in that library. It is also curious that the learned lady should twice leave her umbrella behind her. But her head is filled with more important things than umbrellas.

Over nineteen tons of embalmed cats have been landed from Egypt at Liverpool. These were once the divinities of the Egyptians, and a large find of their remains being recently discovered, they were sold for manure at £3 13s. 9d. per ton. When the Christian pantheon is emptied there will not be the shade of a phantom of a ghost of any divinity. Not enough will be realised to manure a single crocus in a flower-pot.

Some people may have wondered what the conferences of sky-pilots on the Lord's second coming are carried on for. An answer comes from America, where a conference of twenty preachers, presided over by the Rev. Israel Hollock, was held at Brusby Mountain, Wilkes County. These worthies meant business. They did not fall at loggerheads about the interpretation of scripture. No. They solemnly agreed that J. C. was due this very year, and that they would preach he was coming. As a consequence much excitement prevails, which it is said will even affect the crops, farmers who believe the holy message concluding it is no use to make any provision ahead. What should people want with crops if they have Christ?

Dr. Kirker, giving at the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society “Sanitary Notes on Egypt and Palestine,” expressed his belief that the plagues of Egypt might be accounted for by natural phenomena. Thus the plague of

boils was probably an epidemic preceded by an unhealthy season. The darkness which might be felt was very likely a dense fog. The apparent turning of pools of water into blood might have been caused by stagnant water being discolored by the surrounding soil. The plague of frogs would be a natural result of the destruction of fish in contaminated waters, for the frogs would then be sure to assert themselves.

Dr. Kirker forgets that the plagues were given as signs of the miraculous power of Jahveh, but we fancy from what he says of the plague of lice in which the Egyptians saw the finger of God, that he is somewhat sceptical as to that finger. He is reported as saying: "With regard to the development of insect life, he did not think it necessary to dwell on those two plagues, for everyone who had visited Egypt would be inclined to feel that the troubles of the ancient Egyptians and the Israelites were shared by the inhabitants in the present day." Dr. Kirker did not venture to refer to the destruction of the first-born to any known natural phenomena, and seems indeed to hold loose-minded rationalistic views quite inconsistent with the inspiration of the Bible.

What a modicum of logic and common sense goes to the making of a minister! Here is the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes boasting of an "answer to prayer." He besought the Lord for £500 by a certain date, but he also took the precaution to inform the St. James's Hall congregation of the fact on two successive Sundays. Luckily the cash arrived on the very evening it was wanted, as it always does in these stories; and Mr. Hughes asks Professors Huxley and Tyndall what they think of it. Well now, if he asked our opinion, we should say that he is either a clever humbug or an awful fool. Fancy keeping a secret by telling three thousand people! Mr. Hughes should pray for what he wants in secret, taking care to let nobody but God know, and see if the money comes *then*.

The Rev. Wm. Frederick Gover, of Oaksey Rectory, Wilts, is a muscular Christian. He is said to be more familiar with prize-fighting than preaching. This clerical prop of the Primrose League recently interrupted the speakers at a Liberal van meeting, and has since been committed for trial for aiding and abetting in a drunken brawl and prize-fight.

It was a moonlight fight. Mr. Gover acted as second to one of the pugilists, picked up his man five or six times, called out "Time," and used language showing he was more in his element there than in preaching that if struck on the right cheek one should turn the left also.

The Abbé Martin, who insured his brother's life for a heavy sum and then endeavored to strangle him in his sleep, has been sentenced by the Allier Assize Court to penal servitude for life.

While Mrs. Roberts was worshipping in a chapel at Plasynddod, Wales, she was suddenly seized with paralysis, and died before relief could be obtained.

Thomas Hesketh, confectioner and lay preacher, of Heavily, is charged with the wilful murder of the infant child of Elizabeth Parker, with whom he is said to have cohabited for more than two years. The body was exhumed by order of the Home Secretary. Hesketh is committed for trial.

There have been "scenes" at Rotterdam over the opera "Falka," in which a drunken monk appears on the stage. Of course there have been plenty of drunken monks *off* the stage, but a drunken monk *on* the stage the Catholics regard as blasphemy. The police have had great difficulty in quelling the riot inside the theatre, and a big fight took place outside, the police having to use their sabres. All the rumpus seems to have been got up by the Catholic papers: so true it is that religion always encourages peace and goodwill.

The "Strict Baptist Church" in Highbury Place made a mistake. It admitted into fellowship a lady who had not gone through the process of dipping. But she was physically deformed, and this was held to render the ceremony impossible. The "London Association of Strict Baptist

Churches," however, held the plea to be invalid, and excluded the church at Highbury. This brought the elders and the congregation to a sense of their awful position. They caved in, found they had been hasty, and made arrangements for giving the deformed lady a dipping. She was seated in a chair, wearing a specially designed dress, and was properly soured in the baptismal tank. Thus all's well that ends well. The Church is received back into the Association, and the deformed lady has had the holy bath which is indispensable to all emigrants to heaven.

For absurdity *The Reaper*, an Evangelical paper emanating from Glasgow, beats the comic papers all to fits. Among the gems we have culled from the February number of this magazine are the "China Inland Mission is praying for 1,000 additional workers." "Spain, France and Italy debased and down-trodden by the papacy, or cheated and misguided by infidelity, have great demands upon Christian sympathies, prayers and efforts. The one great desideratum is that the Lord's people be anointed and filled with the holy spirit." "The beast from the sea is unquestionably the same with Daniel's weakened iron and clay condition of the Roman Empire." Of Mr. Bradlaugh "to rank such a man with Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone is a crime against humanity."

