

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## MR. GLADSTONE ON THE FALL OF MAN.

Talk *politics* with the stupidest Englishman, and he will be sure to say something sensible. But so soon as the conversation turns on *religion*, the most intelligent Englishman utters nothing but silly speeches.—HEINE.

MR. GLADSTONE'S third article on the Bible, in the June number of *Good Words*, is disappointing. He fulfils none of the promises with which he set out. No attempt is made to answer the sceptic's objections. We have simply a theological essay, restating the orthodox view of the Bible, and abounding in evasions and assumptions. A certain pomposity of style, familiar to Mr. Gladstone's readers, gives his article a fictitious air of importance; but in substance it is remarkably poor, and its argumentation is such that if it were displayed on any other topic it would expose him to derision. That a man of Mr. Gladstone's powers and eminence should sink so low is only to be explained by the fact that religion stultifies the intellect. The defence of childish legends and contemptible doctrines cannot but degrade their champion. We regret to say it, but truth is higher than politeness. It is time that some one told the Grand Old Man that he is making an exhibition of himself. He is a perfect Rip Van Winkle in religious controversy. What else can be said of one who, so many years after Darwin's death, writes as though Darwin had never lived; of one who, in an age in which Evolution has overrun every field of research and speculation, writes as though Evolution had never been heard of? If, on the other hand, Mr. Gladstone knows something of Evolution, and simply ignores it, he might give points in ludicrousness to the proverbial ostrich with its head in the desert sands. Why on earth—we say it in all seriousness—does not a confidential friend break through the ring of flatterers, and save a statesman in whose reputation we are all interested from himself and the editors with cheque books who are anxious to trade upon his name? Mr. John Morley could hardly do it; his heterodoxy would throw suspicion on his advice. But there is Professor Stuart. He knows a thing or two, and his scepticism is only ankle-deep. Could he not contrive to drop a whisper into Mrs. Gladstone's ear, and even in a roundabout way spare us the necessity of laughing at one we would fain reverence? For risibility is an imp who will not be balked; when he scents antics he will take a ticket for the spectacle.

The very opening of Mr. Gladstone's third article is what is vulgarly called "a caution." In face of all he has written before he says it is "likely that the Creation Story has come down from the beginning." He even talks of "the corroborative legends of Assyria." Nay he declares, with a wonderful equanimity, which we are unable to emulate, that "we now trace the probable origins of our Sacred Books far back beyond Moses and his time." In other words, Mr. Gladstone, at this time of day, fancies the antediluvian patriarchs were actual and not mythical

personages, who had the Creation Story revealed to them, and passed it down to their descendants. Despite the fact, too, that all savages—and the ancient Jews were savages—trace their descent from a common ancestor, for the simple reason that they cannot understand any but a blood relationship; despite the fact that Romulus, the mythical founder of Rome, for instance, is now seen to be as real a character as Tamoi of the Brazilians, or Unkulunkulu of the Zulus; Mr. Gladstone takes Abraham quite seriously, regards his "call" as a fact like that of the last clergyman who had a call to a richer living, and bravely declares that "Of all great and distinctive chapters in the history of the human race we have here perhaps the greatest and the most distinctive." Why, the very circumcision which Jehovah fixed as his special brand upon the Jews, beginning with Abraham, is older than the earliest trace of the Jews in history. It was practised on religious grounds by the priestly caste in Egypt. It was common among the Semites, of whom the Jews are a branch. It has been found in various parts of the world that had no communication with each other, such as South Africa, the South Pacific islands, and Mexico. Jehovah's trade mark was a plagiarism, a violation of an old patent, and he would have been non-suited in any action he took to assert his exclusive rights.

But let us come to Mr. Gladstone's account of the Fall. He starts with setting up an "Adamic race," of whom we suppose he implies that Adam was the first progenitor. Now the science of ethnology is pretty well established, but its records will be searched in vain for any Adamic race. Mr. Gladstone has developed this race, like the German's camel, from the depths of his inner consciousness. Elsewhere he speaks of the Fall as "introducing us to man in his first stage of existence—a stage not of savagery but of childhood." Nowadays such a remark is *childish*. There never was such a stage of humanity. Not childhood, but sheer savagery, was the original state of every people in history. Mr. Gladstone may talk as he pleases, but on this question he is no greater authority than the man in the street. Behind history lies anthropology, and the verdict of anthropology is decisive. Man is of animal origin. He was neither made from earth nor dropped from the skies. This is *proved*. Even Dr. Wallace can no longer withhold his assent. Despite himself he now admits that the evidence for man's "descent from some ancestral form common to man and the anthropoid apes" is "overwhelming and conclusive." Thus the Adamic race, and the primitive state "not of savagery but of childhood," are both figments of theological imagination. They would vanish to-morrow if they were not maintained by the Black Army in the interest of their dogmas.

Mr. Gladstone sums up the purport of the Old Testament as "a history of sin and redemption." Of course the second depends upon the first. Man is an awful sinner, a fallen being. That is the first statement of Christianity, and it is a falsehood. Evolution proves the ascent, not the descent, of man; that he

has risen from a low estate to a high one, and from small things to great. On the other hand, the least knowledge of human nature shows us that man is not half as black as the parsons paint him. It is absurd to talk of "the preponderance of moral evil in the world." Human society could not exist under such conditions. Nor is it sensible to ask, "Are we as a race whole, or are we profoundly sick?" We are neither the one nor the other. Man is neither an angel nor a devil. But there is surely a preponderance of good in his composition. His heart is better than his head. No doubt there is a sad spectacle for the philanthropist in the oppressions of the world, for the honest man in its crimes, for the good man in its vices, and for the truthful man in its lies and hypocrisies—after all these millenniums of religion. But what the world at large does not see, what the newspapers do not report, is deeper and more common than these things; and the homes of the people, where they really live their lives, are perpetually made fragrant by "the little unremembered deeds of kindness and of love." And sometimes a splendid deed of heroism, wrought by one great heart, thrills the hearts of millions, expands our moral horizon, and shames the whining of dastard priests.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

#### CARDINAL MANNING ON ATHEISM.

LAST Sunday at the various Roman Catholic churches in the diocese of Westminster, a pastoral was read from Cardinal Manning on behalf of the Diocesan Building Fund. The Catholic Church is not only making great strides at present, it is preparing the plant for future acquisitions and like all other causes human and divine needs funds for its support. Now Cardinal Manning is tactician enough to know that when money is your suit there is nothing like attacking the enemy. Atheism has few friends, at any rate among the Catholics. The very word has associations which give it a flavor of all that is odious. To say one was an Atheist in the good old days was to say he was out of the bounds of decent society. Cardinal Manning is aware that Atheism is the enemy. He knows that all his elaborate preparations to restore England to "the faith of our fathers" are being undermined. While he is preparing to receive the divided sects of Protestants within the bosom of the mother Church, reason is impelling them outside all churches, and every strain made by his powerful church on behalf of authority but nerves Freethinkers in their promulgation of universal mental liberty.

The Cardinal devotes then much of his pastoral to Atheism. He sets out with the statement that of old, the knowledge of God was not a discovery but an inheritance. This is true enough if for knowledge we substitute belief. Men have inherited the belief in gods exactly as they inherited the belief in ghosts. Indeed, the one idea sprang from the other. The Cardinal, however, appears to hold that the knowledge of God came by a primitive revelation, though he does not expressly say so. He proceeds to observe that the ancients so profusely believed in God, that rather than lose hold of the divine presence, they believed all things to be God. His does not explain how this "majestic perversion of the truth" came about if God gave a primitive revelation. Polytheism and Pantheism are really to be explained as developments of the early superstitious belief in spirits.

"Among the people of Israel," continues the Cardinal, "an Atheist would have been shunned as insane or stoned as a blasphemer." The latter portion is certainly correct, although we may doubt the former, inasmuch as like most Orientals, the people of Israel considered the insane as inspired persons. The Cardinal seems to lament the divinely-directed

stoning by the chosen race. He did his share in stoning Mr. Bradlaugh, writing the most virulent articles against him during his prolonged fight for his seat in the House of Commons. Here the Cardinal was an Israelite indeed. We do not doubt he was sincere. We feel sure he would consign an Atheist to the secular arm to be punished "without the effusion of blood" with the serene consciousness of doing his duty. We suspect he could see the said Atheist burn to death without one twinge of human pity, but with the reflection that thus might others be saved from eternal fire. But Atheists are less shunned now and escape stoning simply because they are too numerous.

