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MR. GLADSTONE'S ROCK OF SCRIPTURE.

[CONCLUDED.]

MR. GLADSTONE is so far, indeed, from yielding without reserve to the conclusions of destructive criticism, that he warns his readers against an excessive alarm. "Those conclusions," he says, "appear to be in a great measure floating and uncertain, the subject of manifold controversy, and secondly they seem to shift and vary with rapidity in the minds of those who hold them." Then, with the dexterity of the old parliamentary hand, he introduces a lecture by Mr. Margoliouth, the Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford, who thinks it possible to reconstruct the Semitic original of the Book of Ecclesiastes, and who is for giving Rabbinical Hebrew a greater antiquity than is usually assigned to it. This would, of course, involve a greater antiquity for Middle and Ancient Hebrew, and by such means the Pentateuch and the "historical" books might be made a century or two older than is allowed in the current chronology. Here, then, says Mr. Gladstone, there is "war, waged on critical grounds, in the critical camp;" and he thinks the spectator will be "the more hardened in his determination not to rush prematurely to final conclusions."

This bit of dexterity is perhaps an effective piece of *ad populum* rhetoric. But is it worthy of Mr. Gladstone? His friend, Professor Max Müller, in the recent volume of Gifford lectures, utters an anticipative protest against this infatuation. "To say that critics disagree among themselves," he remarks, "and that they need not be listened to till they agree, is one of those lazy commonplaces which no true scholar would dare to employ." It is true that Mr. Gladstone does not quite go to this length, but that is where his observations will lead the orthodox reader.

We have called Mr. Gladstone's attitude "infatuation." It is a strong word, but is it not justified? No one doubts that critics disagree. But do they not also agree? Is it not a fact that, in the mass, they move farther and farther from the orthodox position? Certainly they debate many points as they progress, but they keep moving in the same direction; and it is worse than idle for Mr. Gladstone to obscure this fact by directing attention to their discussions along the road. He forgets that perfect harmony is not to be expected. It has not been arrived at in regard to the Greek classics—for instance, Homer—which have been discussed with the greatest freedom, as well as by the keenest intellects, ever since the Renaissance; and how could it be hoped for in regard to the Bible, which has only been scientifically studied during the last half century? Another difficulty is that most of the critics have eaten orthodox bread, and have thus been deterred from free and fearless movement by the severe law of self-preservation.

The word "infatuation," as applied to Mr. Gladstone's attitude, is further justified by a cursory view

of the problem which the critics are solving. The Old Testament, if we except the so-called Apocrypha, is the whole extant Jewish literature before the time of Christ. Probably there were hundreds, possibly thousands, of other writings, but they have all perished. The consequence is that comparative Hebrew is a very different study from comparative Greek. All the Jewish books treat of one subject—religion. This dreadfully narrows the field of research. And it is still further narrowed, as well as obscured, by the absence of a mass of *contemporary* writings in any one age, that would throw light upon each other. Thus the study of comparative Hebrew is almost entirely *internal* to the Bible, and its difficulties are immense. Were not the critics testing the foundations of the greatest historic religion, their labors—so recondite, so painful, and so minute—would be a frightful waste of human energy.

Well, these critics, working at such a task, which is not half finished, are not quite harmonious. But with what an ill grace does this come from a politician like Mr. Gladstone! The Irish problem, for intricacy and obscurity, is nothing to the problem of the date and authorship of the Old Testament books. Yet although it has been before Mr. Gladstone ever since he entered parliament; although it has been a burning question during the fifty years of his public life; and although the data for a solution were always at hand; he has only "found salvation" at the eleventh hour. He might reply, of course, that he has always been moving in one direction. But that is precisely what may be said of the body of destructive critics.

The very illustration Mr. Gladstone gives of the "floating and uncertain conclusions" of these gentlemen is damnifying to his argument. Wellhausen, in editing the work of Bleek, accepted "in a great degree the genuineness of the Davidic Psalms contained in the First Book of the Psalter," but he has since abandoned this position, and he "brings down the general body of the Psalms to a date very greatly below that of the Babylonian exile." Now if Wellhausen had first held the Psalms to be modern, and afterwards held them to be ancient, he would have served Mr. Gladstone's purpose. But Wellhausen's movement has been in the opposite direction. Like other Biblical critics, the farther he goes the farther he leaves the orthodox position behind him. Surely the old parliamentary hand must have nodded when he introduced this fatal illustration.

But Mr. Gladstone's girds at the critics are, after all, but reassuring asides to his readers. He does not seriously contest that the Bible must henceforth be regarded in a new light, and he sets himself to the task of showing that the grand old book is still as safe and sound as ever. To this end he calls upon his readers to "look broadly and largely at the subject of Holy Scripture." "I ask them," he repeats, "to look at the subject as they would look at the British Constitution or at the poetry of Shakespeare." But this overlooks the vast difference between revelation and the productions of human genius. We may respect the British Constitution as

fairly good in the circumstances. We may revere the work of Shakespeare in spite of its imperfections. But does Mr. Gladstone mean that we can adopt such an attitude towards the revelation of God? It is idle to tell us that God's method with us is "one of sufficiency not of perfection"? The Bible is no more sufficient than it is perfect. It may, of course, be sufficient for those who read into it the mental and moral discoveries of later ages. But taken as it stands it is clearly insufficient. Neither slavery nor polygamy, for instance, does it ever mention with the slightest disapproval. We have outgrown both, not by means of the Bible, but in spite of it. On the other hand, the "sacred volume" contains a host of cruel, brutal, and filthy passages, which a wise and good Being would never have inserted in a revelation which he intended for future ages of refinement. This is a truth which Mr. Gladstone perceives, and he attempts to drown it in a torrent of rhetoric.

"Even the moral problems, which may be raised as to particular portions of the volume, and which may not have found any absolute and certain solution, are lost in the comprehensive contemplation of its general strain, its immeasurable loftiness of aim," etc., etc.

What is this, however, but a palpable evasion of the sceptic's argument? Loftiness of aim is obvious in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Spinoza, and other great writers; and "immeasurable" is simply a question-begging epithet. Besides, no one contends that the Bible was written for the purpose of teaching immorality. Then, as to "comprehensive contemplation," we suspect it means seeing what you want to see, and missing everything else. A prisoner in the dock, charged with murder, and clearly proved guilty, might demand to be tried by a "comprehensive contemplation" of his whole life, and offer to produce a hundred witnesses to show that on ever so many other days than the one on which he committed the murder he was an honest and respectable citizen. But the plea would not prevent a verdict of Guilty.

It is a pity that Mr. Gladstone did not give a few illustrations of this "broad view" and "comprehensive contemplation." He does, however, deal slightly with the Book of Genesis.

"With regard to the Book of Genesis, the admission which has been made implies nothing adverse to the truth of the traditions it embodies, nothing adverse to their antiquity, nothing which excludes or discredits the idea of their having formed part of a primitive revelation, simultaneous or successive. The forms of expression may have changed yet the substance may remain with an altered literary form, as some scholars have thought (not, I believe rightly) that the diction and modelling of the Homeric Poems is comparatively modern, and yet the matter they embody may belong to a remote antiquity."

Now it is difficult to think that Mr. Gladstone, when he wrote this passage, had the details of the problem in his mind. If the Book of Genesis was written many centuries after the time of Moses by unknown hands, it is certainly open for any person to assert that its statements *may* nevertheless be true. There is no limit to the license of affirmation. But where is the evidence? We venture to say there is not a tittle. On the contrary, there is the strongest *negative* evidence against the assertion. Never once, in the history of the Judges, or the reigns of the early kings, including David and Solomon, is allusion made to the mythology of Genesis, any more than to the Mosaic law. Mr. Gladstone has therefore not only to produce some positive evidence of his "may be," but to dispose of the strong negative evidence to the contrary. For the rest, "traditions" are not revelation, nor is their truth proved by their "antiquity"; and a primitive revelation is an idle dream in the light of Evolution.

Nothing is clearer than that the mythology of Genesis and the chief part of the Mosaic law belong to the post-exile period. The Jews were never an inventive people. They did invent the synagogue,

which is the original of the Christian church or chapel; but what else can they claim as theirs? They contributed to Christianity its spirit of fanaticism and its apparatus of the Sunday meeting-place. All the rest was contributed, directly or indirectly, by Babylon, Persia, Egypt, and Greece.

Mr. Gladstone promises, in future articles, to show that the Bible is consistent with science, that it contains nothing offensive to the moral sense, that man's progress through the ages has not been purely natural, and that the Bible stands altogether apart from the other sacred books of the world. He has evidently undertaken "a large order," and we shall be interested in watching its execution.