The Reaper falls into ecstasy of admiration at an Irish lady in Africa who is "the terror of the wife-beaters in her district." Directly she hears a woman's cry, divining the reason, she starts forth to the rescue, and whether it is the moral influence she has acquired over them, or her tall imposing presence, that produces the desired effect, the irate husbands desist immediately at her word of command. This lady need not have gone to Africa to quell wife beaters. She would have made a good missionary in our own black country.

The Rev. M. Baxter, editor of the *Christian Herald* and author of *Louis Napoleon: the Destined Monarch of the World*, shifted his date for the final winding up of creation from year to year. 1890 for the past few years had been his favorite date for the beginning of the end, but he now shows symptoms of placing it a little further off. Perhaps some one has offered him seven years' purchase for his house and other property, which must be very considerable in amount. To prey on human credulity is a better paying game than to expose it, and Mr. Baxter must have netted something considerable by his prophecies of the near approach of the end of the world.

The Echo says: "The Prophet Baxter is still starring in the provinces, and frightening many worthy old ladies of both sexes with his predictions of a multitude of coming horrors. Meanwhile some correspondent with a memory has recalled the fact that in the spring of 1888 the prophet advertised 'wars and troubles and revolutions between 1888 and 1891.' This period being now more than half over, it is really high time that the wars and revolutions commenced."

Preaching on Sunday at St. Margaret's Church, Archdeacon Farrar said he feared the corruption of the Church from within rather than from the infidel or sceptic from without. Well, so long as the Church goes to bits, it doesn't matter whether the explosion happens inside or outside. We rather fancy it will be a double explosion—inside and out at the same time, and Dr. Farrar may be alive to weep over the rubbish.

"If the Jews," says the *Echo*, "did nothing else for mankind but institute the Sunday, they would entitle themselves to everlasting honor." Such is the kind of ignorance that passes for knowledge in anonymous journalism. Every scholar is aware that a day of rest was known before the time of the Jews, and that the Jews themselves derived it from the civilisation of Babylon.

We did not join in the general laudation of sister Rose Gertrude who went out to take charge of the leper hospital on the island of Molokai. The newspapers were very hysterical, and it was difficult to discover the young lady's real motives. No doubt there was a feeling of natural disinterestedness in her, but she may also have been instigated by her religious advisers, and this does not seem

improbable in the light of a recent letter by her father. This gentleman, a Devonshire clergyman, says that she was "both beguiled and received into the Roman Church secretly, when quite a girl." He also says that she "preferred to receive doctrines on authority, without having to inquire and decide for herself." This is the kind of nature that priests find it very easy to sacrifice.

Mr. Gladstone will begin in April a series of articles on "The Old Testament" in one of the monthlies. We hope he will be more lucid than he was in the article that Ingersoll replied to. We shall deal with Mr. Gladstone's articles as they appear, and we hope he will give us something to criticise.

Mr. Gladstone's articles, reprinted as a pamphlet, should sell well in the streets, especially outside churches. "Here you are, sir, the Grand Old Man on the Grand Old Book—sixpence!" Sounds well, doesn't it?

The Rev. Walter Walsh, who has been enlightening the Newcastle Secularists on four Sunday afternoons, has a "Monthly Messenger" in connection with his Church. The February number devotes a corner to the "young folks," for whom it prints "a Biblical puzzle." Here it is:

"A Young Student was asked:—'How many boys are there in your class?' He replied:—'If you multiply the number of Jacob's Sons, by the number of times the Israelites compassed Jericho, and add to the product the number of measures of Barley which Boaz gave Ruth, divide this by the number of Haman's Sons, subtract the number of each kind of clean beasts that went into the Ark, multiply by the number of men that went to seek Elijah after he was taken to heaven, subtract from this Joseph's age at the time he stood before Pharaoh, add the number of stones in David's Bag when he killed Goliath, subtract the number of furlongs that Bethany was distant from Jerusalem, divide by the number of Anchors cast out when Paul was shipwrecked, and subtract the number of persons saved in the Ark, the remainder will be the answer.'"

Here you are, ladies and gentlemen; this is the sort of stuff they offer your children! Why, a child had better be engaged in "mischief" than occupied with such imbecility.

Mr. Walsh sometimes writes as though he superintended that children's corner. For instance, he says—"The Creator adapts all things to the natural wants of his creatures. If there is an eye, there is a flower to gratify it; if an ear, music to please it. If there is a bird, there is an atmosphere for flight; if an animal, a solid globe for it to tread on." He might have added that, if there is a parson, there is a pulpit for him to preach from. Mr. Walsh's theology (and science) is like that of the divine who found a mark of Providence in the fact that large navigable rivers generally flow by capital cities.

Mrs. Parmley has been conducting "a week's gospel mission" at Chester-le-Street. Her concluding discourse dealt considerably with the *Freethinker*, which the lady said, had recently published "a series of obnoxious and hideous figures" on the book of Ruth. Mrs. Parmley is evidently as accurate as others in her line of business. We should like her to tell us *when* we printed a series of illustrations on Miss Ruth and her adventures in the barn.

Mrs. Parmley chose a queer text from a queer book for her discourse on Ruth.—"A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me." This is the first half of the thirteenth verse of the first chapter of the Song. The second half we *dare not print*, but of course Mrs. Parmley knows it. The ladies—especially Catholic ladies—have a wonderful fondness for that old Song of Songs which *isn't* Solomon's. But they ought to drop it when they mount the rostrum and address mixed audiences of men and women, and boys and girls.