His Eminence proceeds to ask "Is it not, then, a sign of these last days that in the full revelation of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, in the light and the glory of God in Unity and Trinity, there should be not only those who deny the Lord that bought them, but those also who will not trouble themselves so far as to believe or disbelieve his existence." We are not quite sure what he means by "these last days." If he agrees with Prophet Baxter that the end of all things is at hand, we do not see why he wants money to build splendid churches. No doubt the existence of Atheism is a sign. It is a sign the power of the Church to suppress opinion is gone. It is a sign, too, that there is no God who concerns himself with suppressing Atheism. If there is a God he could at once make Atheism impossible. It is a strange God who hides himself from honest seekers. And we tell Cardinal Manning that Atheists of all men are honest in their opinions, for they have nothing to gain and much to lose by their expression. Theirs is the modest, manly course of not pretending to know that which they do not know. Atheism has extended with increased knowledge of nature. Man, who recognises himself as one of myriads of beings living a few years on a little planet, the satellite of an inferior sun, can no longer suppose that all things were created for his benefit. He sees creation nowhere, but everywhere evolution. He finds that the chief forms of existence are brought about by an enormous destruction of life, that prayers are powerless to avert the evils from which he suffers, and that science is his only providence. Disregard for Deity springs from regard for humanity. Fortunately the mass of men are, in all their immediate concerns, practical Atheists, acting without regard to any possible deity or devil. Yet the Cardinal goes on to say, "The passive unbelief of the ignorant or gross-minded is as abnormal as the privation of sight or speech." Does he forget that God is responsible for the blindness and dumbness of the ignorant and gross-minded? If an almighty being willed, there could be no dispute about his existence or his will. But then there would be no need of Pope, cardinals or priests. Their occupation would be gone. The Cardinal laments that "the men of to-day are born into a state of privation." They are deprived of the guidance of his Church. Their thoughts and lives and those of their wives and children are no longer moulded by priests. But the Cardinal will do his best to bring back the good old days when all were subject to the power of God. And we will do our best to prevent him. We hold that the time has gone by for his Church with its supernatural morality, founded not on the needs of man, but on the supposed will of an arbitrary God, and its sacerdotal pretensions to be that God's interpreter. The Church has had a fair trial. It stands condemned by history. It has cursed mankind in direct proportion as it has been strong. We war against it in the name of progress and humanity.

J. M. WHEELER.

Freethinkers in Crewe and district are invited to attend a meeting at 42 Brown Street at seven o'clock on Sunday next, June 8, with a view to organisation.—CHAS. LEWIS.

## FARRAR'S REPLY TO INGERSOLL.

[CONCLUDED.]

DR. FARRAR gives a curious list of these gentlemen who have given God a certificate. It includes Charlemagne, who had such a fine notion of "evidence" that he offered the Saxons the choice of baptism or instant death, and so converted them at the rate of twenty thousand a day. It includes Shakespeare, whose irreligion is a byword among the commentators. It also includes Dr. Lightfoot and Dr. Westcott, two highly-fed dignitaries of the Church. Among the scientific names is that of Faraday, who "had the Christian faith of a child," which is a very happy description, for Faraday deliberately refused to submit his faith to any test of reason. Dr. Farrar mentions Darwin, Huxley and Tyndall as "exceptions." But they cease to be exceptions when the names of Haeckel, Büchner, Clifford, Maudsley, Galton, and a score of others are added. Among the poets, Tennyson and Browning may be called believers, but Swinburne, Morris, and Meredith are not; and in France the foremost living poet, Leconte de Lisle, is a pronounced Atheist. Sir William Hamilton was a believer, but John Stuart Mill was not. Dr. Gardiner, the historian of England, is a believer, but Grote the greater historian of Greece was an Atheist. After all, however, this bandying of big names is perfectly idle. Propositions must ultimately rest on their evidence. What is the use of discussion if we are not to judge for ourselves?

Not only does Dr. Farrar give us a scratch list of eminent believers—as though every creed and every form of scepticism did not boast its eminent men—but he gives another list of assailants of Christianity, and declares that it has survived their attacks, as it will survive every assault that can be made upon it. It survived "the flashing wit of Lucian," which, by the way, never flashed upon the ignorant dupes who were gathered into the early Christian fold. It survived "the haughty mysticism of Porphyry." Yes, but how? By burning his books, and decreeing the penalty of death against everyone who should be found in possession of his damnable writings. It survived "the battering eloquence and keen criticism of Celsus." Yes, but how? By destroying his writings, so that not a single copy remained, and all that can be known of them is the extracts quoted in the answer of Origen. Then there are Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Voltaire, Diderot, Strauss and Renan—and "what have they effected?"

This is what they have effected. They have broken the spirit of intolerance, and made it possible for honest thinkers to express their opinions. They have crippled the power of priests, tamed their pride, and compelled them to argue with heretics instead of robbing and murdering them. They have leavened Christian superstition with human reason, and made educated Christians ashamed of the grosser aspects of their faith. They have driven Dr. Farrar himself to juggle with the words of Scripture in order to get rid of the infamous doctrine of everlasting torture. They have compelled the apologists of Christianity to alter their theory of Inspiration, to discriminate between better and worse in the Bible, and to practise all kinds of subtle shifts in order to patch up a hollow treaty between religion and science. They have loosened the Church's grasp on the mind of the child, and very largely secularised both private and public life, which were once under the domination of priestcraft. They have made millions of Freethinkers in Christendom, shaken the faith of the very worshippers in their pews, and helped to create that ever growing indifference to religion, which is a theme of wailing at Church Congresses, and bids fair to absorb all the sects of theology, as the desert absorbs water or the ocean a fleet of sinking ships.

What have they effected? Dr. Farrar's article furnishes an answer. Fifty years ago what dignitary of the Church would have replied to an "infidel" except with anathemas and the terrors of the law? Now the proudest of them rush to cross swords with Colonel Ingersoll, and, although they do it with a wry face, they shake hands with him before beginning the combat. Fifty years ago what "infidel," if he openly avowed his infidelity, had the remotest chance of occupying any public post? Now Mr. John Morley is Mr. Gladstone's first lieutenant, and Mr. Bradlaugh himself is marked out as a member of the next Liberal administration. All this may be "nothing" to Dr. Farrar, but it is much to Freethinkers, and they need not argue who has the best reason to be satisfied.

Dr. Farrar proceeds to tackle Ingersoll's agnosticism. In doing so he explains why he introduces the word "infidel." He does not desire "to create an unfair prejudice." Why then does he use the word at all? Certainly he is incorrect in saying that "the word has always been understood to mean one who does not believe in the existence of God." "Infidel" was first used by the Christians as a name for the Mohammedans. It was afterwards applied to the unbelievers at home. The Deists of last century were called infidels. Voltaire and Thomas Paine are arch-infidels, and both believed in the existence of God. Johnson defines "infidel" as "an unbeliever, a miscreant, a pagan; one who rejects Christianity." Bailey as "a Heathen, or one who believes nothing of the Christian religion." A similar definition is given in Richardson's great dictionary. It is clear that Dr. Farrar's etymology is no improvement on his manners. He covers a bad fault with a worse excuse. We are ready, however, to make allowance for him. His mind is naturally loose, and he is rather the slave than the master of his words. In the very next paragraph he says that "our beliefs are surrounded by immense and innumerable perplexities," forgetting that if they are immense they cannot be innumerable, and if they are innumerable they cannot be immense.

Ingersoll's arguments against theology are reduced by Dr. Farrar under four heads: "first, the difficulty of conceiving the nature of God; secondly, the existence of evil; thirdly, the impossibility of miracles; and fourthly, the asserted errors and imperfections of the Bible."

"Is it possible," asks Ingersoll, "for the human mind to conceive of an infinite personality?" Dr. Farrar replies, "Why, certainly it is; for human minds innumerable have done so." But have they? Dr. Farrar knows they have not. He knows they cannot. Otherwise he would not argue that we are bound to believe in the existence of things which are inconceivable.

"Can the human mind imagine a beginningless being?" asks Ingersoll. Dr. Farrar evades the question. He gives us another dissertation on conceivability. He asks whether Ingersoll believes "there is such a thing as *space*," and presently calls it "an entity." We venture to say that Ingersoll believes in nothing of the kind. You may call space "a thing," but it is only indefinite extension, as time is indefinite succession. The metaphysical difficulty arises when we try to use the word *infinite* in a positive sense. Then we are brought face to face with antinomies because we are trying to transcend the limit of our faculties. Still, it is absurd to affirm that "space is quite as impossible to conceive as God." We know extension by experience, and increasing it *ad infinitum* is rather an exercise in transcendent geometry than in practical reason. But what experience have we of God? Is it not easier to conceive that to be unlimited, of which we have some knowledge, and of which we have never found the limits, than to conceive that to be unlimited of which we have no knowledge at all? And if God be considered as a personality—without which he is not

God—is it possible to combine infinitude and personality in the same conception? Dr. Farrar affirms that it is. We say it is not, and we appeal to the judgment of every man who will try to think accurately.