Meanwhile we can only stand aghast at his concluding statement that "the operations of criticism, properly so called, affecting as they do the literary form of the books, leave the questions of history, miracle, revelation, substantially where they found them." This is equivalent to saying that writings which come into existence hundreds of years after the events they record are as good as contemporary documents. It is like saying that traditions about Julius Cæsar, written down for the first time in the age of Charlemagne, would have the value of Suetonius, the Speeches and Letters of Cicero, and Cæsar's "Commentaries." It is, further, an assumption, which is unspeakably monstrous, that the gossip of centuries is excellent evidence of the truth of a miracle.

We must likewise point out the wild rhetoric of the assertion that "the Bible invites, attracts, and commands the adhesion of mankind." It does not command the adhesion of Mr. Gladstone's first political lieutenant, Mr. John Morley. It does not command the adhesion of 160,000,000 Hindus, 155,000,000 Muhammedans, and 500,000,000 Buddhists. It does command the adhesion—such as it is—of 350,000,000 Christians. And that adhesion is "attracted" by the well-nigh irresistible force of early training, and "invited" by the political and social ostracism—if not the active persecution—of every open dissenter. With such advantages "Jack the Giant Killer" might command the adhesion of mankind.

Towards the close of his article Mr. Gladstone refers to the scepticism or indifference of the working classes. There is an impression that they have largely lost their hold upon the Christian creed. But, while admitting that this is to some extent true, Mr. Gladstone denies that, amongst us, they have "lost respect for the Christian religion, or for its ministers; or that they desire their children to be brought up otherwise than in the knowledge and practice of it." Their perversion simply means that "their positive, distinct acceptance of the articles of the Creed, and their sense of the dignity and value of the Sacred Record, are blunted or effaced." But this is a grandiose way of saying that they are neither Bibliolators nor Christians.

Curiously enough, Mr. Gladstone does not find this scepticism or indifference among the "leisured and better provided classes." Surely he must be basking in a kind of fool's paradise. It may be that his acquaintances are chary of troubling him with heterodox opinions. Even Mr. Morley may eschew Diderot and Voltaire in conversing with his orthodox chief. Yet it is clear that educated society is honey-combed with scepticism. And Mr. Gladstone has an inkling of the fact. Why else should he refer to "the wide disparagement of the Holy Scriptures recently observable in the surface currents of prevalent opinion"?

Mr. Gladstone is struck by the fact that the "poor" who first welcomed Christianity are now so indifferent to it. He says it "affords much matter for meditation." But he has himself unconsciously solved the problem. He remarks that there were few

obstacles in the way of the poor becoming Christians in the primitive ages. "They had by contrast," he says, "more palpable interests in the promise of the life to come, as compared with the possession of the life that now is." Precisely so. They eagerly embraced the fine promises of Christianity, and, as happiness seemed impossible for them on earth, they welcomed the prospect of it in heaven. Those who mourned and those who hungered were to be comforted and filled—in the sweet by and bye. But the "poor" have found out the trick; and now, instead of yearning for the celestial shadow, they are trying to secure the earthly substance. On the other hand, the wealthy are averse to change. Many of them have as much "faith" as the present writer, but they support Christianity as the strongest conservative agent. They resemble old Lord Eldon, who denied being a pillar of the Church, and exclaimed, "No, I am a buttress, I prop it up outside."

Here we leave Mr. Gladstone standing on his impregnable rock. It has been disintegrated by all sorts of mines and explosives during the past century; Science, scholarship, morality, and common sense have all been busily at work; and, although there is no great outward solution of continuity, and the rock will last Mr. Gladstone's time, the collapse is approaching. Mr. Gladstone hears the rumbling and cracking, or he would not strive to reassure the faithful; and those who are familiar with the agencies at work know that the "impregnable rock" bears within itself all the elements of ruin.

G. W. FOOTE.

SAUL'S SPIRITUAL SEANCE AT ENDOR.

(1 SAM. XXVIII.)

"Our own time has revived a group of beliefs and practices which have their roots deep in the very stratum of early philosophy, where witchcraft makes its first appearance. This group of beliefs and practices constitutes what is now commonly known as Spiritualism."—Dr. E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i., p. 128.

The oldest portions of the Old Testament scriptures are imbedded in the Book of Judges and the Books of Samuel. Few, indeed, of these narratives throw more light on the early belief of the Jews than the story of Saul and the witch of Endor. It is hardly necessary to recount the story, which is told with a vigor and simplicity showing its antiquity and genuineness. Saul, who had incurred Samuel's enmity by refusing to slay the king Agag, after the death of the prophet, found troubles come upon him. Alarmed at the strength of his enemies, the Philistines, he "enquired of the Lord." But the Lord was not at home. At any rate, he "answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urin, nor by prophets." The legitimate modes of learning one's fortune being thus shut up, Saul sought in disguise and by night a woman who had an *ob*, or familiar spirit. Now Saul had done his best to suppress witchcraft, having "put away those who had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land." So when he said to the witch, "I pray thee divine unto me by the familiar spirit and bring him up whom I shall name unto thee," the woman was afraid, and asked if he laid a snare for her. Saul swore hard and fast he would not hurt her, and it is evident from his question he believed in her powers of necromancy by the aid of the familiar spirit. This alone shows that the Jews, like all uncivilised people, and many who call themselves civilised, believed in ghosts and the possibility of their return, but, as we shall see, it does not imply that they believed in future rewards and punishments. Saul's expectations were not disappointed. He asked to see Samuel, and *up* Samuel came. He asked what she saw, and she said *Elohim*, or as we have it, "gods ascending out of the earth." In this fact that the same word in Hebrew is used for *ghosts*

and for *gods*, we have the most important light upon the origin of all theology.

The modern Christian of course believes that Samuel as a holy prophet dwells in heaven above, and may wonder, if he thinks of the narrative at all, why he should be recalled from his abode of bliss and placed under the magic control of this weird, not to say scandalous, female. But Samuel came up, not down from heaven, in accordance, of course, with the old belief that Sheol, or the underworld, was beneath the earth.

Christian commentators have resorted to a deal of shuffling and wriggling to escape the difficulties of this story, and its endorsement of the superstition of witchcraft. The *Speaker's Commentary* suggests that the Witch of Endor was a female ventriloquist, but, disingenuously, does not explain that ventriloquists in ancient times were really supposed to have a spirit rumbling or talking inside of their bodies. As Dr. E. B. Tylor says in that great storehouse of savage beliefs, *Primitive Culture*, "To this day in China one may get an oracular response from a spirit apparently talking out of a medium's stomach, for a fee of about twopence-halfpenny."

Some make out, because Saul at first asked the woman what she saw, that, as at many modern séances, it was only the medium who saw the ghost, and Saul only knew who it was through her, else why should he have asked her what form Samuel had?—which elicited the not very detailed reply of "an old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle"—that is, we suppose, with the ghost of a mantle. She did the seeing and he the hearing. But it says "Saul perceived it was Samuel," and prostrated himself, which he would hardly have done at a description. Indeed the whole narrative is inconsistent with the modern theory of imposture on the part of the witch. Had this been the explanation, the writer should have said so plainly. He should have said her terror was pretended, that the apparition was unreal, and that Saul trembled at the woman's words, whereas it is plainly declared that "he was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel." Moreover, and this is decisive, the spirit utters a prophecy—not an encouraging, but a gloomy one—which was exactly fulfilled.

All this shows the writer was saturated in supernaturalism. He never uses an expression indicating a shadow of a ghost of a doubt of the ghost. He might easily have said, the whole thing was deceit. He does not, for he believed in witchcraft like the priests who ordered "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." One little circumstance shows his sympathy. Samuel says: "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" This is quite in consonance with savage belief that spirits should not be disturbed. Here was Samuel quietly buried in Ramah, some fifty miles off, taking his comfortable nap, may be for milleniums in Sheol, when the old woman's incantations bustle him out of his grave and transport him to Endor. No wonder he felt disquieted and prophesied vengeance to Saul and to his sons, "because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek."*

Matthew Henry and other commentators think that the person who presented himself to Saul was not Samuel, but Satan assuming his appearance. Those who believe in Satan, and that he can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi., 14), cannot refuse to credit the possibility of this. Folks with that comfortable belief can credit anything. To sensible people it is scarcely necessary to say there is nothing about Satan in the narrative, nor any conceivable reason why he should be credited with a true prophecy. The words uttered are declared to be the words of Samuel.

* The seventeenth verse stupidly reads "The Lord hath done to him as he spake by me." The LXX. and Vulgate more sensibly reads to thee.