Among recent records of divine beneficence we note the terrible colliery disaster near Pontypool, Monmouth, resulting in the loss of over 170 lives; a fatal fire at Southampton, where two children were burnt to death, while their frantic mother, blinded and scorched by the fire, vainly endeavored to save them; influenza in Mexico so fatal that there are not hearses enough to convey the bodies of the dead; avalanches and floods in America, occasioning loss of life and enormous destruction of property.

The *Oldham Evening Chronicle* has an amusing account of a "marriage" at the Salvationist Temple. The smartly written report was appropriately headed Salvationist Burlesques, for the marriage was, of course, only a dodge to raise coin, the legal ceremony having taken place previously.

A divinity student named E. Q. Coles has been charged with an indecent assault upon a young lad in the vestry of St. Stephen's Church, Kensington.

"Supplied for the Service" is stamped on copies of H. L. Hastings' lecture on the Bible, which are being circulated on board Her Majesty's ships off Portsmouth. Surely there is nothing to equal the impudence of these religious zealots. Some pious jack-in-office must have permitted this manoeuvre, and if religious equality were a fact, as it will be some day, he would be brought to book for his impertinence.

Mr. Moody, the American revivalist, thinks Christ will soon put in a second appearance. When he comes Chicago won't be ready. Won't it, though? We guess it would ask him to repeat that wave-walking performance on Lake Michigan, and some enterprising caterer would offer him half the gate money.

Moody says the infidels can keep on barking at Christ. He just keeps on shining like the moon. Precisely so. Most of his teaching is moonshine, especially the parts that Moody isn't fool enough to obey.

"Love not the world nor the things of the world," says the Holy Ghost. But the Rev. John McNeill differs from the Paraclete, ay, from the whole blessed Trinity. He advises a young man to fall in love with a young woman. No doubt his advice will be extensively followed.

Courtship and Marriage were the subject of a recent sermon by Prebendary Harry Jones. He said they were of divine origin, and perhaps this is true. Anyhow, there is a God the Father and a God the Son, and perhaps God the Holy Ghost is the wife of the one and the mother of the other. Will Prebendary Jones preach a sermon on Jehovah's courtship? It would draw—especially with magic lantern illustrations.

Stands Scotland where it did? Hardly. A ship was launched at Govan on Sunday afternoon, a monster of 8,500 tons, and 500 feet long; and what was worse, thousands of Scotties watched the performance. Guid God, mon! What's auld Scotland comin' tae?

The first step has been taken in the proceedings against Dr. Marcus Dods for heresy. The case is likely to prove a lively one, and is sure to make the heresies complained of more familiar to theologically backward Scotsmen.

A Jewish woman in Philadelphia made complaint recently before a magistrate that she had been taken by her husband before a rabbi and constrained to accede to a decree of divorce under the Hebrew law. The couple had lived together for fourteen years, and the husband's only motive for his course was that he desired to marry their servant girl, Dora Goldbeck, with whom he had already been living on terms of intimacy. The man's contention that he was acting strictly in accordance with the divine law received little attention from the Christian officials of the United States.

It is stated that the custom of granting divorces without regard to the laws of the commonwealth prevails especially among the Russian Jews, of whom large numbers have in recent years emigrated to America. In Russia the rabbis are granted legal jurisdiction over this subject, and when they emigrate the rabbis still continue to exercise this jurisdiction. The decree is written in Hebrew, and a copy given to each of the parties, who suppose it to be a valid and absolute divorce. Like other religionists, the Jews put their religion above their allegiance to civil law.

At the Golden Gate, St. Peter—"Who are you?"
Applicant—"I was the manager of a London syndicate."
St. Peter—"Well, you go to—the other place. This place is not for sale."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Feb. 16, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town Road; at 7.30, "An Hour with the Devil."

Thursday, Feb. 20, Hall of Science, Old Street, E.C., at 8 "Freethought and God." Free Lecture, with unlimited discussion."

Feb. 23, Hall of Science, London.

March 2, Manchester; 9, Camberwell; 16, Cardiff; 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London.

April 6, Milton Hall; 13, Portsmouth; 20, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science.

May 4, Newcastle; 11, South Shields.

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.

C. GORDON.—Mary Ann Girling, the so called Shakeress, died at the community she founded called "The People of God," on Sept. 18th, 1886. She claimed to be an incarnation of Christ The sect, after suffering great hardship near Hordle, Lymington, Hants, disbanded.

JOHN STOKES, a bricklayer's laborer, sends us a subscription of nine shillings, acknowledged in another column, for the Swedish Prisoner's Fund. If handsome is as handsome does, John Stokes should be an Apollo. Several better-off readers might take a lesson from him.

W. CARTER.—Thanks for the cutting. No wonder Canon Talbot shirks a debate with Mr. Foote. His lecture on the Gospels is a tissue of assumptions and misrepresentations, apparently designed to bamboozle an ignorant Christian audience, and the disingenuous reference to Matthew Arnold is simply disgraceful.

C. G. SPENCER.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome.

M. CLAY.—Many thanks for cuttings.

D. WOODHOUSE.—Much obliged for the papers.

WILLIAM SIMONS.—Cuttings are always welcome.

B. INGHAM writes that he got his newsagent to expose the *Freethinker* and take a few copies for sale, guaranteeing him against loss from unsold copies. The result is that he disposes of half a dozen extra copies already. Other readers might go and do likewise.

J. EVANS.—See "Acid Drops."

D. MCINTYRE.—Of course there are good as well as bad things in the Bible; otherwise it would have been kicked out of the world long ago. The Koran—the Bible of the Mohammedans—can be obtained at almost any book-shop.

H. CHAPMAN.—Greatly pleased with your letter. We are glad to know that Freethought is spreading in the Navy, and that our publications are doing such good work there.