With regard to the existence of evil, all that Dr. Farrar can say is that it is a mystery. Now a mystery, in theology, is simply a contradiction between fact and theory, and arguing from mystery is only justifying a particular contradiction by a general contradiction. Dr. Farrar must also be exceedingly simple to imagine that it is any reply to Ingersoll to appeal to St. Paul. Nor is it permissible to argue from the assumed "restoration of all things" which is to take place in the future, unless conjecture and argument are the same thing, in which case it is idle to discuss at all, for every time the Christian is beaten he has only to start a fresh assumption. It is foolish, likewise, to complain that the argument from evil is an old one, and that there is "nothing new in the reiterated objection," for there is nothing new in the reiterated reply, and the objection remains unanswered. The Catholic theologian would address Dr. Farrar in the same futile fashion. He would reply to objections against Transubstantiation, for instance, that they are musty with age and have been answered again and again.

Dr. Farrar finally sees he has a poor case and resigns the argument. After trying to explain away a great deal of the world's evil by saying it is "transitory," which is questionable; or "phantasmal," which is a mockery; he ends by throwing up the sponge altogether. He admits he has "no compact logical solution of the problem," and cries out in despair that the theologians "are not called upon to construct theodiceas." But that is precisely what they *are* called upon to do, and if they cannot do it they should have the modesty to be silent. It is their function to "justify the ways of God to men." Let them perform it, or confess they cannot, and retire from their pretentious business.

But we must be just to Dr. Farrar. He does supply two arguments, not for God's goodness, but for God's existence. The first is "the starry heavens above." Did they come by *chance*?—as though God and chance were the only possible alternatives, or as though chance were anything but contingency arising from human ignorance!

"The starry heavens above." "It is all very well, gentlemen, but who made these?" asked the young Napoleon, pointing to the stars of heaven, as he sat with the French *savans* on the deck of the vessel which was carrying him to Egypt, after they had proved to their satisfaction that there is no God. To most minds it is a question finally decisive.

Colonel Ingersoll must smile at this childish logic. No doubt to most minds it is finally decisive. Who made the world or the stars? is a pertinent question to those who have been taught that they *were* made. It is an idle question to anyone with a moderate acquaintance with astronomy. On that subject the French *savans* were better informed than Napoleon.

Dr. Farrar is erroneous in supposing that the Atheist or Agnostic is bound to "account for the existence of matter and force." Accounting for them can only mean explaining how they began, and the Atheist or Agnostic is not aware that they had a beginning. The "source of life" is a question that biology must solve. Until it does, the "infidel" waits for information. No light is shed upon the problem by supernatural explanations. Still less is the "infidel" called upon to account for "the freedom of the will." He knows of no such freedom as Dr. Farrar means by this phrase. As for "the obvious design which runs through the whole of nature," it is so *obvious* that Charles Darwin wrote, "the longer I live the less I can see proof of design."

The second of the two things that are "ample to prove the being of a God" is "the moral law within." Dr. Farrar asserts that Conscience "is the voice of

God within us." But assertion is not proof. Colonel Ingersoll would reply that Conscience is the voice of human experience. No student of evolution would admit Dr. Farrar's assertion. The origin and development of morality are seen by evolutionists to be perfectly natural. It is futile to make assertions which your opponent contradicts. Argument must rest upon admitted facts. Dr. Farrar strikes an attitude, makes dogmatic statements, draws out the conclusion he has put into them, and calls that discussion. He has yet to learn the rudiments of debate. The methods of the pulpit may do for a pious romance called the *Life of Christ*, but they are out of place in a discussion with Colonel Ingersoll.

Misled by his fondness for preaching, Dr. Farrar has forgotten two of the four heads under which he reduced Colonel Ingersoll's arguments. He says nothing about "the impossibility of miracles" or "the errors and imperfections of the Bible." But these are the very points that demanded his attention. The existence of God, and the problem of evil, belong to what is called Natural Religion. Dr. Farrar is a champion of Revealed Religion. He is not a Deist but a Christian. He should therefore have defended the Bible. His omission to do so may be owing to prudence or negligence. He has given us fifteen pages of "A Few Words on Colonel Ingersoll." We look forward to a "Fewer Words on Dr. Farrar." G. W. FOOTE.

## ACID DROPS.

Lord Wolesley is a curious specimen of the militant Christian. Of late he has been urging the duty of drilling school-children in order to make them good fighters—we suppose after the pattern of the Sermon on the Mount. Last Saturday afternoon he went a step farther in pious exhortation. After laying the foundation stone of a new church at Harringay, he preached a sermon on faith, which he regards as the one thing needful. According to the Wolesley creed, it is not righteousness, but faith that exalteth a nation; and as France is not noted for this particular virtue, Lord Wolesley declared that she was hopelessly lost. To make the declaration more offensive, he quoted the words of "a great German statesman," who said to him, alluding to France, "What can you hope from a nation that has no faith in it?"

Such a public insult to a friendly nation by a man in Lord Wolesley's official position is nothing less than a scandal. His foolish incontinence of tongue has more than once brought him into trouble, and he surely should be reprimanded for this fresh offence. Very likely, as before, when he was brought to book by Lord Salisbury, he would climb down and roar like any sucking dove. Anyhow, it is high time to tell this bouncible soldier, who brought home King Coffee's umbrella from Ashantee, and didn't rescue Gordon from Khartoum or get near it, that his achievements do not entitle him to indulge in the license of insulting nations with whom we are on terms of amity. If he must display his silliness, let him go on chattering about the dangers of the Channel Tunnel; or, better still, let him resign his sword and take a pulpit.

Our pious contemporary, the *Christian Commonwealth*, has a queer way of speaking of its betters. "This man," it says, "has told the world why he is an Agnostic." The "this man" is Colonel Ingersoll. How hard it is for Christians not to be impudent to Freethinkers.

By the way, there is an article in the *C. C.* on "brain friction." We should hardly have thought that a burning question with its readers.

Mr. Spurgeon reviews *The Atheist Shoemaker* in his monthly magazine. He praises it as "a beautiful story," and says it "should be given away among Atheistic shoemakers, of whom the world hath not a few." At the same he gives the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes a shrewd dig in the ribs. "It is a pity," Mr. Spurgeon says, "that the name and address of Herbert [the blessed shoemaker] are not given, for it would make it fair, logical, weighty testimony

with the man's former companions. We fail to guess the reason for making the convert anonymous when the name of his spiritual guide is given so openly." Well said, Mr. Spurgeon. But when you read our exposure—and we are sending you a copy—you will no longer "fail to guess" Mr. Hughes's reason.

By the way, we have some copies of our exposure of the Hughes's story still remaining, and as the lie is being circulated and advertised we hope Freethinkers will continue to circulate its refutation.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis, in an article on the Broad Church in the June *Contemporary*, commences by stating two facts—(1) Intelligent men refuse to take Holy Orders. (2) Intelligent men refuse to attend Church. He fancies this can be got over by the admission that dogmas which were once true are so no longer. We fancy that when men come to see that God's revelation is in this category they will begin to doubt the utility of churches and ministers. Mr. Haweis and his like, with more ingenuity than ingenuousness, continue to put new wine into the old bottles, unheeding the warning of their master upon this matter.

Dr. Henry Van Dyke offers 100 dols. to the babies ward of a New York hospital if anyone will produce a passage from the writings of Calvin in which he unequivocally declares that all dying infants are elect and saved. He points out that, while Calvin's adversaries accused him of believing in infant perdition, he never denied it.

"The doctrine of hell," says Ingersoll in the *Twentieth Century*, "is now only for the poor, the ragged, the ignorant. Well-dressed people won't have it. Nobody goes to hell in a carriage—they foot it. Hell is for strangers and tramps. No soul leaves a brown-stone front for hell—they start from the tenements, from jails and reformatories. In other words, hell is for the poor. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a poor man to get into heaven, or for a rich man to get into hell. The ministers stand by their supporters. Their salaries are paid by the well-to-do, and they can hardly afford to send the subscribers to hell."