Much is said of Saul's wickedness, but the only wickedness attributed to him is his mercy in not executing God's fierce wrath. If it was wicked to seek the old woman, it is curious God should grant the object he was seeking, by raising up one of his own holy servants. Why did the Lord employ such an agency? It looks very much like sanctioning necromancy. And further if a spirit returned from the dead to tell Saul he should die and go to Sheol—where Samuel was, for he says "to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be *with me*"—why should not spirits now return to tell us we are immortal? If the witch of Endor could raise spirits why not Lottie Fowler or Mr. Eglinton? Such are the arguments of the spiritists. We venture to think they cannot be answered by the orthodox. To us, however, the fact that the beliefs of the spiritists find their countenance in the beliefs of savages like the early Jews is their sufficient refutation. Spiritism, as Dr. Tylor says, is but a revival of old savage animism.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

By an unhappy coincidence, all the Branches that nominated Newcastle, Bradford, Huddersfield, and Southampton for the holding of the Conference, omitted to comply with the condition of inquiring whether the Branches in those towns were able and willing to undertake the arrangements. This was discovered almost accidentally. On learning it I desired Mr. Forder to summon a special Executive meeting. But, owing to the Easter holidays, such a meeting could not well be held before Thursday, April 10. In the circumstances, as there was no time to be lost, I deemed it my duty to take immediate action. I therefore wrote to the Manchester Branch, asking whether it would, if required, arrange for the holding of the Conference in its hall. Mr. Hemingway called a committee meeting within forty-eight hours, and the answer was "Yes." Thereupon I ventured to fix the Conference at Manchester, and I have no doubt the Executive will approve of my decision. I am sorry the emergency obliged me to strain my powers, but I could not stand on punctilios in face of a grave danger. I now appeal to the Branches and the individual members of the National Secular Society to make the Conference a success. All resolutions for the Agenda must be sent in before the end of April.

G. W. FOOTE (*President*).

HE LOVED TO STEAL.

An amusing incident occurred in one of our down-East churches a few months ago. The clergyman gave out the hymn:

I love to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,
And spend the hour of setting day
In humble, grateful prayer.

The regular chorister being absent, the duty devolved upon Deacon M., who commenced "I love to steal," and then broke down. Raising his voice a little higher, he then sang, "I love to steal." As before, he concluded he had got the wrong pitch; and deploring that he had not his "pitch-tuner," he determined to succeed next time. All the old ladies were tittering behind their fans, while the faces of the "young ones" were in a broad grin.

At length, after a desperate cough, he roared out, "I love to steal." The effort was too much. Everyone but the clergyman was laughing. He arose and said: "Seeing our brother's propensities, let us pray." It is needless to add that but few of the congregation heard the prayer.—*Pittsburg Dispatch*.

"I noticed," said old Misfit, as he walked out of church after service, "that the choir made an honest acknowledgment in one of the responses." "Indeed," said Mr. Pewholder, "in what part of the services was that?" "Why, where they all said 'We are miserable singers.'"

ACID DROPS.

Good Friday is the day when, according to Carlyle, Christians celebrate the death of their Redeemer by getting drunk. Anyhow the majority of them, at least in London, do not look very mournful on this dread anniversary. We took a walk round Hampstead on Good Friday afternoon and saw thousands of people—most of whom, we suspect, would have hissed a Freethought speaker—enjoying the brilliant sunshine like Pagans. Concertinas, harps and fiddles were playing, swings were doing a roaring trade, and drums drew attention to various well-patronised shows. The ever-shifting crowds were as merry as the bunting that fluttered on the flag-staff. And over all was the miraculous soft blue sky, high and cloudless, and so steadfast that as you looked up through the dark tree-tops they seemed painted against the firmament. The whole scene was as far removed as possible from the drama of Calvary. And perhaps it was only the peripatetic infidel who remembered the words "By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion."

Dr. Parker gave Moses a lift on Good Friday morning. As usual he whipped up a big audience by writing a mysterious letter to the press, the *Christian World* being this time the recipient of his oracular communication. According to the Saturday papers, the sermon was directed against the scientific gentlemen who think they can improve on the Mosaic account of the universe. Well now, perhaps Dr. Parker doesn't know it, but hundreds of thousands of schoolboys are able to correct the mistakes of Moses. Dr. Parker may give the old Hebrew a leg-up, but he will never get him over the stile of Evolution.

Canon Liddon, preaching the Easter sermon at St. Paul's, administered a withering rebuke to the scientists who will not recognise God's right to suspend his own laws. But the worthy Canon mistakes the argument. Scientists are quite ready to investigate a good sound miracle; in fact, some of them are yearning for the opportunity; but to use the language of the Rev. Dr. Littledale, the Lord is very reluctant to become the subject of a scientific experiment.

Some of the big London churches had a running service on the double or treble shift system on Good Friday. But the service was mostly musical, and the clergy are cheating themselves into the belief that all the folk who drop in to hear good music are devoted believers.

On Good Friday, they showed at the Church of Notre Dame an alleged scrap of the seamless garment the prophet of Nazareth went about in—a sort of long bathing dress made of camel's hair, measuring five feet in length and four in breadth, with loose short sleeves. No wonder crowds followed him.

The Passion Play in which Sarah Bernhardt was to appear as the Virgin Mary, being prohibited by the Censor, Sarah read the *role* at the Winter Circus in Paris on Good Friday. The gifted actress threw all her genius into the reading, but without stage accessories it simply wearied the audience, who were only moved to express their impatience with the mother of Christ and her many sorrows.

It is reported that the Roman Catholics will boycott Sarah Bernhardt when she performs in London. They want to teach her that she must not play with sacred subjects. But the divine Sarah is a very self-willed lady, and we guess she will "gang her ain gate."

Richard Davies was hung on Tuesday morning. His last words were "O Lord, to thee I commend thy spirit, and receive it for Christ's sake." He appears to have been pretty certain that he was going to heaven. Indeed, he set up as a kind of authority on emigration to that locality. He assured his brother George that *he* would never go to heaven unless he corroborated Richard's account of the murder. When we further consider the fine distinction he drew between murdering his father and helping George to do it, we incline to think a first-rate Jesuit was lost in Richard Davies.

The young murderer's last pious letter from prison very much resembles the one previously published. He expects

to enjoy God's mercy, but not a word of pity escapes him for the probable fate of his father. Whether the murdered man went to hell or not does not seem to have caused the parricide a moment's trouble. Were we not right in saying that such "repentance" is a bit of sublime selfishness? Had it been impossible to prove the murderer's guilt, it is highly probable that he would have wasted little time in remorse; and the whole tone of his "sorrow" only shows that religion invariably appeals to man's innate selfishness.

Opposed as we are to capital punishment, we object to the hanging of Richard Davies. We fail to see, however, why those who would retain the death penalty were so clamorous for a reprieve. Granted that the elder Davies was a wretched, cruel despot; is it not clear that the family had a better remedy than murder? And was not the murder conceived and carried out deliberately, instead of being perpetrated in the heat of passion? The young men were not bound to live with their father. They could have gone and earned their own bread. Mrs. Davies herself could have obtained redress in a magistrate's court. Of course that would have been washing the family linen in public. But is it not washed in public now with a vengeance?

Those who believe that Richard Davies has gone to heaven are very inconsistent in denouncing the Home Secretary. Mr. Matthews did him a good turn by declining to reprieve him. Instead of being miserable in a convict establishment, Richard Davies is drinking his first draughts of deathless felicity in the New Jerusalem. So says theology. But the instinct of human nature is against it. Heaven is a good thing in reserve, but practical philosophy says, "Keep out of it as long as you can."

Dr. J. A. Rentoul, the newly-elected Unionist M.P. for East Down, says that "it was the Bible which taught men to think for themselves." Yes, and just to encourage them it says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned."

According to Dr. Talmage, Gladstone said to him when in England, "Do you have any of that dreadful Agnosticism in America?" It is barely credible that the Grand Old Man can have asked so silly a question as this after his encounter in the *North American Review* with Colonel Ingersoll. If our great statesman can so readily forget the thrashing he then received from an American Agnostic, he must have one of the happiest memories in the world.

A crazy evangelist, named J. R. Rice and called "the boy preacher," is working out a ten dollar fine for obstructing the streets of Oakland. He did not have the money to pay his fine, and so was very appropriately set at work with hoe and broom cleaning the streets where he had formerly harangued.—*Freethought*.

The Rev. Alex. Grant, pastor of a Winnepeg Church, is reported to have created a great sensation by declaring that "he would not be surprised if at the Judgment, when all is revealed, it was found that the churches had been instrumental in sending more people to hell than to heaven." The suspicion that Satan inserted many things into the Bible casting reflections upon the character of God, is followed by the one that he rigs the churches in the interests of Sheol. We always thought they were on the wrong track.

Two large beams of the parish church of Helpringham, Lincolnshire, fell into the body of the church, smashing the pews and church furniture. Fortunately the Lord's house was empty of people.