W. STRAKER.—We are much obliged for the copy you send us of *Il Secolo Tartufo* by Mantegazza.

G. WISE.—Haven't you some friend who could prevent you from making such ghastly mistakes? Here you are, only a fortnight after your two nights' public debate with Mr. S. Standing, complaining that the Secularists are shy of discussion. By the way, unless you want your letters disregarded, you had better couch them in language of ordinary politeness in future.

J. H. THOMAS.—It is a long subject, and we have had our say. Thanks for the cutting.

H. SANDERSON.—Thanks for your good wishes. We hope we shall always have your respect.

W. TENCH.—We don't think there is any Branch at Norwich. There ought to be though.

A. D.—Green's History would be more serviceable to you than Hume's or Smollett's. The early Fathers can only be obtained complete in the Ante-Nicene Library, an expensive collection. *Supernatural Religion* is in three volumes at 36s. All Dr. Bain's books are good. Darwin's chief works are in seven-and-sixpenny volumes. Never mind Christian insults.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—Some of them might be useful.

W. LAPPAGE.—The report question is still open.

H. COURTNEY.—We will deal with the matter next week.

J. ROBINSON.—There is no biography of Huxley or Spencer. Write to Mr. Forder for the others, enclosing stamp for reply as to volumes and prices.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

J. S.—Thanks.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Cambria Daily Leader—Liberator—Liberty—Western Figaro—Menschenthum—Western American—Neues Freireligioses Sonntags-Blatt—Open Court—Eastern Evening News—The Reaper—Portsmouth Evening News—Freethinkers' Magazine—Lichtfreund—Dundalk Democrat—Manchester Guardian—Der Arme Teufel—Chester-le-Street Advertiser—Lucifer—Bulletin des Sommaires—Southampton Times—Wiltshire Times—Tit-Bits—Swindon Advertiser—Oldham Evening News—Answers—Consett Guardian—Devon Evening News—Bristol Mercury—Kensington Churchman—Weekly Dispatch.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish our attention directed.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE'S lectures on Sunday at Blackburn were delivered in the Oddfellow's Hall, the lessee of the theatre having declined to let it again for fear of losing his license. The hall appears to have seen better days, and the audiences were only middling; but there was plenty of questioning and discussion after the lectures, and two reporters took notes of the afternoon lecture in reply to the Rev. J. Ogmores Davies's sermon on Atheism. The Blackburn Branch consists almost exclusively of working men, and it lost its financial pillar when Mr. Umpleby removed to London. We hope, however, that last Sunday's meetings will bring the Branch a few new members.

THE meeting of the National Secular Society at the Hall of Science, London, to-day (Feb. 16) will commence at 11.15 instead of 11 as previously announced. The change has been made to accommodate many members from the country.

THOSE who want to view Mr. Bradlaugh's presents from India will find them in the minor hall, upstairs, before or after the meeting. A luncheon will be provided at the Manchester Hotel at one o'clock. Tickets can be obtained of Mr. Forder before the morning's business begins.

NEXT Thursday evening a special course of four Free Lectures will open at the London Hall of Science under the auspices of the Secular Federation. Mr. Foote will speak on "Freethought and God." The subsequent lecturers are Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. G. Standing. Discussion is courted, and the Christian Evidence Society has promised to send representatives.

THESE lectures will all be free; that is, there will be no charge for admission. But there will be a few reserved seats for which tickets can be purchased. Some Freethinkers will no doubt take this method of contributing to the expenses of the enterprise.

ON Sunday afternoon, at 4 p.m., our good friend Mr. H. L. Braekstad lectures for the Sunday Lecture Society at St. George's Hall, Langham Place, on "Norway, its Scenery and its People." The lecture will be illustrated with oxy-hydrogen lantern views.

ON Saturday evening, Feb. 1, the Swindon Branch put themselves *en evidence* by holding a dinner at the Golden Lion Hotel. The tickets announced the dinner at another place, but the proprietor faked at the last moment; the repast proved, however, that nothing was lost by the enforced change. Mr. Carrien, the president of the Branch, was, through illness, unable to be present, but Mr. Richards was equal to the occasion. Good speeches were made by Mr. Dawe and Mr. Jones, and Mr. Forder, who went down from London, responded to the toast of the N. S. S. Excellent singing and music by Messrs. Weight, Spratt, Richards and Lawrence contributed to make the evening a most enjoyable one.

MR. FORDER impressed on the members and friends present the urgent necessity of attempting propagandist work in their district, promising the assistance of the Organisation Committee if needed. Most of the members

are employed by the G. W. R. Company, and it seems that there is an impression that it would be bad for any of them to attempt aggressive work. There are some, however, brave enough to attempt this, and although no hall can be hired for a Freethought lecture it is likely ere long that Swindon will be awakened from its long sleep.

MRS. BESANT has been elected president of the "Blavatsky Lodge" of the Theosophical Society. *Sic itur ad astra.*

PROF. ANDREW T. WHITE, of Cornell University, author of the *Warfare of Science*, shows up "The Myth of Lot's Wife" in the February number of the *Popular Science Monthly*.

The *Freethinker's Magazine* for February gives a cut representing "Christians burning Bruno at the Stake." The magazine is enlarged and is full of good readable matter and well deserving of support.

DR. E. ABBOTT, author of *Philochristus*, *The Kernel*, and *the Husk*, and other rationalistic works, is using the leisure gained by his enforced retirement from the City of London School in preparing a commentary on the epistles of St. Paul.