Walter Hayne, the hero of the Spring Palace fire, is to have a monument at Fort Worth, Texas, and ample provision is to be made for his family. He personally saved a hundred women and children. When the flames were beyond control he appeared at an upper window with another fainting woman in his arms. There was but one chance. He jumped. He broke the woman's fall with his own body, and was killed on the spot, while she was uninjured. Brave fellow! We would rather make a pilgrimage to his grave than to that of any saint in the calendar. Yet, if the Christian religion be true, and Walter Hayne's views were unsound, he is gone to hell. Everlasting fire is his reward for saving a hundred lives from the flames. What a disgusting creed! Every honest man should spit upon it. It is too vile for argument.

It is not usual for French advocates to appeal to the old Jew books for arguments in favor of their clients. In the great case of the Comptoir d'Escompte, prosecuted for forestalling copper, Maître Buit argued that such speculation was of divine origin. "What was Pharaoh's dream but a warning voice from above to speculate? There never was, added Maître Buit, such a great forestalling operation as Joseph carried out when he filled the granaries of Egypt with corn."

An infamous sentence has been passed upon Moses Harman, the editor of *Lucifer*. He is a very plain-spoken sexual reformer, and did not shrink from printing an unusually strong letter from one of his correspondents. For this offence he has actually been sentenced to five years' imprisonment and a fine of three hundred dollars, which he is never likely to pay. Such a sentence makes one gape with wonder. Would any judge who was not a wretched bigot pass it, or would it be tolerated by any people not eaten out with hypocrisy? The wife-beaters and woman-outragers are at large, and this well-meaning, if mistaken, man is treated as a criminal of the deepest dye. Even if society—God bless its sweet, pure soul!—felt obliged to discountenance such a publication as *Lucifer*, one

would think that a week's imprisonment would suffice, at least to begin with. But five years! It takes one's breath away. Yet this happens in America, where they are holding meetings to protest against the Czar's treatment of political prisoners. "Frailty, thy name is woman," says Hamlet. That's a mistake. But this is true—Hypocrisy, thy name is Christian civilisation.

Instead of savagely torturing Moses Harman, Christian society should deal with its own black sheep. Here are three items from one American paper. Robert Willis, the San-Francisco evangelist, is charged by his wife with extreme cruelty and conspiracy to put her in a lunatic asylum. The Rev. Mr. Hyde, Protestant missionary at Honolulu, says that Father Damien's leprosy was brought on by his vices and uncleanness. Ex-priest Martin, of Montreal, who became a Protestant in order to marry, has deserted his wife and children, leaving them to destitution, and returned to the Catholic Church.

There was a very pretty squabble out in New Zealand. Mr. Henry Varley (? Butcher Varley) said that no man could live free of sin, and that Christ alone was perfectly holy. Mr. W. Birch, of the Baptist Tabernacle, undertook to refute this. He maintained that a sinless life was possible, and that he had attained it. But a scene of sad disorder ensued, and the meeting broke up amid "ructions." Full details are lacking. Very likely the sinless Birch used some strong language at the finish, but that goes for nothing. He couldn't well have beaten Holy J. C.

"Ingersollism" is causing great excitement in Yankee-land. The latest gentleman to take the field on the orthodox side is Professor Phelps, late U.S. Minister to England. Addressing the Yale divinity students, he has uttered some remarkable nonsense, the more remarkable as coming from a lawyer. He actually argues that "it is too late to raise the question as to the credibility" of the Gospels. "The time has come," he asserts, "to say that this is established, if anything can be established by human evidence." Indeed! Why precisely the same may be said of witchcraft. Even sceptical historians have remarked that there is superabundant "evidence"—as such evidence goes—of the truth of this superstition. Is Professor Phelps ready to accept witchcraft and to revive the witch laws? Of course not. But in that case he is bound to give up his argument.

Professor Phelps is mistaken in supposing that the legal doctrine of possession is applicable in this controversy. "Society," he says, speaking as a lawyer, "society could not stand if it did not respect the right of unchallenged possession of property. We do not ask a man to go back of twenty years if everybody has acquiesced in his claim." But this is a mere matter of practical prudence. Applied to history, philosophy and religion, it would give perpetuity to every legend, every false principle, and every dogma that once succeeded in getting itself established. Such a doctrine puts the Protestant Reformers out of court, and condemns the Christian missionaries who try to disturb the faith of the "heathen" in creeds that are older than Christianity itself.

"Truth can never be confirmed enough, though doubt did ever sleep," said a wiser man than Professor Phelps—namely, William Shakespeare. Christians, however, don't want their faith confirmed. They don't want it tested. Why? Because they fear the result.

There is another fallacy in Professor Phelps's argument. Christianity has never been in "unchallenged possession" of its documents. "There is positive proof," writes the Rev. Dr. Giles, "in writings of the first ages of Christianity, that the same question as to the age and authorship of the books of the New Testament was even then agitated, and if it was then set at rest, this was done, not by a deliberate sentence of the judge, but by burning all the evidence on which one side of controversy was supported."

Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Professor Phelps; and cease teaching that if a lie is believed long enough it becomes a truth.

Just another word to Professor Phelps. Why does he degrade himself by appealing to the lowest prejudices of

Christian auditors? "Would you," he asked, "like to be tried for your life by a jury of Mohammedans or Brahmins?" Well, why not? Native judges in India are as just and honorable as English judges; and what is there in Mohammedans, who are proverbially more truthful than Christians, to prevent twelve of them from returning a true verdict in a case in which they have no personal interest?

At Cirencester on Monday the Rev. W. F. Gover, rector of Oaksey, was fined £2 and costs for being drunk when in charge of a horse and cart, at South Cerney, on May 19.

Rosina Price, a servant girl, who hanged herself at Hampstead, left a piece of paper, on which was written:

Let but my fainting heart be blest  
With thy sweet spirit for its guest;  
My God to thee I leave the rest.  
Thy will be done.

The verdict was "Suicide while of unsound mind."

A married man named William Meredith, who occupied the position of treasurer to the Salvation Army at Newtown, has been committed to trial on a charge of indecent assault upon a member of the Army named Elizabeth Evans, aged fourteen years. According to the evidence the intimacy arose through attending the meetings in the Victoria Hall, and took place in the private room for the use of officers.

"He doeth all things well." An Armenian village has been completely destroyed by an earthquake.—Leprosy is extending in the Australian colonies.—Last year it is computed that 203 persons were killed by wolves in Russia; the number of wolves does not seem to diminish; according to official statements it is over 170,000.—A hailstorm in Bulgaria has thrown down telegraph posts, destroyed the crops and damaged many public buildings.—The Rev. J. W. Sharpe, vicar of North Leach, Gloucestershire, dropped down dead in a cricket-field.

Dr. T. Hodgkin contributes a paper entitled "A Palestinian Utopia" to the *Contemporary Review*. He shows that the Holy Land is one of the most God-forsaken of much-visited places. The worst bridle path in Cumberland is equal to the royal high road of Palestine. The Holy Land is a country without posts, newspapers, schools, doctors or justice. The cottages are without glazed windows, and the house is also the cow-byre. The Jews are corrupted on the one side by the bounty of their co-religionists, and on the other by Christians who seek to convert them. All this is to be altered by the country being placed under an International Commission. But what will the Turk, who is in possession, say?

Canon Girdlestone finds a confirmation of Holy Writ in the fact that the names of six of the Babylonian months are almost identical with those of the Jewish months: Nisan, Sivan, Chisleu, Tebeth, Sebat and Adar. This is only another proof that the Jews were adepts at borrowing, and indicates that much even of their chronology came from Babylon.

The Church papers are getting anxious as to what the judgment of the Archbishop of Canterbury will be in the case of the Bishop of Lincoln's trial, and whether the Bishop will conform to the judgment. The *Church Review*, one of the organs of the Ritualists, counsels submission to the decision, whatever it be, but a writer in the *Church Times* says if the Archbishop bases his decision of those of the Privy Council, it must be repudiated as those of the P. C. have been. It is evident there are all the elements of a very pretty quarrel arising out of the trial.

The missionaries of Calcutta are protesting against the new municipal bye law, which is intended to put a stop to preaching in public squares. They want preaching but not discussion.

At the soiree of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association Dr. Sadler said Unitarians had never been received into cordial Christian fellowship by other denominations, though they had produced many champions against unbelief. Of course Unitarians seek to mitigate their own heresy by attacking those who go a little further. The Rev. J. H. Allen, of the American Unitarian Association, spoke of Theodore Parker as an eminent member of that

body, but did not inform his hearers that Parker was driven out of the Unitarian Church because he went too far.