Poor little Annie Brightling, aged six, was burnt to death at Welling on Thursday morning. She had been taught that she had a friend in Jesus, and most likely she prayed to him before going to bed. But Jesus did not help his little friend when the house caught fire. Perhaps he was too busy looking after the arrangements for his funeral anniversary.

The leader of a lot of Second Adventists in Georgia is collecting from each of his dupes 5 dols. with which to fly to heaven with. There are nearly four hundred of the

sect, and if the leader succeeds in collecting 5 dols. apiece from his entire flock he will have a neat little sum to fly away with himself.

Mr. C. R. Parsons, leader of an adult Bible class at Bristol, claims to have broken up an infidel club there. Is this correct? It is certain that the city where the *Oracle of Reason* was first started ought to show more activity.

Who first doubled the Cape of Good Hope? In this enlightened age the reply of every schoolboy to this query will be, "Why, Vasco de Gama, to be sure." In Portugal, however, a much more ancient navigator has been mentioned. Antonio Vieira (1608—1697), a preacher of great renown at Lisbon, said in one of his sermons: "One man only passed the Cape of Good Hope before the Portuguese. And who was he? and how? *It was Jonah in the whale's belly!* The whale went out of the Mediterranean, because he had no other course; he kept to the west of Africa on the left, scoured along Ethiopia, passed by Arabia, took port in the Euphrates on the shores of Nineveh, and, making his tongue serve as a plank, landed the prophet there." Southey, upon reading this, remarked: "The sermons of Vieira, more than any other compositions in any language, display the strength and weakness of the human mind."

The good old Bible institution is dying in its last citadel. Mr. Woodruff, the leader of the Utah polygamists, has declared that the days of divine revelation are over; and this, coming from a man supposed to be himself inspired, has fallen like a bombshell in the Mormon camp. They expect their leader will go from bad to worse in his heresy, and will shortly "go for" polygamy itself.

Ally Sloper quotes the following from a West Indian newspaper dated April 10, 1820. It was taken from a funeral sermon by a negro preacher, Sam Quaco:—"A man dat bon ob a woman hab not long time to lib. He troble ebbery day too much. He grow up like a plantin. He cut down like a banana. Pose de man do bad he get bad. Pose he do good, he go to de place call him Gholio, where Goramity stans upon a top, and Debble on a bottom. Pose he do bad, he go to de place call him Hell, where he mot burn like a peppercon. He call for drink of wara: no man give him a drop of wara to cool him dam-tongue. So breren Goramity bless you all. Amen."

The Birmingham *Daily Gazette* prints a letter from T. H. Aston, a local Christian, who "praises God" for the blows which have recently fallen upon the National Secular Society. This gentleman forgets that Mr. Bradlaugh is still a member of the Society, and that the Freethought party is better organised and more active as this moment than it has been for a considerable time. He also forgets that the circulation of the *Freethinker* is steadily increasing, and that this fact belies all his foolish prognostics.

Mrs. Besant's resignation is of course a blow, but the blow fell before Mr. Bradlaugh's resignation of the Presidency, when she became a leader of Theosophy and ceased attending the Executive meetings. Certainly the Society loses five pounds per month through Mr. Bradlaugh's breakdown, but up to the present the increased receipts have more than compensated for the loss, and new members are being enrolled more rapidly than ever. Mr. Aston is evidently shouting a long while before he is out of the wood.

Mr. Aston flatters himself that he *was* a true prophet with regard to Mrs. Besant. He predicted, what anyone with common gumption could see, that Theosophy would lead her away from Secularism. "Now it appears," he says, "that I was accurate in my estimate, for in the columns of the Spiritualist weekly, *The Two Worlds*, I notice the name of Mrs. Besant included among the 'prospective speakers' at Spiritualist meetings during April. Thus the Atheist platform is abandoned, and we find her in association with a system that is without doubt modern witchcraft, but under a more respectable name."

According to this funny gentleman Mrs. Besant has become a witch. Well, if that be true, why does he "thank God" that she is lost to the N. S. S.?

The Tithe Bill, which has been pretty well described as a bill to set by the ears landlords, tenants and ratepayers for the benefit of parsons, doesn't satisfy the black parasites after all. They complain that they will no longer have the right to distrain on the land, and that consequently tithes will decrease in value.

That the clergy have long ceased to discharge the functions for which the tithes were originally given is a flagrant fact. Those purposes included the relief of the poor, the repair of the churches, and very often the saying of masses for the dead.

"How to bring a fresh eye to the reading of the Bible" was the title of a recent address in Glasgow by the Rev. Alexander Whyte. Our opinion is that people don't want a fresh eye for the business. All they require is to use their two old ones a little better. To do this they must cast away their theological spectacles.

The contrast between the industry and prosperity of the North of Ireland and the thriftlessness and poverty of the South which has better soil, to which Mr. T. W. Russell calls attention in the *Nineteenth Century*, suggests to us a different conclusion from that of Mr. Russell. His belief is simply that the lack of the law-abiding spirit has frightened capital away. We trace the turbulence, ignorance and absence of enterprise in the South to its devotion to a religion which encourages population and preaches content while fostering disaffection and hatred to those of a different faith.

Mr. W. S. Lilly, the Romanist, fights Herbert Spencer's Agnosticism in the *Nineteenth Century* with the argument of the Atheist. He says the very nature of intelligence forbids such a conception of the Absolute as that which Mr. Spencer presents under the name of the Unknowable. If, as Mr. Spencer insists, our experience is only conditioned, assuredly we are not justified in asserting an unconditioned existence in any form, conceivable or inconceivable. Astute Roman Catholics like Mr. Lilly always seek to make the issue clear. Either their church or atheism. They fancy people will be frightened, and retreat into the church. Those who are logical, however, will simply press forward and accept the issue.

Lord Penzance thinks that to suspend the Rev. George Collins the Vicar of Charlesworth for three months is sufficient punishment for his having been intoxicated, and whilst in that condition having been uproariously riotous. The object of the sentence he observed was that time might be allowed for the recollection of his conduct to subside or pass away.

THE Archbishop of Servia will be declared a bankrupt if Jacob Braun, a banker, of Buda Pesth, to whom his Holiness is indebted to the extent of two hundred thousand florins for losses at the Vienna Board of Trade, is successful in his complaint just made to the Belgrade Court. The Metropolitan, when asked to pay, replied that his office declared him beyond the reach of the law. The Court, however, thinks differently, and has replied that a Metropolitan has no right to become a stock-jobber unless he intends to pay his losses. The Archbishop threatens to excommunicate Judge, jury, and, above all banker Braun.

Mr. Spurgeon's opinion about the new theological movement, typified by Drs. Dods and Bruce, is "that evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, and, by this means, the Prince of Darkness will put the Free Church in chains." All people not Calvinists hold that the so-called Free Church of Scotland is the most slavish body in existence.

It was in the infant class of the Sunday School. The teacher was trying to bring out the fact that David was a man of varied occupations. There had been smooth sailing until the question was asked, "What do you call a man who plays on a harp?" After a brief pause, a youngster raised his hand and answered, "An Italian!" The teacher and scholars had a good laugh, and a new topic was introduced.

The April number of the *Contemporary* contains a feeble reply by the Rev. Dr. A. Cave to Canon Cheyne and Canon Driver's criticism of the Old Testament. Dr. Cave

himself admits that Genesis is a composite work, that "the books from Judges to Kings were produced by the labors of several generations of prophets," and that the Books of Chronicles are compilations of a relatively late date. But he seeks to throw discredit on further results of the Higher Criticism because, forsooth, Kuenen and Wellhausen, Graf and Vatke, Kalisch and Colenso, were not adherents of "supernatural Christianity." He says: "Supernatural Christianity has so many reasons in its favor [trot out a few, please] that any theory which seems to be alien to supernatural Christianity is *ipso facto* rendered suspect—not without justice." Well, supernatural Christianity is rapidly decaying, and perhaps Dr. Cave may live to find that arguments in its favor are "*ipso facto* rendered suspect."

Dr. Cave seeks to throw discredit upon the "Higher Criticism" because conducted by Germans, who, he would lead us to fancy, follow each other like a flock of sheep. But the fact is, the results of research have had to stand against the assaults of established orthodoxy in Germany as well as elsewhere. Besides, Dr. Cave should know that Colenso, Dr. Robertson Smith, Dr. S. Davidson and Canon Driver, are not Germans.

The rector of Bow does not get on well with his churchwardens, one of whom states that the herald of peace in the parish has on Sunday often applied to the inspector of police on duty at Bow Station for two gentlemen in uniform to be at the church on Sunday evening. That application was refused, but the inspector placed a man in plain clothes at the church in case of any disturbance arising. The dispute is, of course, about the holy trinity £ s. d. The parson wants to take up a collection for church expenses, and the churchwardens think the usual offertory is sufficient.