LESLIE STEPHEN, in his Memoir of Gibbon, in the last published volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says: "In accuracy, thoroughness, lucidity, and comprehensive grasp of a vast subject, the 'History' is unsurpassable. It is the one English history which may be regarded as definitive. The philosophy is, of course, that of the age of Voltaire, and implies a deficient insight into the great social forces. The style, though variously judged, has at least the cardinal merit of admirable clearness, and of pompous is always animated. Whatever its shortcomings, the book is artistically imposing as well as historically unimpeachable as a vast panorama of a great period. Gibbon's fortunate choice of a subject enables him to write the one book in which the clearness of his own age is combined with a thoroughness of research, which has made it a standard for his successors."

THE *Devon Evening Express* (Exeter) is rough on the Bishops who are begging for the poor curates. It prints a little cartoon, showing their lordships of Exeter, London, and Canterbury in the front, holding collection-boxes and tickets showing their own big salaries, and a lean curate in the background, with a sort of "Don't I wish I may get it" look on his emaciated countenance.

SWEDISH PRISONER'S FUND.—We have received the following: J. C. (Blackburn), 10s.; John Stokes, 9s.; (Jarrow) H. Sanderson, 2s. 6d.; John Dickson, 2s. 6d.; W. Plumpton, 2s.; T. Price, 1s.; J. Sanderson, 2s.; H. Richardson, 2s. 6d.

SWEDISH PRISONERS' FUND.—H. J. M., 2s.; A. W. T., 2s.; J. K., 1s.; F. F., 2s. 6d.; J. Knapp, 1s.; W. Cabbell, 5s. 6d.; Hartlepool Branch N.S.S., 10s.; Manchester Branch N.S.S., £1 8s.; C. Roos, 1s. H. Pearse, 1s. Stalybridge Branch N.S.S. 5s.; H. Symes, 1s.—R. Forder, Secretary.

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDREN'S PARTY.—W. Cabbell, 5s.; per Mrs. Fisher, 2s. 4d.; Per Mr. Powell, 11d.; Collected at Hall of Science, £1 12s. 3½d.; per Miss Vance, 2s. 6d.; per Mr. Larkin, 5s.—R. Forder, Secretary.

MRS. THORNTON SMITH had a large audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening, and her lecture gave great satisfaction.

ACCORDING to the biography of James McDonnell, the late eminent journalist, he told an Aberdeen lady that he did not know a single journalist in London, except G. A. Sala, who believed in Christianity, or who ever mentioned lit but as an object of ridicule.

THE *Freethinker* ran out of print early last week, and we fear that some of our regular subscribers must have been disappointed, but they will be able to obtain copies out of the returns if they desire to complete a file. We

generally print in excess of the sale, but it is not always possible to calculate exactly.

THE first series of *Letters to the Clergy*, including all that have appeared up to date, will be on sale next week in a little volume of 128 pages. The letter on Prayer has been much amplified, and Mr. Foote has written a Preface to the collection. The price is one shilling.

A NORTHAMPTON VETERAN.

Mr. Bradlaugh has lost one of his oldest and warmest supporters in Alderman Thomas Adams, who has just died at Northampton. We remember Mr. Adams of old when we were down at Northampton helping to fight Mr. Bradlaugh's election during his absence in America, and he dwells in our recollection as a genial gentleman, as well as a sturdy Radical and an earnest Freethinker. Those were the days that tried men's souls. Mr. Bradlaugh's seat is safe enough now, but he had to battle hard for it for ten years—before he engaged the House of Commons—and among the gallant band of reformers who stood around him at Northampton none was truer or more helpful than Thomas Adams. One by one the Old Guard goes. May the new soldiers of progress be as steadfast and courageous as those who fought around the standard when Balaclava Charges were everyday occurrences.

MR. VOYSEY AND THE GOSPELS.

MR. VOYSEY having been accused by writers in the Unitarian *Inquirer* of unfairness in blaming Unitarians for picking out of the Gospels only such passages as commend themselves, while he himself only picks from the Old Testament certain passages, he replies "I accept as good and true whatever I find in the Old Testament which commends itself to my reason, conscience and love. But I do not, therefore, claim any reverence for the Old Testament as a whole, nor do I deny that the parts of it which I reject belong to it likewise. Some Unitarians, however, not only accept as good and true whatever words, attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, commend themselves to their reason, conscience and love, but they go on to deny that all the rest which they reject was ever spoken by him at all." Mr. Voysey quotes the recent utterance of Dr. Marcus Dods: "The claim of Jesus to be Divine, if not true, was wicked and mad. They had but one alternative either to admit the claim, or to suppose him to be instead of the wisest, the foolishest, and instead of the best, the wickedest of men." Mr. Voysey vehemently protests against the imputation of wickedness, and says it is preposterous to say Christ, in claiming to be God, was wicked and mad too. Mr. Voysey's argument is plausible, but will he apply it to Mohammed's claim to inspiration?

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that may remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

A clergyman, going the rounds of his country parish in the south of Ireland, met a farmer who, though residing in a neighboring parish, was a regular attendant at his church. Said Pat, "Af ye please, yer riverence, would ye mind prayin' for a wee drap o' rain next Sunday, for sorra a thing'll grow in me little garden wid the present hate o' the weather?" "Sorry to hear that, Pat," replied the divine; "but you ought to ask your own parson, not me." "Ah, shure," was the reply, "that's just it; what's the good in axin' him to pray for rain wid them cocks o' hay a-standing on his lawn?"

A MATTER OF ARITHMETIC.

It is one of the finest constituents of human nature that when a man is convinced of some important truth, or, even, of what he may erroneously believe to be an important truth, he desires to convince others of it; and it may be said that just in proportion to his earnestness in spreading his new conviction may his love of truth as a principle be measured.