The Vigilance Society and other worthies who have been so energetic in suppressing the portrait of a lady performer at the Aquarium, might notice the statement of Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P., that "some of the most willing publishers of obscene and offensive advertisements were the proprietors of religious papers." Samuel Smith, M.P., is an authority. He has probably the keenest nose for obscenity of any man in England.

When Mr. Foote lectured at Portsmouth he was opposed by a Mr. Millett, who deliberately misread a passage from John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, making him say the very opposite of what he had written. Mr. Foote got hold of the book, read out the omitted words, and exposed the wretched creature to public contempt. Yet this Millett is puffed in the *Christian Citizen* as having effectually disposed of Mr. Foote—when he had left the town! Now, as ever, the Christians will not only pardon but approve any liar, if he lies for the sake of their faith.

Mr. Mead, the magistrate who presides at the Thames Police-court, has done a public service by calling attention to the discreditable imposition of vestries in issuing the notices for a church rate on the same form that the general services and poor rate is made out, and with the words "if the rate is not paid a summons will be issued," when the fact is that in law the payment is entirely optional.

After Mr. Gladstone's curious Rip Van Winkle attitude towards Darwinism it is worth noting that even in the *Methodist Times* evolution is frankly accepted by the Rev. S. E. Keble, who says that "To account for man's significant resemblance to the animal on any other theory than that of Evolution is, I think, very difficult, and the attempt involves us in some intellectual vagaries and evasions." Of course Mr. Keble tries to make out that Evolution and Christianity are quite compatible. That is not a matter, however, to discuss in a paragraph. Our point is this—the clergy begin to see that Evolution can no longer be resisted.

"Gallant little Wales"—we mean the principality, not the Prince—is evidently going to the Devil. The Rev. Cynddylan Jones, travelling secretary of the Bible Society, declares that fifty persons would not go to hear a great preacher at Cardiff on Saturday afternoon, "free, gratis, for nothing," but fifteen thousand would readily pay a shilling each to see a football match. Dreadful!

Catholicism succeeds in India by assimilating itself to the native superstitions and adopting native festivals. The *Bombay Catholic Examiner* claims that there are 1,275,000 Roman Catholics in India, besides 400,000 belonging to the Portuguese jurisdiction of Goa.

The Rev. J. R. Diggle has unfrocked himself. Ceasing to be a clergyman he is eligible for a seat in Parliament. Like one of the gentlemen in the parable, he has "married a wife," and as she has plenty of money Mr. Diggle turns his back on Jesus Christ, scorns the pulpit, looks down upon the soul-saving business, and wants to become a politician. Well, we wish him success, for he is a very able man, and has been a notable chairman of the London School Board. His principles, of course, are opposed to ours, but able men in parliament are better than duffers. But what of this text?—"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Sunday trading is occupying the attention of the clergy of Somers Town. A meeting on the subject has been held in the parish-room, Christ Church, with the Rev. P. S. O'Brien in the chair, and a resolution passed calling on the "clergy and ministers" to take "energetic measures" against the "growing evil." This is evidently a clerical move, prompted by trade motives. For our part, we think it is doomed to failure. The old fashioned Sunday has received its death blow. People are not going to work seven days a week—there is no fear of that; but the notion of everybody resting on the same day is seen to be absurd. Most people will rest on Sunday, but a minority will have to minister to public requirements then, and take their rest at another time. Let the clergy whine and wail, or grunt and thunder, to this complexion it must come at last.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday morning, June 8, at 11, Gladstone Radical Club, 22 Baroness Road, Hackney Road, E., "The Future of Labor."

Sunday evening, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, at 7.30, "Heresy at Oxford."

June 15, Manchester; 22, Liverpool; 29, Reading.

July 13, Hall of Science; 27, Hall of Science.

August 3, Camberwell; 10, Hall of Science; 17, Hall of Science; 31, Birmingham.

## 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.

W. A. NEWCOMB sent parcels of literature to Motherwell, Wexford, Blackpool, and London. He is cleared out for the present.

W. E. W.—Cuttings are always welcome.

S. STANDRING notifies the re-opening of the Tottenham outdoor station for the summer months. Local Freethinkers are desired to sustain the enterprise, and the services of one or two earnest Freethought missionaries would be very welcome.

J. FRASER.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

QUIZ.—The pamphlet was not priced. It seems to be circulated for the author by the Ulster Secular Society.

E. PINDER.—The scoundrel is hardly worth so much space. We note the fact, however, that when sky-pilot Johnson eloped from Leicester with Mrs. James, he left "his own wife and eight children, one at the breast, quite destitute."

C. K. LAPORTE wants to know where he can obtain the *Freethinker* near Camden Square. Can any reader inform him?

J. ROSS.—Yes, it does look like a new version of the Kilkenny cats story. The paragraph was not our own, but quoted from a Christian paper.

H. BORLAND.—Our compliments to the gallant little band at Dum Dum. Write to us whenever the spirit moves you. The *Truthseeker* subscription is three dollars per year; we don't know about the extra postage. Address, 28 Lafayette Place, New York. The *Liberator* is threepence weekly. Address, 456 Bourke Street West, Melbourne.

E. W. OSBORNE.—See "Acid Drops."

J. BROWN, sec. N.E. Secular Federation, acknowledges the following subscriptions: Newcastle Branch, 9s.; Mr. Purvis, 2s. 6d.; Gateshead collection, 1s. 5d.

W. LEMAITRE.—The extract does not specifically refer to religious superstition. In the eagerness of your Freethought you have, we think, credited the writer with more than he meant.

W. WARRY.—The "convert" you refer to was not one of the National Secular Society's lecturers nor a member of the Society. If he has found Jesus for the usual consideration, we are not at all sorry. To call this seedy, drink-sodden individual a "Secular leader" is worthy of his converter's genius.

BRANCH SECRETARIES are requested to be more careful when sending Lecture Notices. Camberwell has last week's subject for this week's lecture. Birmingham notice has no lecturer's name. Bethnal Green afternoon notice makes Mr. Marshall lecture on Mr. Moss's morning subject.

J. BURNELL.—The "extraordinary bill" is sent us about once a month. It has been printed in hundreds of papers for ever so many years. Readers are requested to note that we don't want any more copies of that bill for putting a new tail on the Devil, etc.

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—Fritankaren—Cosmopolitan—Boston Investigator—Echo—Seafaring—Secular Thought—Liberator—Lucifer—Star—Morpeth Herald—Vancouver Weekly News Advertiser—Women's Suffrage Journal—Church Reformer—Notes and Queries—Manchester Guardian—Maldon Express—Nazarene—North Western Gazette—Loyal American—South Wales Echo—Tocsin—Barnet Press—Reading Observer—Newcastle Chronicle.

## THE FREETHOUGHT FUND.

A Fund is being raised to enable the National Secular Society to extend its work and organisation. Members and friends are invited to give a yearly donation. A list will be kept, and the annual subscribers will be periodically applied to for their promised contributions. It is earnestly hoped that *all* will give according to their means. The wealthy should subscribe their pounds, but as much value is attached to poorer men's shillings. If every reader of the *Freethinker* were to join the National Secular Society, and subscribe *something* above the minimum of one shilling, the Society would be able to carry on the propaganda of Freethought with tenfold vigor and success.

Already acknowledged £58 11s. 8d.

## Seventh List.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
W. Brierley	0	10	0	John and James	1	0	0
J. Brierley	0	10	0				

[Mr. Forder, who is not well, has a further list, which will be acknowledged next week.]

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening at the London Hall of Science on "Heresy at Oxford." He will deal with the volume entitled *Lux Mundi*, written by the clergy of Prusey House, who are all High Churchmen. It goes a great deal farther than the once famous *Essays and Reviews*, and is causing much excitement in orthodox circles. The Bishop of Lichfield and Archdeacon Denison have fulminated against it, and Canon Liddon has been to Oxford to counteract its influence.

The first meeting of the new N. S. S. Executive will be held on Wednesday, June 25, at the Hall of Science. Branches should appoint their members of the Council by that time. A full attendance is necessary. Very important business will have to be dealt with.

Mr. J. O'Donovan's article on the Decline of Calvinism will appear in our next number. Press of matter excludes it from the present issue.

An important meeting will be held at Manchester on Saturday evening, June 14, in the Secular Hall, Rusholme Road. Delegates are to attend from all the South Lancashire Branches of the National Secular Society for the purpose of forming a Federation for the district. Branches that have not yet appointed representatives should do so immediately. Mr. Foote will preside at the meeting.