There are "ructions" in North Britain. The Rev. Jacob Primmer, of Dunfermline, is on the war path, and the enemy must look out for their scalps. His heroic soul is stirred to its depths by the attempt to make Roman Catholics eligible to the offices of Lord Chancellor and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Perish the thought that Protestants should lose this glorious monopoly! Primmer is agitating against the infernal conspiracy. He is rousing the nation against "this infamous and revolutionary bill," and he will either save the British Constitution or perish amidst its ruins. Good old Primmer!

Another cyclone in America has demolished Prophetstown, Illinois, and destroyed a number of lives. God, according to Cowper, rides upon a storm; but one would expect him to destroy any place rather than Prophetstown.

The *Christian World* prints an awfully stupid article by "J. B." on "Youth and Religion," in which the writer congratulates England on having two good Christian poets like Browning and Tennyson, while the French poets are "avowed and cynical pagans, rejecting with scorn every religious inspiration, and making the sole object of life to be the gratification of the passions." Fancy a man writing in this way of Victor Hugo and Leconte de Lisle! Why doesn't he learn French before writing about French poets? It would save him from scribbling a deal of nonsense: for, if French poets are irreligious, they don't teach that "the sole object in life is the gratification of the passions."

That religious encyclopædia called the Bible is remarkably lucid, and one of its most perspicuous contributors was a gentleman called Paul. His phrase "Baptism for the dead," for instance, according to the Rev. J. W. Horsley, has had thirty-seven different explanations. But as Paul doesn't say which is the right one, the commentators have no alternative but to knock up thirty-seven more.

More than one religious paper has been fishing for definitions lately. Hundreds of answers to the question, "What is a Christian?" have been gathered. But the very best comes from the Rev. W. J. Woods. It is so good that no other is worth mentioning in the same breath. It is Woods first and the rest nowhere. His definition of a Christian is "a voluntary slave of Christ." There you are, ladies and gentlemen. The thing is done once for all. Nobody need try it again. The definition ought to be printed over every page of the New Testament—"A Christian is a voluntary slave of Christ."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, April 13, The Circus, Portsmouth; at 11, "Mr. Gladstone's Defence of the Bible"; at 3. "Why I am an Atheist"; at 6.30, "An Hour with the Devil."

Tuesday, April 15, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, at 8, "Freethought and a Future Life." Free admission.

Friday, April 18, Hall, Powis Street, Woolwich, at 8, "Why I am an Atheist."

April 20, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science.

May 4, Newcastle; 11, South Shields; 18, Hall of Science, London; 25, N. S. S. Conference.

June 1, Hall of Science London; 8, Gladstone Radical Club and Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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

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

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

A. LOVETT.—"At Church" is not up to your usual form.

J. BROWN.—Delighted to hear of the progress the cause is making in Newcastle. We don't wish to outrage your modesty, but very much is due to your own energy and devotion. Mr. Foote is much better, but not quite himself.

F. GILBERT.—*Bible Romances* are on the stocks. We expect to begin their republication next month, and to make a formal announcement next week.

W. SIMONS.—Cuttings are always welcome.

W. LITTLETON, 61 Regency Street, S.W., has a few subscribers' letters for the Brompton Hospital, which he will be glad to give to any of our readers requiring the same. He also sends 2s. 6d. for the Free Lectures in London.

E. SIMS.—Thanks for your subscription to the N. S. S. The list of subscribers will be formally opened next week, when all subscriptions and promises will appear up to date. The mediæval list of repairs you send us is a very old one. It appeared in our columns many years ago.

J. O'DONOVAN, the recent accession to our list of contributors, sends a half-yearly subscription to the N. S. S., which he has just joined. He is also forming a Branch in Dublin, which we hope will do good work there.

ONE.—Certainly. Members of the N. S. S. who wish to respond to the appeal for special annual subscriptions, but are not able to send any considerable amount at once, can forward quarterly. Your annual subscription, on this footing, is booked, and we hope it will be followed by many others. The five shilling subscribers are wanted as well as the five guinea ones.

G. P. L.—Cardinal Newman reviewed Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet in a Letter to the Duke of Norfolk. It is reprinted in the second volume of *Difficulties of Anglicans*.

NEANIAS.—Read Mr. Foote's *Philosophy of Secularism*. The Secular Society does not publish any book as a recognised standard. If you cannot purchase the books you require, you could borrow some of them for a small consideration from Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street. Apply personally.

H. MARGERISON assures us that the employees at Price's Candle Factory are under no kind of compulsion to attend the gospel-shop on the premises.

J. COLE.—Will see what can be done.

S. R. STEPHENSON.—Received. The list of annual subscribers will be commenced next week.

SWEDISH PRISONER FUND.—A. Guest, 2s. 6d. Proceed of sale of portrait of Richard Carlile presented by Lot Hill, 10s.

C. KING.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—W. J. Birch, £3.

H. O. THOMAS.—Your cheque has been handed to Mr. Forder, to whom all orders should be addressed. Letters addressed to the Editor are answered through these columns. No such letters as you refer to have reached us.

DR. VOELKEL (Magdeberg).—"The Hibbert Trust" was money left for promoting the study of comparative religion. Many important lectures have been given under its auspices. Messrs. Williams and Norgate, publishers, Henrietta Street, London, will give full information. Mr. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past* has been out of print since our fire. Friendly greetings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligiöses Sonntags Blatt—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Bulletin des Sommaires—Menschentum—Progressive Thinker—Fair Play—Freidenker—Freethought—Freethought Record—Lucifer—Twentieth Century—Echo—Labor Elector—Women's Suffrage Journal—People's Press—Staffordshire Sentinel—Evening News—Star—Bournemouth Guardian—East London Observer—Le Courrier de Londres—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Evening Standard—St. Pancras Gazette.

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.

There was a larger audience at Milton Hall than could have been expected on Easter Sunday to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead?" It is hard to believe that no Christians were present, but no one ventured to question the lecturer's review of the evidences of the Resurrection.

Mr. Foote lectures at Portsmouth to-day (April 13) in the Circus. This is a large building which takes a great deal of filling. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the local Freethinkers will do their best to bring some of their orthodox friends to the lectures.

This number of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of many South London readers before Friday night (April 11) when Mr. Foote opens the course of Free Lectures in the Camberwell Secular Hall. We beg to remind them that the presence of Christians at this and the following lectures is earnestly desired, their object being to convert the unconverted. Mr. Foote is followed on April 18 by Mr. J. M. Robertson.

The Milton Hall course of Free Lectures opens next Tuesday evening. We press the same advice upon our North London readers.

The Christian Evidence Society has been invited to send representatives to these Free Lectures, but Mr. Engstrom says he does not think his committee will accept the invitation. In that case the discussion will be open to all comers, and we hope there will be plenty of it.

The *Daily Telegraph*, in its "Paris Day by Day" columns, notices the banquets of Freethinking associations, organised as a counterblast to the rigid fasting and abstinence of the pious, and mentions that at one Good Friday dinner of Unbelievers the bill of fare contained items of consumption labelled, for the occasion, with names of political or semi-political import. Thus there was "Gamelle soup," to remind those who partook of it of the doings and sayings of the young Duc d'Orléans; "Constans sausages," so called after the energetic Minister of the Interior; "Jersey filets," to recall General Boulanger; "Freppel nuts," and "Wilsonian pots de vin." This banquet was designed, according to its organisers, to celebrate the "Triumph of Tripe over Ecclesiastical Salt-fish."

The Newcastle Branch had a splendid social gathering on Good Friday. The ladies were in strong force, and contributed greatly to the entertainment. These parties are rallying the old Freethinkers to the standard. They had got tired of fighting without a little recreation.

The Rev. Walter Walsh, of Newcastle, is continuing his efforts to convert the Secularists; and as he only helps to swell their ranks, we hope he will persist in his good work. He lectures to-day in the Nelson Street Lecture Hall on "Is there a God?" He is also going to give a course of Sunday evening addresses in the Rye Hill Baptist Chapel, in which he will reconcile Evolution and Christianity. But, although the Secularists are invited, they do not see their way to spending six Sunday evenings in a Baptist chapel where no discussion is permitted.

An effort will be made to revive the old North London Branch of the N. S. S., under the name of the St. Pancras

Branch. It is hoped this can be done in time to carry on on the open-air station during this summer, beginning early in May. Mr. Foote will be glad to hear from someone in the district who can have a small members' meeting in his house to start the Branch. A public meeting could be held subsequently.

Fair Play, Valley Falls, Kansas, says—"G. W. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker*, has been elected to succeed Charles Bradlaugh as President of the National Secular Society. For thirty years he has been the official and real leader of the English Freethought army. Mr. Foote is his natural successor, the mantle of the great Iconoclast more nearly fitting him than any other of the Freethought captains."