Were it not for this quality, which may be considered an essential part of every man's character, although some have it much less than others, and some so very slightly that its existence betrays but few signs, there could be no advance; every new opinion would be jealously guarded within the mind of him who had conceived it—for fear of exciting prejudice—and humanity would swelter for ever and a day in a stagnant ocean of stale sentiment.

Whether the belief may conduce to happiness or otherwise is generally a matter of indifference to the one who believes it. What he wants is to convince others of that of which he is convinced himself. That the majority of the human race will be burnt in a lake of fire during all eternity, and poisoned with the fumes of brimstone at the same time; that agonising tortures are predestined for people before they are even born; that hell is paved with the skulls of unbaptised infants; that God and the Lamb and the elect will gloat with infinite joy over the excruciating sufferings of the damned, and similar cruel and nonsensical beliefs have been preached with as much gusto and energy as though they were good and pleasant and true.

When, on the other hand, the belief is one which is grounded on the same mode of reasoning which enables us to tell the hour at which the sun will rise or set, and is one which might be supposed to benefit one's fellow men, as, for instance, when a man is sufficiently enlightened to perceive clearly that the ideas of the childhood of his race are based on dreams, fancies, and illusions; that God, Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, Heaven, Hell, and other theological terms are mere words representative of nothing but confused and contradictory notions, symbolising no external entities, and thus that most people are living under the influence of tremendous delusions, his enthusiasm to spread this belief ought to be in proportion to its philanthropic import.

If Freethinkers were in as much earnest in demolishing the cobwebs of priests as some of the old Christians were in spinning them the number of God's elect would speedily decrease.

Were every reader of this paper to give his weekly copy, after reading it himself, to some Christian, or, failing this—as the chance of receiving a sanctimonious “No, thank you” to the polite request of “Will you accept a paper?” does not tend in the direction of philosophical equanimity—to leave it in some public place for some meek and lowly disciple to pick up, it would be a strange thing indeed if in the course of six months his twenty-six copies had not secured at least one recruit. Thus even this comparatively small amount of enthusiasm would, at the lowest computation, double the circulation of the *Freethinker* every six months, starting somewhere, say at two thousand, and doubling this number every six months for only six years, and nearly every man in the United Kingdom, or rather the civilised parts of it, would be a subscriber and consequently a converted Christian.

The means are simple by which a consummation so devoutly to be wished could be reached—only dropping a paper once a week—and the man who would not do this much for a belief he considers true and vitally important, must, to say the least, be possessed of but an infinitesimal amount of what was before described as one of the finest constituents of human nature.

J. E. ROOSE.

I F ?

An anxious inquirer sends the following question to the editor of the *Ironclad Age*: If there is a God—but there isn't—and this god had a son—but he hadn't—through the assistance of a virgin—but she couldn't—and this son—his own pa—was murdered by god—his other pa—because Eve—our first ma—took some apples and things—which was proper—and this god-kill-god business is my only chance to escape hell—this is hell, isn't it? And the blood of the lamb—Hi Yoop! big injun god! much blood; heap scalps!—is all redeeming and all atoning, am I not saved just the same whether I believe this stuff or not?

MORE PERSECUTION.

Dr. Monroe is unwearied in his defence of poor maligned ministers. Here is his latest:

“In Virginia one would think the ministers might have some chance, but they haven't. A malicious paragraph is going the rounds, which is inserted here so that indignation may have vent:

“Rev. J. R. Stargis, pastor of a church at Richmond, Va., was suspended for writing an improper letter to a married lady of that city.”

“An improper letter! But who says it was improper? Not the friends, but the enemies of Christ. And isn't a moral guide's sacred character something? Shouldn't it outweigh a ton of letters, half of them forgeries? And if a woman is married—does that divorce her from the bridegroom Christ? Does that imply that her soul needs no more saving? Left out of the promises in the good book it takes a great deal of hard work on the part of the clergy to save the women. And this work is performed under a fire of wicked suspicions. Still, though many fall, the holy messengers bravely prosecute the work. Verily such martyrdom merits its reward.”

A DEATH BED CONVERSION.

The London Correspondent of the *Liverpool Post* tells this story concerning the Rev. H. White, the new chaplain of the House of Commons:—Many years ago he was a curate at the East-end, with respect to which epoch in his career he has a gruesome story to tell. One night, after he had gone to bed in his humble lodging, there came an imperative rapping at the street door. On inquiry he found a poorly-dressed woman, who besought him without a moment's delay to go and see her husband, who was dying. She had by chance heard Mr. White preach, and had induced her husband to accept the benefit of his ministration. Mr. White at once dressed, and accompanied his guide through the purlieu of what he recognised as the lowest quarter in his parish. Arrived at a house, he was, after some parley between the woman and the custodian of the door, admitted, and followed the wife into the sick room. Here he found a still young man lying on the bed, evidently close at the gates of death. It was a squalid room, but Mr. White noticed that the thin candles were set in massive silver candlesticks, whilst about the room were strewed many articles of portable property of a character strangely diverse from the ordinary poverty of the apartment. He spoke to the sick man some words of comfort, and finally promised to pray with him. As he spoke he observed a gleam in the sick man's eye, and following his glance, saw that it rested on the light gold watchchain that hung from the pocket of his waistcoat. Leaning over the man he prayed for him, the wife sobbing bitterly. Where “Amen” should have come in he heard the death rattle in the man's throat, and moved away. Then he discovered that the dead man's fingers were entwined in his watchchain, and as he quickly started back the watch came out and fell on the bed. The man was a noted burglar and pickpocket, and even in the throes of death had been unable to resist the temptation unconsciously put in his way.