A meeting of the Yorkshire Secular Federation was held on Sunday, June 1, at Laycock's Temperance Hotel, Kirkgate, Bradford. Arrangements were made for a monster demonstration to be held at Shipley Glen on June 8. The object is to stir up the latent Freethought of the neighborhood, and a resolution for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws will be proposed. It is hoped that Freethinkers who live within reasonable distance will come and help to make it a success.—ROBERT ATKINSON.

Mr. C. J. Hunt has been winning golden opinions in the Tyneside. Mr. Brown sends us a glowing account of his tour. The open-air lectures were especially successful. At Blyth he had a long discussion with a Presbyterian minister.

Mr. Hunt's two nights lectures at Blyth are both well reported in the *Morpeth Herald*, which devotes a leaderette to the subject, in which it praises his courtesy and reflects upon his opponents.

A select concert will be held at the Battersea Secular Hall, Prince of Wales's Road, on Wednesday, June 11, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of furnishing the hall. This Branch has had to buy all new chairs, the ones previously used having been only lent; therefore the finances are in a low state. There will be an excellent entertainment, and Freethinkers who can attend, as well as those who cannot attend, should buy a ticket (sixpence), which can be obtained at the hall, or of Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street.

The *Liberator*, of Melbourne, prints in full Mr. Foote's address to the members of the National Secular Society upon being elected President.

The army Freethinkers at Dum Dum have formed a Branch of the N. S. S. It begins with twenty-two members. The promoters engaged the only available room in Dum Dum for the preliminary meeting, but the Christians threatened to starve the proprietor, and for his sake the engagement was cancelled. The meeting was finally held in the open air. This was on May 4. Afterwards the Adjutant of the Buffs called two members of the Branch before him, and told them if they held any kind of meeting in the barracks he would confine them for disobeying orders. Happily this bigoted martinet cannot touch them outside. The men are full of enthusiasm and mean business. They have ordered a parcel of literature for sale and distribution.

We can give any Branch a parcel of back numbers of the *Freethinker* for distribution at open-air meetings. Applicants should state how many they can use. The parcels must be fetched from our office.

We are issuing a new edition of James Thomson's *Satires and Profanities*. This includes all the principal pieces in the original edition; the pieces, in short, that fall most properly under the title, and that are best worth preserving. A complete reprint was financially out of the question, besides being unnecessary. The price of the new edition is one shilling. The volume includes "The Story of a Famous Old Firm"—that is, Jehovah, Son, and Co.; "Religion on the Rocky Mountains"—"Christmas Eve in the Upper Circles"—"The Devil in the Church of England"—and some other pieces, forming the cream of Thomson's genius in this direction.

The concluding numbers of *Bible Heroes*, so long but so unavoidably delayed, are now ready, and the Second Series will be ready in volume form next week.

Mr. Foote is engaged on a new edition of his *Bible Romances*, which has long been out of print. The first instalment, "The Creation Story," will be published on the first of July. A fresh instalment will be issued every fortnight afterwards. Much of the work is re-written and amplified, and the rest is carefully revised.

The *Jewish Chronicle* reports a lecture by the Rev. Isidore Harris at the West London Synagogue on Judaism and Christianity in relation to the Rights of Labor. Mr. Harris claims that Judaism has been more favorable to the workers than Christianity. The laws of Moses he contends mitigated slavery while Christianity at a later date confirmed it.

*Freethought*, of San Francisco, under the able editorship of Messrs. Macdonald and Putnam, must be doing a great deal of good out West. We are glad to see that the shares of the Freethought Publishing Company are being rapidly taken up. This means that *Freethought* has "come to stay." It is also pleasant to notice the energy of the lecture movement.

The Freethinkers of Texas will hold a Convention at Waco from July 15th to the 17th. Mr. J. D. Shaw will preside.

Dr. Voelkel, of Magdeburg, has published in a series called the *Freireligiöse Hausbibliothek* an account of Thomas Paine and the *Age of Reason*.

The Bruno-statue receives much admiration for its workmanship and honor for its subject, and in addition to one to Arnold de Brescia, it is also proposed to erect a monument to Pompeyo de Ageri, burnt in 1556. On this a Catholic journal says that "if the existing fanaticism continues, Rome, and indeed the entire land of Italy, bids fair to become one huge's Gallery' in marble, stone and bronze."

*El Libre Examen* is the title of a newspaper which has been started in Caracas (Venezuela), and is edited by J. M. Leon Garcia. Its object is to support and spread Freethought in Venezuela, one of the most bigoted republics in South America, and the Eldorado of skypilots.

According to the *Daily Graphic* a collection of valuable cuneiform tablets has just arrived from Babylon. They are

documents of a legal, commercial, and fiscal character, varying from B.C. 2300 down to two centuries before the Christian era. One pair of tablets, dating about B.C. 2,200, reveal the curious fact that there were at that time a class of men in Babylon who obtained children to be adopted by wealthy men who had no family. These men received a regular commission from both parties.

B.C. 2,200 is about seven hundred years before Moses is supposed to have received the rudiments of civilisation from God Almighty. What a race of "stretchers" were the scribes of Palestine! Query—was it this adoption of children in Babylon that suggested the idea of Moses being adopted by Pharaoh's daughter? Located in Egypt, where a rigid system of caste prevailed, the incident is absurd.

#### THE ASCENSION AND ASTRONOMY.

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."—Acts i., 9.

"We maintain that the body of Christ even after his resurrection and ascension is a true human body with all things pertaining to the perfection of man's nature."—Bishop Harold Brown's *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, page 106.

It is a noteworthy sign of the times that religious magazines publish articles on scientific topics. Such articles have no effect in sustaining religious belief; they are simply inserted as a tribute to the spirit of the times—to make the serial interesting to the general reader, and thus to make it sell.

Not only are articles on science powerless to "save souls" but they are very likely to foster scepticism. To insert articles on science in a religious paper may be compared to building up a house of cards with one hand and pulling it down with the other. I was reminded of this simile when I read recently, in one of the class of magazines alluded to, an article on the Ascension and another on Astronomy.

Now, if the reflection that the ascension story is rendered ridiculous by astronomy forces itself upon the mind of one reader upon comparing these articles, the conjecture seems not unwarranted, as all sane minds are of the same general pattern, that some similar idea would suggest itself more or less strongly to the intelligence of other readers.

The thoughts aroused within my own mind by the perusal of the two articles to which I have referred I mean to state as briefly as I can, and that they make the Ascension story appear absurd and improbable—not to say impossible, for the highest authorities assure us that this is a word we should be exceedingly chary of using—will, I think, be admitted without hesitation.

The story goes that Jesus left this earth direct for heaven in his bodily form. The general style of going there is to leave the body behind, and this, of course, does not seem nearly so wonderful. This ascension, we are told, was witnessed by his disciples who gazed upwards in amazement as "a cloud received him out of their sight." The writer of the article on this subject, having discovered that clouds are merely masses of vapor and consequently unable to support a man's weight, thinks this statement so obviously incredible that he explains, "the cloud was one probably composed of angels." It does not occur to him that this cloud of angels when they left the earth's atmosphere would be unable to make use of their wings, or even to breathe; and an attempt to explain such a little matter as that of the cloud while leaving untouched other far greater difficulties is like straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

Now, the word ascension, as pointing out any particular direction a body might take on leaving the earth on a journey into space, is rendered meaningless by the fact that the earth is a globe rotating on its axis round an ellipse.

If we imagine a top spinning and a microscopical insect on it endeavoring to jump off, we may form some dim notion of the difficulty Jesus would encounter on taking his departure from this earth which rotates on its axis at the rate of one thousand miles every hour; and this illustration, rough though it is, enables us to understand clearly that the direction of his journey—supposing a straight course steered—would be determined by the precise moment at which he succeeded in overcoming the earth's attraction. An error on his part to the extent of half a second would have had serious consequences, because however small the divergence between two lines—i.e., the true course and the false one—may be at their commencement, the distance between them increases as they lengthen, so that, on a long voyage, a mistake, however



small initially, would land its perpetrator a long way from his port of destination.

Assuming that Jesus made his calculations correctly, without the aid of a chronometer, sextant, or nautical almanac, for there were no such things in those days, and allowing for the fact that modern theologians, in order to explain errors in his reported utterances, allege that in taking on man's nature he also shared his ignorance, which, at the time he lived in was of the grossest kind, it yet remains to be considered how he reached heaven while there was any life in him.