A COMING MAN IN ENGLAND.—Mr. Bradlaugh is, to all appearances, a coming man. Mr. Bradlaugh has carefully cultivated the House of Commons. He came in with the reputation of being, among other things, a great platform orator, a very Boanerges of the East-end meeting and the provincial meeting. He has a powerful form and a most tremendous voice. When, after a long struggle, he was at last allowed to take his seat in peace, the House assumed that it was in for frequent and ponderous rhetorical exertions. Mr. Bradlaugh gave the House nothing of the kind. He never, so far as I know, made a long speech. He always goes straight to the point, and when he has said what he wants to say he always sits down. He is really a very eloquent and powerful speaker, with a remarkably impressive voice, and it must be a temptation to such a man to let himself fully out now and then. But Mr. Bradlaugh is always concise, and the House now knows perfectly well that he at least will never bore his audience. Then he has devoted himself very closely to what we call the "business of the House"—to committees, and private bills, and all that sort of work which your popular orator generally disdains with a lofty disdain—and the House likes a man who looks after its work. Moreover, he is a man of the most winning courtesy of manner. He has disarmed the dislike of all his former political and religious opponents—and he had a good many of them—by his anxiety to oblige, by his willingness to make graceful concessions, by his genial toleration of difference of opinion. He is, I should think, destined before long to be a member of a Liberal Administration, and even of a Liberal Cabinet.—*North American Review*.

Our Swedish friends are carrying on the agitation with energy. Captain Otto Thomson informs us they have published the pamphlet "Why I Attack Christianity," for which Mr. Lennstrand has his last sentence. Captain Thomson and Messrs. Berghell and Mentzer went before the Minister of Justice, demanding that the pamphlet should be prosecuted in order that it might be brought before a jury, and Mr. Mentzer on Sunday March 30, read the lecture to a large audience. The pamphlet will accordingly be prosecuted.

Captain Thomson was spokesman of a deputation which waited on Prince Charles, Duke of Södermanland, who is regent during the king's absence, with a protest against Mr. Lennstrand's imprisonment, to which there were 9,159 signatures—this by no means including all the lists that are out. The Regent, though constrained to speak with reserve, let it be understood he was not favorable to prosecutions for opinion. It is certain our good Swedish friends have a strenuous battle before them, but it is equally certain the issue will be to the advantage of Freethought. Our warmest sympathy goes to Captain Thomson and his brave comrades who are fighting so hard for their imprisoned leader.

The Blair Educational Bill—the object of which was to enforce religious instruction in the public schools of the United States—has been thrown out by the Senate. It had the luring bait of a big appropriation to be distributed among the States in proportion to the density of illiteracy. It is not so easy nowadays to put time backwards. The clock hands may be shifted, but things go forward all the same.

A. K. Fiske, writing in the *Forum*, says: "Men of intellect and education, who are capable of enthusiasm and ardor in the service of mankind, are deterred from seeking to do that service through the Christian ministry. They cannot honorably accept its doctrinal requirements, and will not submit to its mental restrictions."

An important decision has been given by the Supreme Court of the United States in a case in which Roman Catholics who sent their children to the public schools objected to their being read to and taught from King James's Version of the Bible, on the ground that it constitutes sectarian instruction. The Supreme Court upheld this objection, and in its decision said: "Any pupil of ordinary intelligence who listens to the reading of doctrinal portions of the Bible will be more or less instructed thereby in the doctrines of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the eternal punishment of the wicked, the authority of the priesthood, the binding force of the efficacy of the sacraments, and many other conflicting sectarian doctrines." This is correct. Bible reading without comment is a compromise which can suit no party that is in earnest. The only fair solution of the religious difficulty is to let all religion be taught at home.

Some of our vegetarian readers, and perhaps others, will be interested by Dr. Drysdale's *Vegetarian Fallacies*, a pamphlet he has just published through G. Standing. It includes his paper read at the Health Congress last year in Hastings, and an account of the subsequent discussion. Dr. Drysdale believes in eating meat as well as vegetables, and his physiological and chemical arguments deserve attention.

Mr. A. B. Moss has issued through Watts and Co. a handsome little volume on *The Bible and Evolution*. It is by far the best production of Mr. Moss's pen, and we heartily recommend it as an excellent text-book of the subject. The matter is good and the style is bright. The reader is carried along an easy-flowing stream of science, history, ethics, and common sense.

Owing to a continued press of matter, Mr. Foote's letter to the Rev. Dr. Mathieson on "The Fear of God" stands over till next week.

HOME RULE AND ROME RULE.

"We shall take our religion but not our politics from Rome," is the invariable defence advanced by Irish Nationalist politicians to meet the charge made by the Protestants that Home Rule and Rome Rule are synonymous terms. The Protestant minority make their charge in good faith, and the Catholic majority advance their defence in all sincerity. But everything depends upon where the boundary line can be drawn between Roman religion and Irish politics. My own experience tells me that the religion of Rome and the politics of Ireland are so inextricably mixed up that it is impossible to tell where the one ends and the other begins. The Catholics may mean well when they say that they will accept nothing from Rome but religion; but unfortunately for their assertion nobody is so blind as not to see that they are not free agents in the matter. Rome, it is true, may not dictate a political policy for adoption in Ireland; but it can use religion at any time to forbid the adoption by Catholic Irishmen of any policy which is not pleasing to the Vatican. Consequently when the Vatican can dogmatically condemn any phase of politics it dislikes, and when it tolerates only the kind of politics agreeable to it, it is obvious that it has the same power over Ireland as if it sought to compel Irishmen to adopt any particular line of political conduct. By constituting it a "sin" on the part of Catholics to support any political creed which he may choose to condemn, the Pope has virtually the power to exert a sway over Ireland quite as effectual as if he were an authorised and despotic ruler of the country. Irish Catholics have no option as to what they are to accept, or not accept from Rome, and their favorite formula (as quoted above) is therefore an expression with more sound than sense. From this point of view, the question might be disposed of at once by saying that Home Rule, or no Home Rule, Ireland will be under the sway of Rome so long as the majority of Irishmen remain good Catholics, but no longer.

In the event of our getting Home Rule, Rome Rule would doubtless become more powerful, but if my judgment is worth anything, I feel that I can safely predict that after Home Rule is enjoyed for a short time the power of Rome will gradually dwindle away. There are forces at work in Ireland, beneath the surface, that will ultimately make the gentlemen in Roman collars and tall hats a trifle uncomfortable; but having regard to the enormous power of the priesthood, and their great hold on the minds of a naturally

credulous people, the struggle to shake off the yoke of Rome will be a long and bitter one.

When Home Rule is conceded, one half the battle for Irish freedom will not be won. The right to govern ourselves after our own fashion will be but a shadowy right as long as the influence of Rome holds good. Catholicism is a conglomeration of religion and politics; the religious department being equivalent to mental slavery and superstition, and the political department being essentially Conservative. Catholic politicians who wish to remain in good odor with the Church will not be actuated by what they deem to be good for their country, but by what they consider advantageous for their "souls." This latter they cannot decide for themselves, nor can the Irish priests, except under orders from Rome. What is good or baneful for the "souls" of the Irish politicians will altogether depend upon the prevailing political intrigues at Rome. These intrigues will have reference to England. The Pope has his eye on the land of the Saxon. To have the Saxon on his side is his great ambition at present; for he believes that the countenance of England would further the interests of the Church in more important places than Ireland. Accordingly, Ireland has been reserved, and is destined to be reserved, to act the part of puppet, and to be ready at all times to do what the Pope thinks would please England or further the interests of the Church. This is no mere speculation. Catholics themselves say that the Pope is justified in prosecuting such a policy; and they even confess that it is better that the whole Church should benefit than that the Irish section of it should be allowed to have matters its own way as far as "temporal" interests are concerned. When the Rescript against the Plan of Campaign was issued, many Irishmen growled; but the body of them lay down calmly and said that the welfare of their "souls" demanded that the Pope should be implicitly obeyed. Those who spoke pretty plainly were condemned for their levity; but at the same time the growling in certain quarters was growing so threatening that the Bishops, except one, did not actually enforce the Rescript, fearing, doubtless, that their doing so would endanger the hitherto strong hold which Rome Rule had on Ireland. It will yet be found that that Rescript was the beginning of the end. The end is far off, very far off, but it is nearer than if the Rescript never left the Vatican. In the hearts of the younger men, the insult to their country and the unwarrantable interference with their right of combination, are still rankling; and if Home Rule were granted, this feeling of soreness would make itself felt in the towns, and wherever the Gaelic Athletic Association has influence, for the young men of that body have been the first to resent priestly interference, by insisting on managing their association without priestly aid. Political expediency keeps those who feel inclined to oppose the priests silent for the present; but if Home Rule were once a reality, all necessity for restraint would be abolished, and all with notions of Liberty above the milk-and-water Liberal principals of the Church of Rome, would undoubtedly commence to assert themselves, timidly, perhaps, at first, but gathering strength as time went on, and as abuse, if not persecution, was heaped upon them.