THE Rev. William Binns, in the *Inquirer*, welcomes Mrs Besant as an “addition to the advocates of fundamental religious ideas.” Mr. Binns also expresses an opinion as to the editor of this journal, but as it comes from a minister of religion it is hardly worth troubling about. We don't fish for clerical compliments, and are very glad to be without them.

MR. BINNS talks downright nonsense when he says “there is a bitter orthodoxy among Secularists.” Every person who is not a lunatic must see the necessity of some understood principles in every voluntary society; and to insist on those principles, in the face of opposition from within or without, is simply to fulfil the object for which the society exists. It is idle to suppose that all opinions are possible in a single society. This is all we have asserted, and if this is “bitter orthodoxy” it is time to revise the dictionary.

THE inhabitants of Peckham have been amused with a new entertainment. A procession of youths, apparently in nightgowns, parading the streets with banners and lamps, was in danger of being taken for a form of religious penance or a novel advertising dodge. And it was the latter; the surpliced choir being the touts to draw an audience to the mission services at the parish church.

A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST.

It may not be generally known that the Rev. John Jasper, the colored theologian of Virginia, is now in San Francisco; and I am not certain of it myself, but I met a man the other day who answers his description, and I think his name must be Jasper. He was discussing religion with Newton Parnell in front of the Sentry Box on Market Street. Said he:

"You gentlemen" (including myself) "are all go'n to hell and burn forever suah, an' doan you make no mistake."

Parnell said: "How do you know?"

"Bible says so."

"Do you believe it?"

"Every word on it, sah! Bible's all the authority I want for faith or works."

"Do you accept its astronomy?"

"Stronomy, geometry, barometry—all on it. Bible's good nuff for me."

"You think Joshua knew more than Copernicus, eh?"

"Never heard of Coterminus. Some fool, I suppose. Used ter be er fool myself, but got over it."

"Are you sure you got over it?"

"Huh?"

"Do you think the Bible is authority in all branches of science—better authority than Darwin, for instance?"

"Darnin, Darrun—oh, Darwin—nevah heerd of him, sah. What fool thing does he say?"

"He holds that men are descended from the lower forms of animal life."

"Well, he must be a fool, wuss'n old Tom Paine. Live in San Francisker, does he?"

"No; he died several year ago."

"Well, that's the curusest think I ever heerd on, and I've heerd a good deal of curus preaching'. So they's some folks believes that, is they? Hi, yi, yah, yah—wow!"

The Rev. Mr. Jasper was so happy at Darwin's expense that we withdrew and left him enjoying himself. He expects to attend the meetings of the Freethought Society this winter and refute the sophistries of Infidelity. Meanwhile he will instruct a local colored congregation in the truths of religion and science.

G. MACDONALD in "Freethought."

AN INSTANCE OF DESIGN.

A child born in West Manchester, New Hampshire, the other day, looked (so the *Philadelphia Ledger* says) more like a frog than a human being. It had no neck, and the eyes, of which there were six, were so located as to look skyward. The arms and hands were formed precisely like those of a frog. It had a double spine, and died soon after birth. When Theists explain how monstrosities are born which are incapable of life, they will have solved one of their many difficulties.

THE DEATH PENALTY!

Humanitarians are questioning the efficacy of the punishment of death as the deterrent of crime, and they point to the fact that there has been a decrease of crime where the punishment has been remitted. Do they not believe that God is the author of the Bible, and that his laws are just? Here are a few of the crimes for which God adjudged the penalty to be death:—Eating leavened bread during passover, Exodus xii, 5; Kidnapping, xxi, 16; Witchcraft, xxii, 18; Idolatry, xxii, 20, Compounding holy ointment, xxii, 33; Working on the Sabbath, xxxi, 16; Eating the fat of sacrifices, Leviticus vii, 29; Eating any manner of blood, vii, 27; Eating a sacrifice of peace offering, xix, 8; Going after familiar spirits, xx, 6; Blasphemy, xxiv, 16.

CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH AMERICA.

As one of the first cares of the Spanish sovereigns was to propagate the Catholic faith in their immense provinces, they established tribunals of the Inquisition successively in the cities of Mexico, Lima, and Cartagena. But in the latter part of the reign of Charles IV. this formidable tribunal was not much feared. Its influence was exercised chiefly to watch and keep out of the country all free literary productions, by them styled *philosophical* books. In the year 1826 a bookseller sent from New York to Cartagena various boxes of valuable Spanish books. Among them were some copies of Voltaire's famous *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. The boxes were opened, and by the influence of some priests the greater part of the books, among which was the dictionary, were refused admittance, and sent back to New York. I have this fact from the bookseller himself.—*Ducoudray Holstein's "Memoirs of Bolivar."*

ST. JAMES ON TRIAL.

It is claimed that all civil law is based upon the Bible. Every Christian minister makes that statement, and regards it as an argument in favor of retaining the Bible in the public schools and making it the supreme law of the land. We notice, however, that when civil law and so-called divine law come in conflict, the Bible is thrown out. A case in point is at hand. Some days since a man was arrested in Brooklyn, N.Y., charged with having caused the death of his child through neglect. He was a firm believer in the prayer cure, and had refused to administer to his sick child the medicines prescribed for her relief. The laws of New York make such neglect a criminal offence, and, when death results, attach the penalty of manslaughter. But when the accused was brought into court he pleaded the duty he owed to the higher law which he found in the Epistle of St. James, as follows: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him."