On leaving the earth he is represented to have started at a somewhat moderate rate; had he put on full speed before getting out of the atmosphere, which offers considerable opposition to anybody passing through it, he would have dissolved into the elements, and vanished in a streak of flame, after the manner of a meteorite. Supposing, then, that after getting out of the earth's atmosphere he travelled at the same speed as light (one hundred and eighty six thousand miles per second) it would have taken him three years and a half to get as far as the nearest fixed star, Alpha Centauri, and, keeping up the same rate of speed, he would not have reached the farthest visible star even yet.

Great as is the speed of light, Jesus must have travelled a great deal quicker, for we are told he reached his journey's end safely and "sitteth at the right hand of God." How he kept his breath, and how he obtained food during this stupendous journey, are questions which might well puzzle the heads of theologians.

Another element of difficulty in his flight through space which has to be taken into account, as it would render futile any attempt to make use of the stars to guide him in his course, is presented by the fact that, after leaving the earth's atmosphere he would be plunged into pitch darkness, for we are instructed by physicists that waves of ether only form light when they have some state of matter to impinge against and that therefore all interstellar space is pitch dark.

These are some of the difficulties with which theologians ought to grapple, and when they have succeeded in smoothing them away, with the valuable assistance of the learned President of the Royal Society, and offered some explanation of how Jesus overcame the force of gravitation, and of the nature of the energy which rushed him through space, and also informed us of the attitude his body assumed with reference to its flight—whether, for instance, it went headlong, or feet first, sideways, or backways, or doubled up with a rotatory motion—for these details, trivial as they may appear, are essential towards forming a correct apprehension of the affair—they will then have to furnish proof that the event ever happened, for at present there is none whatever.

This most wonderful of the wonderful achievements of Jesus took place in the year A.D. 33,—1857 years ago, so that, as the sun is dragging its planets after it at the rate of 154 million miles a year, we have left the point of space from which Jesus commenced his journey about 285,978 million miles behind us; to the Christian, no doubt, a melancholy reflection, as from this fact it may be presumed that heaven lies somewhere in the same backward direction, and that we are thus ever increasing our distance from it. If the centre round which the sun moves is also changing its position, and this is inferred by astronomers, the distance mentioned may be immensely greater than I have stated it to be.

To the old Jews the Ascension story appeared easily credible because, not to speak of their superstitions on other matters, they believed the earth to be motionless, and heaven just above the firmament, i.e., the blue sky overhead, which they regarded as a solid expanse with the sun and moon and stars fixed in it, and worked behind by angels. Childish, however, does the story seem when we consider that the sun, round which our little planet keeps circling, is only one of the countless million suns in the path of the Milky Way—that it is one of the smallest of them, and that each one of these suns, with which the sky appears white by reason of their innumerable multitude, most probably has its planets revolving around it similarly to the sun of our own system.

The relative insignificance of the portion of space occupied by our sun with all its planets revolving around it was well shown by Professor Norman Lockyer when lecturing recently on the meteoritic hypothesis.

A photograph of the nebulae in Orion being reflected and magnified on a screen about twelve feet square, he remarked that the space within the orbit of the outermost planet of our solar system, represented on the reflected and magnified photograph on the screen only as large a surface as he could

cover with the point of his stick. And it must be noted that the photograph had been taken by aid of the telescope, and that to the unassisted eye the part of the sky from which the entire photograph had been taken would appear no larger than a shilling piece.

Stray meteors must have presented a serious danger to Jesus in his heavenward flight, but these nebulae, or suns in course of formation, covering such vast spaces, must have been hard indeed to "circumvent," as Mr. Weller used to say, and once within their fiery influence there would have been little chance of survival even for the great thaumaturgist himself.

J. E. ROOSE.

### ENCHANTING THE ROD.

Tune—"Vikilins and his Dinah."

As Moses was tending his dad-in-law's herds,  
Jehovah spake to him, and these were his words:  
"Don't draw too near, Moses, but pull off your shoes,  
I'll give you the tip how to lead out the Jews.

"Go down and tell Pharaoh I want them let out  
To cook me some lamb while green peas are about;  
For since they've been captive, as he may suppose,  
No sweet smelling savor has come near my nose."

"O Lord," cried poor Moses, "my speech is so slow,  
I'm certain King Pharaoh will not let them go;  
Besides, by the Jews I will not be believed,  
They'll ask me from whom I the message received."

"What's that in thine hand?" "Why," said Moses, "a  
stick."

"Well, cast it down there, I'll show you a trick  
I'm sure will convince the most sceptical Jew:  
I am that I am gave the order to you."

Mo threw down his hazel, when lo and behold!  
It became a live cobra—so we have been told—  
And so frightened Moses he gave it leg bail;  
But Jehovah called out, "Catch a hold of his tail."

Then Moses came back and laid hold of the snake:  
The feel of its scales made him all of a shake.  
"Hey, presto!" again cried this conjuring God,  
When lo! in an instant 'twas once more a rod.

"You see," said Jehovah, "what excellent sport  
You'll have with the wizards about Pharaoh's court;  
I know he will not let the Hebrews depart,  
I've taken precautions to harden his heart.

I want to impress this great truth on his mind,  
That I am Jehovah, the boss of mankind—  
That no other god on the earth's worth a sou:  
So go tackle Pharaoh and see what I'll do."

Thus the rod was enchanted and ready to use,  
And Moses trudged off to deliver the Jews;  
And the tricks he performed, with the help of the Lord—  
Lo! are they not written in God's Holy Word?

T. CLARK.

### SCHOOLBOY BLUNDERS.

The *Private Schoolmaster* prints some amusing answers given by schoolboys, for the truth of which the writer, himself a schoolmaster, vouches:—

#### SCRIPTURE STUDIES.

It is not perhaps generally known that "Christ appeared to two disciples as they were going to Mass," or that "Adam and Eve were tempted by the servant." A rather Irish piece of information is contained in the statement, "The only light in the Holy of Holies was darkness." "Abraham turned Ishmael out of doors because Sarah saw him trying to wean Isaac." The answer to the question, "What did Gallo do when the Apostles were brought before him?" runs as follows:—"He cut their hair, and sent them away again." When Peter saw in a vision a great sheet let down from Heaven, full of clean and unclean beasts, the directions he received were—"To clean them." "The parents of Moses, when they could no longer hide him, put him in a burning bush," with what result is not stated. "Seth was so called because he married Adam instead of Abel." "The Israelites travelling through the wilderness were fed on mammoth."

## COLONEL INGERSOLL SPEAKS.

At the nineteenth anniversary banquet of the Lotos Club, the literary club of New York, Col. Ingersoll was one of the distinguished guests. Here is a portion of his speech:—

"Sometimes I think, and especially when I am at a meeting where they have what they call reminiscences, that a world with death in it is a mistake. What would you think of a man building a railroad knowing that every passenger was to be killed—knowing that there was no escape? What would you think of the cheerfulness of the passengers if everyone knew that at some station the name of which had not been called out, there was a hearse waiting for him; backed up there, horses fighting flies, drivers whistling, waiting for you? Is it not wonderful that the passengers on that train really enjoy themselves? Is it not magnificent that everyone of these, under perpetual sentence of death, after all can dimple their cheeks with laughter; that we, everyone doomed to become dust, can yet meet around this table, as full of joy as spring is full of life, as full of hope as the heavens are full of stars? I tell you we have a good deal of pluck. And yet, after all, what would this world be without death? It may be from the fact that we are all victims, from the fact that we are all bound by common fate; it may be that friendship and love are born of that fact; but whatever the fact is, I am perfectly satisfied that the highest possible philosophy is to enjoy to day, not regretting yesterday and not fearing to-morrow. (Applause.) So, let us suck this orange of life dry, so that when death doth come we can politely say to him, 'You are welcome to the peelings. What little there was we have enjoyed.'

"But there is one splendid thing about the play called life. Suppose that when you die that is the end. The last thing you know you are alive and the last thing that will happen to you is the curtain, not falling, but the curtain rising on another thought, so that as far as your consciousness is concerned you will and must live for ever. No man can remember when he commenced and no man can remember when he ends. As far as we are concerned we live both eternities, the one past and the one to come, and it is a delight to me to feel satisfied and to feel in my own heart that I can never be certain that I have seen the faces I love for the last time. When I am at such a gathering as this I almost wish I had had the making of the world. What a world I would have made! In that world unhappiness would have been the only sin; melancholy the only crime; joy the only virtue. And whether there is another world nobody knows. Nobody can affirm it; nobody can deny it; nobody can collect tolls from me claiming that he owns a turnpike (applause), and nobody can certainly say that the crooked path that I follow, beside which many roses are growing, does not lead to that place. He does not know. But if there is such a place I hope that all good fellows will be welcome."