With the advent of Home Rule and the temporary increase of the influence of the Rule of Rome in Ireland, there is no fear that the latter power will exhibit itself in the form of persecution of the minority. The fears that Protestants express of persecution are groundless. It is not the Protestants that Home Rule will trouble itself to persecute. From motives of policy it would be dangerous to persecute non-Catholics, even if it were not absurdly out of date to attempt anything of the kind. Rome Rule will reserve its malignant forces for those who dare to oppose the political policy of the priests, and opposition to that policy will not come from the Protestants, except in the unlikely event of an attempt being made to endow the Catholic Church. Irish Protestants are generally conservative in politics, and it is quite on the cards that they would willingly join with the creatures of the Catholic priests for the purpose of putting down those who will preach nationalisation of the land, and the establishment of free and undenominational education. As Conservatives, Protestants and good Catholics will combine to "protect property" from the reformers who will want to do something substantial for the long-neglected artizans and farm laborers; and as bigots they will combine to defeat those who will demand free education for the people. Not that there is ever likely to be anything like a feeling of harmony between the Catholics and the Protestants. The bitter spirit of sectarianism will always render friction of some kind inevitable.

Protestants under Home Rule will not have the pick of the good positions under the Government, as they have been accustomed to, and this will perhaps make them a trifle cantankerous. The worst that is to be expected is an occasional row between the most bigoted and ignorant on both sides, and a continuance of that mutual hatred, which is kept alive by the clergymen of all sects, and which is only to some extent satisfied by the consoling belief that the opposing party is safe for eternal damnation. For my own part I do not apprehend any religious persecution under the combined Home Rule and Rome Rule; but I do most certainly apprehend that there will be bitter persecution of those who may be bold enough to attack the stick-in-the-mud policies of clericals, solicitous for their own influence and welfare, and for the influence and welfare of their churches.

To sum up. Rome Rule need not be feared as likely to very vastly increase under a Home Rule Parliament. It may flourish undisturbed while the people are rejoicing over their triumph, and while the services of the priests in securing it give them a sort of right to the gratitude of the nation. It will affect the Protestant minority but very slightly, and that not in the direction of persecution. But on the moment that the influence of Rome will oppose itself to Progress, then the fight will commence—not between Catholics and Protestants, but between the genuine Home Rulers and those whose Home Rule principles are mixed with Rome Rule principles. There are a few men ready to start that fight as soon as opportunity offers. Behind them will be ranged a good sprinkling of the younger men, and of the artizans. Once the struggle is under weigh Freethought will spread, and a new life will be infused into Ireland never dreamt of during the days of religious ascendancy. Priestly influence, superstition, and all the paraphernalia of Rome Rule will perhaps require a great deal of mangling, and will die hard. But I hope that I will not have descended into the eternal oblivion of the grave until I see the darkness of religious superstition giving place to the lights of Truth and Reason, which, unhappily for herself, have never yet shed their benign lustre on poor Ireland.

J. O'DONOVAN.

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF FREETHOUGHT IN SPAIN.

(Concluded from p. 147.)

In other countries religious wars and persecutions have only been passing incidents, which have left no trace upon the national character; but this has not been the case with Spain. In England the last two persons burnt for heresy were Legate and Wightman in 1612. In Spain the last victim of the Inquisition perished as late as 1822.* The Inquisition arose as soon as the monarchy was established, and became an auxiliary to its power. During three consecutive centuries it impressed upon the Spanish nation such an indelible stamp of bigoted perfidy and monachal mumery, that in spite of the efforts of the Spanish people they have not quite succeeded in shaking it off. As the church retained her hold over the highest as over the lowest intellects, writers were proud of counting themselves among the ecclesiastical authorities. Thus we find that Lope de Vega and Calderon became priests towards the end of their lives. The latter has been justly called by Sismondi "the poet of the Inquisition." Cervantes became a Franciscan monk. Montalvan, Solis the historian, and do Molina, received holy orders. Mariana was a Jesuit. We will not tire the reader by inserting more names, which perhaps he hears for the first time. It suffices to say that in those horrible times everybody of eminence and property took good care to flatter or join the Holy Office.

Beaumarchais puts in the mouth of Figaro the following ironical remarks, which show the sort of liberty enjoyed by the Madrid press in the eighteenth century. "They tell me," says Figaro, "that during my economical retreat [he had been imprisoned] there has been established in Madrid a system of liberty which extends even to that of the press; and that provided I don't mention in my writings anything concerning the authorities, politics, religion or morality, or the people present, or credited corporations, the opera and other spectacles, or lastly concerning any person who keeps to anything, I can print as much as I like about *everything else*, always of course under the supervision of a few censors!"

* In Mexico the custom of burning witches seems not quite to have died out. In 1874 a poor woman was accused of witchcraft and publicly burnt! See Stanford's *Compendium of Geography*, America.

The above "sweet liberty" was the only one enjoyed by authors and journalists in Spain almost up till now. Is it, then, astonishing if Freethought has not been able to make progress in such a country?

When Tyndall's *Heat as a Mode of Motion* came out, importation and translation of the work into Spain was prohibited. When in '59 the world's gossip was the *Origin of Species*, only one man in Spain (Castelar) wrote a few timid remarks in a review! But things, we are glad to say, have changed in the last twenty-five years, thanks to the unceasing labors and indescribable sufferings of a few enlightened men.

It is not only in the nineteenth century that Freethought existed in Spain. During the period in which that country was governed by the Arabs, nearly 800 years, a Freethinking sect arose. Thus we find Abu Abdallah Muhammad Ibn Masara al Jabali, an upholder of Pantheism and a student of the works of Empedocles and other Greek philosophers. His books were burnt. Died 931. Abu Bakr Ibn Al Tufail, who died at Morocco in 1185, wrote a philosophical romance, *Hai Ebn Thokdan*, i.e., the Man of Nature. Averroes, the prince of Arabian philosophers, was imprisoned for his heterodoxy. He was born at Cordova 1126. He is too well known for it to be necessary that we should mention much about him. The reader will find all desired information in Rénan's splendid volume. Sabin was born at Murcia about 1218; he corresponded with Frederick II. and replied to his philosophical questions.

The above are the names of the Hispano-Arabic Freethinkers, mentioned in Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*; they are not numerous, but there is no doubt that a greater number must have existed of whom details have been lost. The writer has not been able to consult the valuable dictionary, in four volumes, written in Arabic and Spanish, by Ebn Alkhali Mahomed Ben Abdalla, which is kept in the Escorial; nor the literary history of Ben Mohamed Abu Nasser Alphrath, of Sevilla, which is to be seen in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. A careful perusal of these two works would certainly reveal more names of Freethinkers.

The first Freethinker we meet after the Arabic period is Alfonso X., surnamed the Wise. He learned his scepticism from the Jews and Arabs. He is credited with saying that had he been present at the creation, he could have given "the Old Jew upstairs" a few hints on improvement. Hurtado de Mendoza, who flourished about 1503, was undoubtedly a sceptic at heart, but limited himself to vituperating the conduct of the clergy. His "Lazarillo" and satires were condemned by the Inquisition.

Miguel Servet (1509-1553). One of the martyrs of Freethought: intended for the Church, he left it for law, and finally studied medicine. He certainly contributed largely towards the discovery of the circulation of the blood. His two books, *Trinitatis Erroribus* and *Christianism Restitutio*, brought him the hatred of both Catholics and Protestants. We all know the infamous conduct of Calvin towards Servetus. The unfortunate Servetus was burnt alive at a slow fire at Genoa on the 25th October, 1553. Bruno has had a statue erected to him on the spot where he was burnt. Why should not Servetus have one also erected to him in his native place, or in the town where he suffered martyrdom? Let us hope that ere long a committee for the proposal of an erection of a statue to Servetus will be formed, so that his effigy, like that of Bruno, may stand out with menacing looks warning the Church of her approaching ruin!

Mendizabal was born at Cadiz 1790. He learnt his scepticism from the English Freethinkers. He subjugated the clerical party, abolished religious orders, and proclaimed their goods as national property. Readers of George Borrow's *The Bible in Spain* will recollect the interview this reverend gentleman had with Mendizabal. Here is the finish of it: "What strange infatuation," continued Mendizabal, "is this which drives you over lands and waters with Bibles in your hands. My good sir, it is not Bibles we want, but rather guns and powder. I have not lived thirteen years in England without forming some acquaintance with the phraseology of your good folks. Now, now, pray go; you see how busy I am. Come again whenever you like, but let it not be within the next three months."