Now, what do the Christian judges intend to do about this case? The "divine" law prescribes one thing, and the civil law another. It is of course very easy to tell what ought to be done. The man should be set at liberty and informed that he is merely a victim of popular religious superstition. He should be instructed that the epistle of James was written by some fanatic who was governed by his imagination instead of his knowledge. All the judges, lawyers, and most of the ministers know that the prayer of faith will not heal anybody who is really sick. It may in some cases quiet the nerves of the one who does the praying, but it can have no permanent effect on another person. Common sense teaches all but religious people that the healing of sickness requires the administering of such material remedies as experience with similar cases has shown to be efficacious; and intelligent clergymen adopt this method until health is restored, when they again begin preaching the efficacy of prayer, which they have not sufficient faith in to give it a trial in their own cases. This incongruity is so conspicuous that everybody ought to be able to see it. Probably the fact that it is an every-day occurrence is the reason why it does not excite comment. People long habituated to humbugs accept them at last as truths until they reach the point of putting them in practice, when, unless fanaticism has supervened, as in the case of the Brooklyn man, they quietly ignore their faith and rely upon knowledge and experience.

The Brooklyn father who permitted his daughter to die for want of medical treatment has acted consistently with his belief; and for a Christian community to condemn him would be like a father administering liquor to a child and then punishing him for being intoxicated. In this case it is not the poor fanatic but the Christian religion that is on trial.—*Freethought.*

THOSE BOYS.

"Did I not give you a flogging the other day?" said a school-master to a trembling boy. "Yes, sir," answered the boy. "Well, what do the Scriptures say upon the subject?" "I don't know, sir," said the boy; "except it is, 'It's more blessed to give than to receive.'"

"You were a nice, quiet little boy in Sunday school this morning, Bobby," said the minister. "I was very much pleased." "Yes," replied Bobby, "pa said that if I'd behave myself in Sunday school I needn't go to church."

A Sunday School teacher told his infants to ask any questions they had in their minds, and a little one asked, "When is the circus coming?"

Teacher: "Now, children, I am going to tell you about the prophet Daniel, who, though cast into a den of lions—" New scholar: "Have you only just got onto that here?"

Old lady (to wicked little boys who are playing marbles on Sunday): "Little boys, what are you playing marbles on Sunday for?" Little boys: "We're playing for keeps."

Willie was on a visit to his aunt in the country. It was bedtime, and he had gone upstairs to the little room set apart for him. "Auntie," he called out, "where's the prayer-rug?" "The prayer-rug, Willie? Isn't the carpet good enough?" "Not by a jugful. The best people all use prayer-rugs. If you haven't got any, I'll just be doggoned if I'm going to say my prayers to-night, that's all!"

Sunday-School Superintendent: "I am pained to learn that two of the little boys of the school have absented themselves to-day, in order to go fishing. You wouldn't go, would you, Master Norton?" Master Norton: "No, sir." Sunday-school Superintendent: "Now, tell the rest of the scholars why you wouldn't go fishing Sunday." Master Norton: "'Cause it's too cold yet to catch anything."

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mrs. Annie Besant, "The Inspiration of the Bible: what is it?"
 Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7, Mr. A. T. Dipper, "Modern Moralists."
 Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30 Dr. A. Vickery, "Over Population and its Remedies. Small families versus Strikes."
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, J. B. Coppock, "The Age of the Earth."
 Clarendon Hall, 7, Sam Standing, "Jehovah, the God of the Jews."
 Edmonton Assembly Rooms, Silver Street, 7, Mr. L. Keen, "Suffer Little Children," etc.
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "An Hour with the Devil."
 Old Southgate—Cromwell Hall, 7, Mr. Snow, "A Few Plain Words to Working Men."
 Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter Street, 7, Mr. F. Millar, "The Struggle for Existence."
 Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11, Mr. S. Standing, "Christ on the Labor Question."
 Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead Road, 7.30, Mr. E. Calvert, "The Philosophy of Materialism."
COUNTRY.
 Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 11, Mr. J. Hooper, "Remarkable Dreams of Holy Men:" 7, "Why Should an Atheist Fear to Die?"
 Glasgow—Ramshorn Hall, 123 Ingram Street, 6.30, Mr. John Gentles, "The Moon Theory."
 Huddersfield—Littlewood's Buildings, Upperhead Row, Mr. R. Lan, F.G.S., 3, "The Work that has been done by Glaciers and Icebergs in Former Ages of the World;" 6.30, "How the Rocks which contain Coal were Formed."
 Liverpool—Camden Hall, Camden Street, 3, Discussion Class, "The Duty of the Rich to the Poor," Mr. Beer to open; 7, Mr. Doeg, "A Reply to Dr. Sexton."
 Manchester—Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, Mr. Ernest Evans, "Science in the Service of Man."
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11, Important meeting of Sunday Music League: Wednesday, 7.45, Mr. Penny will read a paper on the "Advantages Accruing from a Knowledge of the Elements of Chemistry."
 Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck Street, 7, Mr. J. Hyder, "The Case against Landlordism."
 South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, 7, Mr. S. M. Peacock, "The Technical Instruction Act, 1889: Its Object and Scope."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

Mr. A. B. Moss, 44 Creden Road, London, S.E.—March 2, Woolwich; 23, Milton Hall; 30, Woolwich. April 6 (morning), Kingsland Green (evening), Ball's Pond; 13, Camberwell. May 18 (morning), Clerkenwell Green, (evening), Ball's Pond; 25, Regent's Park.
 TOLMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Street, Stratford, London, E.—Feb. 23, Woolwich. March 9, Woolwich; 16 (morning), West Ham; 24, Woolwich; 30, Westminster. May 11, Clerkenwell Green; 18, Regent's Park.
 Mr. JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—Feb. 16, Birmingham.
 E. STANLEY JONES, 53 Park Street, Toxteth, Liverpool.—Feb. 23, Huddersfield.

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