## THE BIBLE.

We understand that this excellent work has a large sale, but on inquiry we learn that it is very seldom read, and that it is principally used for making entries of births, marriages and deaths. This is a pity, as it gives away your eldest daughter when a probable match calls and turns over the leaves of the family Bible, and sees her real age knocking about. Some of the narratives in this very ingenious compilation are calculated to effect considerable good, but we have some hesitation about recommending it for perusal by a mixed class of young men and young women. Certainly, if this work were more generally read, we should all be better than we are, but as most of us yearn to be much worse, we are filled up with grave fears that this estimable book will go on increasing in sale without being read any more. Some of the lessons taught are very sublime, and we rather like the idea of Abraham going up the mountain to burn up his son Isaac. We quite sympathise with Abraham. We know what these young Jews are. There is also a pleasant story of King David taking a fancy to another gentleman's wife, and getting him killed in order that he (the King) might enjoy the lady's society without the fear of a divorce court citation. The expedient seems unnecessary to our modern minds, which take their impressions from what is proceeding in fashionable society. Despite this defect, however, we have no hesitation in recommending a more extensive perusal of this noble book. —*Sporting Review.*

## CREEDS.

This is the age of revision. Churches are all hurrying to catch up with the world. There is a desire to square ideas with facts, and shape beliefs with knowledge. Religion must suffer in this process. Something will be lost, but only what is bad, false and wrong. Creeds are out of date. They are behind the times. They are the dead leaves from the tree of knowledge, the dead branches on the tree of life. The world's faith is in the living; in the bud, the blossom, the promise of things—not in the husk, the shell, in dead and useless things.

New creeds are to take the place of old ones. What people believe now, not what people believed hundreds or thousands of years ago, must be put into a confession of faith. For a man to profess what his father and mother believed is to make birth useless and existence valueless. We are to live to add to life, not to repeat it. Is theology the only thing that people believe? Is religion the only thing that people put their trust in? A theological creed has to be accepted with the eyes shut. We want a creed of the heart, of the head, of the senses, of the whole man. There is no theology worth believing in. The creed of the Church is a gravestone.

If we were to make a creed for the world of man to accept we would make it out of human hearts. We would go where a man had helped another; where a woman had sat beside the sick and suffering; where man had been crucified for being true, where he had been burned for being honest; where he had stood against the world protesting against its wrongs and proclaiming the right, and where he had fallen with a martyr's crown upon his forehead; and we would write these into a creed, and have man say: I believe in men and women who have led good lives, who have taken the unfortunate by the hand and lifted up the fallen, who have pardoned a woman's fault, who have showed their love of truth by being true, and who have done right even when they were wronged for so doing.

The grandest life is the grandest creed; and if man's faith was faith in what has made the world better and brighter and happier, he would be better off than by believing in a God that is cruel, unjust and unkind, and in a heaven where the highest joy is found in laughing at those who are in hell.

—*Boston Investigator.*

## BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

Mrs. Lonomens, who was seven years at the Court of Siam, says that on one occasion she read some of the Gospels to these royal ladies. We may be pretty sure it wasn't about cursing the fig-tree, more probably the sermon on the mount. They were delighted. "Why, he is just like Buddha," they said; "suppose you call Christ Buddha and we will call Buddha Christ!" On another occasion an ascetic heard her read from the high water mark of New Testament literature, Paul's words on Charity, 1 Cor. xiii., "Though I give my body to be burned," etc. "Ye know not the meaning of your great Teacher," he said "Soon I shall pass on to Nirvana, but the ashes of my unworthy body are to be scattered on the land of the poor and needy to enrich it; and yet, as he saith, even that is nothing without illimitable love." The Dhammapada utters a similar sentiment. It has been conjectured that Paul had heard of the Hindu ascetics who gave their body to be burned, but is it not just possible that the famous discourse on charity itself originally emanated from India where this reference would be most natural?

## PROFANE JOKES.

A printer, in setting up "All are but parts of one stupendous whole," by mistake of a letter made it read: "All are but parts of one stupendous whale!"

At a Jewish School.—Teacher: "What fault did Joseph's brothers commit in selling him?" Smart boy: "Please sir, I know, sir. They sold him *too cheap.*"

Little girl (looking at a one-legged man)—"Oh, mamma! Where was he made?" Mother: "Made in Heaven, my dear." Little girl: "Why don't he go back and get finished?"

Little Viola: "Mama won't oo tum up an' sit wid me till I dit aseep?" Mamma: "Mama's busy, darling, and can't come now. Run back to bed, my pet, the angels arp with you." Viola: "Dat's wat oo said before, mama, but the angels didn't show up an' I's lonesome."

A refractory youngster was being sharply rebuked by his mother for his numerous transgressions. "Harry, Harry," she exclaimed, "if you behave in that way you will worry your father and mother to death; and what will you do without any father and mother?" "The Lord is my shepherd," said the small boy; "I shall not want."

SUNDAY MEETINGS.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

Ball's Pond Secular Hall, 36 Newington Green Road, N., 7, Mr. S. Soddy, "The English Language and the Confusion of Tongues."

Battersea—The Shed of Truth, Prince of Wales's Road, 7.30, Mr. W. Norrish, "Christianity and Civilisation" (free). Monday (at 8), social evening. Wednesday, select concert. Thursday, committee meeting. Friday, discussion.

Bethnal Green—At Mr. Simson's, 2 Railway Place, Cambridge Road, 7.30, a members' meeting.

Camberwell—61 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Bible Biography."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, 8, Mr. T. Garner, "Life's Duty from a Freethought Point of View." Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Heresy at Oxford."

West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 7, the President, "Labor: its Condition and Redemption."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates, 11.15, Mr. W. Norrish, "The Teachings of Christ."

Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Sinful Saints and Sensual Shepherds."

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Civilisation and Progress."

Clerkenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. G. Standring, "Why Christianity is Dying."

Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 6.30, Mr. J. Rowney, "Is the Bible a Civilising Power?"

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand), 3.30, Mr. S. Standring, "Good and Evil."

Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.15, Mr. G. Standring, "Christian Evidences. June 11, at 8, Mr. W. Heaford, "Bible Barbarities."

Kingsland Green, 11.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "Faith or Freedom." Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. W. Heaford, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."

New Southgate, Betstyle Bridge, 11.30, Mr. Sam. Standring, "Working Men in Parliament."

Old Southgate—On the Green, 7, Mr. Sam Standring, "An Atheist's View of Right and Wrong."

Plaistow Green (near the station), 11.30, a lecture.

Regent's Park, near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, Mr. F. Haslam, "Why I am a Secularist."

Tottenham—Corner of Seven Sisters Road, 3.30, J. Rowney, "The Resurrection."

Victoria Park, near the fountain, 11, Mr. J. Marshall will lecture.

Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "The Life and Character of Christ."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11.30, Mr. T. Thurlow, "Salvation."

Woolwich—Beresford Square (opposite the Arsenal gates), 7, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Life and Character of Christ."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent; lectures, 11, "Can Christ Atoned for the Sins of Men?"; 3, "Theosophy or Materialism?"; 7, "Christianity and Women."

Hanley—Secular Hall, 51 John Street, 7, special meeting, for consideration of the report of Conference.

Liverpool Branch N.S.S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—7, Mr. Haslam, "Knowledge versus Beliefs"

Manchester—Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, 6.30, Mr. E. Stanley Jones, "Creation and Evolution."

Newcastle—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11.30, meeting of Sunday Music League. On Newcastle Town Moor, 6.30, first concert of season by band, under the leadership of Mr. Wood.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, excursion to Rotherham Park; members and friends meet at Midland Station, train starts at 2 p.m.

South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, 7, yearly meeting and election of officers.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden Road, London, S.E.—June 8 (morning), Bethnal Green, (evening), Camberwell; 15 (evening), Ball's Pond; 22 (morning), Clerkenwell; 29 (morning), Mile End, (afternoon), Victoria Park. July 6 (morning), Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich; 13 (morning), Mile End, (evening), Camberwell; 20 (afternoon), Victoria Park.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—June 15, Birmingham.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Leta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool.—June 8, Manchester; 29, Rochdale. July 20, Sheffield.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—June 8 (morning), Wood Green; 15 (morning and evening), Battersea; 22 (morning), Camberwell. July 14 (morning), Wood Green.

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