José Marchena (1768-1821) was intended for the Church, but was "converted" by reading the works of French philosophers. He was very active, and translated into Spanish a good many Freethought works.

Pedro Aranda (1718-1799). He imbibed the ideas of the

Encyclopædists, and contributed largely to the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain. The Inquisition was completely disarmed by him. Larra (José) 1809-1837. Became obnoxious to the Spanish government by the publication of his *Poor Gossip*. The journal was suppressed after its fourteenth number. He translated Lamennais' *Paroles d'un Croyant*, under the title "The Dogma of Free Men." The following saying of his betrays his scepticism: "All the truths of this world can be wrapped in a cigarette paper." Ramon de la Sagra (1798) was less a savant than an economist, but in this science he kept the first place among Spaniards. He published numerous works and was a disciple of Proudhon, whom he greatly admired. It is said, but without foundation, that in later years he modified his opinions.

Espronceda (1810-1842) may be called the Spanish Shelley. Want of space prevents me from doing justice to him, but any one who wishes to become acquainted with the finest lyrics in the Spanish language, let him read "A una Estrella" and "El Pirata."

García-Vao, was born at Manzanares 1862. A young man of great talent and capacity, he was cowardly assassinated four years ago. His *Echoes of a Free Mind* will continue to be read, as well as his satires on the monks.

With García-Vao terminates the list of notable Spanish Freethinkers, who have wandered over "to the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." Of living Spanish Freethinkers, materials for their biographies are wanting; besides the Freethought party is very young and feeble still. It is a consolation though to know that such able men as Castelar, Pi-y-Margall, Ruiz Zorrilla, Perez Galdos, Salmeron, Varela, Morayta, Nakens, Miralta, Chies, Pompeyo Gener, Tubino, etc., the best men that Spain has, are most decidedly "on our side."

South America can show also the names of a few Free-Freethinkers. We find general Miranda (1750-1816) who was a friend of Tom Paine. It is said that Miranda made a sceptic of James Mill. Bolivar (Simon) 1783-1830. Lost his belief by reading the works of Diderot, Voltaire, Rousseau, etc. Francisco Zarco (1829-1869), a Mexican journalist, propagated liberal ideas in his country and was imprisoned by the reactionaries.

Positivism found an exponent in Lastarria. He is a prolific author, and his *Politica Positiva* has been translated into French. Rafael Nunez, the Columbian President, is a writer on political questions and in philosophy a follower of Mill, Comte and Spencer. Lastly we come to Guillermo Mata, a Chilian poet, who has been justly called the South American Byron. He was educated in Europe, where he imbibed his Atheistical opinions. He is sixty years old, and as staunch a Freethinker as ever. We have already spoken of the spirit of bigotry and intolerance which has always prevailed in Spain, and of the difficulties Freethinkers had to surmount. Here are the names of some persons who have suffered for their Freethinking ideas:—Dr. Gabarro was sentenced to four years' imprisonment; he fled, and continues in France to edit his anti-clerical journal *La Tronada*. Senor A. de Maglia, who lately paid us a visit, was condemned to six years' imprisonment and a fine of 4,000 francs. Like Gabarro, he has left Spain also. The last prosecution took place only last December. The editor of *Las Dominicales*, Ramon Chies, was condemned for blasphemy to six months' imprisonment and a heavy fine. After a great struggle he was acquitted, to the extreme disgust of the sky-pilots and bigots.

It would be surprising to many to hear the number of Freethought papers published in the Peninsula. We could give their titles, but we shrink from doing so, for fear of tiring the reader. The number of Secular societies and clubs is very extensive; and in no other country are so many civil marriages and secular burials performed as in Spain. A great number of unbaptised children are registered annually. Cremation is also making progress.

It will not be out of place here to mention that translations of the most important scientific and philosophical works have been made lately. Any Madrid bookseller will supply you to-day with a copy in Spanish of the *Origin of Species*, *Force and Matter*, Strauss' and Rénan's *Life of Jesus*, Haeckel's *History of Creation*, Spencer, Maudsley, Comte, Bain, Guyot, Letourneau, Schopenhauer, etc.

Last autumn when the International Congress of Freethinkers took place, Spain sent her delegates; and the next International Congress of Freethinkers will take place this year, and in Madrid! As we see, Spain has entered into a new era. The dawn of a great future has broken over her, and all that is now wanted for the realisation of her dreams

is the establishment of a Republic. But the moment for sounding the tocsin and marching towards the second Bastille has not yet arrived. The Republican and Freethought parties, as we have said before, are too young and too feeble still. If they want to see their efforts crowned with success, they will do well to wait another ten years at least; so that they may have adequate time to recruit partisans and choose for their leaders wise and experienced men. Men who, with the welfare of their country at heart, and power in their hands, will regenerate the nation, make commerce and industry advance, establish just and wise laws, elevate the position of women, and give the masses a useful and healthy education. Then will Spain be able to take her place again among the great nations, and contribute largely to the welfare of humanity. And if this sublime task is ever accomplished, it will be thanks to that class of unselfish, valiant and honest men, who are proud of belonging to the noble Army of Freethought.

F. MALIBRAN.

ANOTHER NOTE ON EASTER.

Easter has no connection with the mythical Christ. The word is usually derived from Eoster, the Saxon goddess of the East, the dawn, spring and resurrection. She is probably to be identified with Ishtar, the Assyrian goddess of love, fertility and generation. Ishtar corresponded both in name and attributes with the Astarte or Ashtoreth of Phœnicians and Syrians. Like the Greek Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, she was the queen of love and beauty, and presided over all reproduction, of animals and plants as well as of man. The Easter egg symbolises her fecundity and power of initiating new life. Ishtar was fabled to have descended into hell, and to have there been one by one divested of her adornments, but she returned again with all her beautiful attire. This transparent myth of the resurrection of life in spring was recorded on tablets above a thousand years before the Christian era. Jeremiah (vii., 18) alludes to the Jewish women kneading their dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, a practice they had learnt in Babylonia, and which survives in our Easter buns. The spring festival celebrates the procreative power of nature, the bursting of life from the underworld, and the myth of Ishtar is both more appropriate and poetical than that of Christ.

LUCIANUS.

OBITUARY.—We have to record the death of Rose Florence Coxesedge, daughter of Mr. Coxesedge, of Bath Street, Clerkenwell, and granddaughter of Mr. A. Hilditch. The Secular Funeral Service was read over her remains at Finchley Cemetery on Sunday by Mr. F. Haslam.

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

LONDON.

Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30, a lecture. Park Gates. 11.15, Mr. F. Haslam, "Is the Bible True?" Social evening every Tuesday.
 Bethnal Green—Opposite "Salmon and Ball," Mr. G. Spiller, 11.15, "The Secular Basis of Morality."
 Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "What do Christians Believe?"
 East London—Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. S. Standing, "Why we Reject Christianity"; 8, Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "The Resurrection."
 Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Can Christ Atono for the Sins of Men?"
 Milton Hall, Kentish Town Road, N.W., 7.30, Mr. John M. Robertson, "Right and Wrong; or Praise and Blame."
 West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 10.30, committee meeting; 11.30, Mr. Frank Fawcett, "The Exodus from Egypt"; 7, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Jesus and his Beliefs"; 8.30, music, etc.
 Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "What Do Christians Teach?"

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, Mr. C. C. Cattell, "Man's Natural Origin and Great Antiquity."
 Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, 7, Mr. W. Hall, "The House of Lords."
 Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—7, Mr. D. S. Collins, "Why I Believe Jesus Rose from the Dead"; secretary to reply.
 Newcastle-on-Tyne—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street. 11, meeting of Sunday Music League; 2.30, in Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, Rev. Walter Walsh, "Is there a God?"; 7.30, fortnightly business meeting of members. April 14, at 7, Mr. J. Clarke lecture, in High Market on "Is the Bible Inspired?"
 South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, at 7, business meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon Road, London, S.E.—April 13, (morning) Pimlico, (evening) Camberwell; 27, Reading. May 18 (morning), Clerkenwell Green, (evening), Ball's Pond; 25, (afternoon) Regent's Park. June 1 (morning), Pimlico; 15, Ball's Pond; 29, Mile End. July 13, Mile End.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—May 4 (morning), Mile End Waste; 11, Clerkenwell Green; 18 (afternoon), Regent's Park; 25 (morning), Hyde Park. June 1 (morning), Mile End Waste; 8 (morning), Clerkenwell Green.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—April 13, Nottingham.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—April 13 (evening), Plaistow; 27, Hyde Park.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—April 13, Manchester; 20, Rochdale. May 4, Birmingham.

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