

# The Free Thinker

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## IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED?

(A Review of "*Lux Mundi*.")

(CONTINUED.)

BUT before we deal with Mr. Gore's views on Inspiration, it may be worth while to notice his attitude towards Scepticism. Mr. Gore is too intelligent and well-informed to echo the old nonsense about sceptics being wicked, nor will he so much as countenance the ineptitude of quoting the Psalmist who remarked that "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." The object of this plausible High Churchman is inconsistent with discourtesy. He desires to keep the sceptically inclined within the Church, and he knows that his purpose would only be defeated by sneers and jibes at those who have followed their intellects to "the bitter end." Indeed, to do the *Lux Mundi* writers the barest justice, it must be admitted that their tone is unexceptionable. Whatever may be thought of their arguments, no one can deny their urbanity. Mr. Gore writes like a gentleman, even when he pointedly addresses the unbeliever.

"If any man comes to us and says that he has studied and assimilated the Christian Creed with all the care and reverence in his ability, and has rejected it because he finds it irrational and false, we cannot complain of him. We cannot ask him to accept it though he thinks it false. We do not at all complain of his having inquired and thought freely—only we venture to assure him, with a confidence that can hardly fail to be irritating, because it is confident, that he has thought not only freely, but erroneously."

Mr. Gore further declares it to be "the test of the Church's legitimate tenure that she can encourage free inquiry into her title-deeds." He remarks of the Church that "It is her note to be tolerant, morally and theologically. She is the mother, not the magistrate." This is a view which is not justifiable by an appeal to history. We oppose it with "a confidence" no less "confident" than Mr. Gore's. But we cordially acknowledge that tolerance is a "note" of Mr. Gore's spirit, and we venture to express a hope that he will give effect to his sentiments by assisting to repeal the Blasphemy Laws.

Now for Mr. Gore's theory of Inspiration. Apparently he holds that, in some degree, *everything* is inspired, all life being animated by "the breath of God." But man has a peculiar share of this influence. "A special in-breathing of the Divine Spirit gave to man his proper being." As the footnote shows, this is an allusion to the verse in Genesis, where God breathes into Adam "the breath of life," so that he becomes "a living soul." But surely Mr. Gore is aware that the same operation was performed on the lower animals. According to the Jewish scriptures, the breath of life was precisely the same in animals as in men, and there is absolutely no contradiction between the second of Genesis and the third of Ecclesiastes.

Presuming man, however, to be in some special sense animated by the breath of God, how is it that

he advances so crookedly? How is it that he is so capable not only of folly, but of sin? Mr. Gore's answer is that man is endowed with free will. His spirit must co-operate with God's before any good can result. The Holy Spirit guides, but cannot control him. Such a theory is to our minds a very grotesque puzzle, for if all the spirit man has is an emanation from God, the spirit within him and the Holy Spirit outside him are really one and the same. Nor is a divided responsibility any more conceivable than a divided operation. To speak of man as constantly "baffling" God is a poor compliment to Omnipotence; and to ascribe all the good that man does to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and all the evil to the independent action of his own "cussedness" is a poor compliment to a man. Logically, Mr. Gore has no possible escape from the doctrine of an ever-active Devil. Pushed to its legitimate end, his theory arrives at Martin Luther's position that man is like a poor jackass, whom God and the Devil contend for; when God mounts him he runs towards Heaven, when the Devil mounts him he runs towards Hell, he himself being without any choice in the matter.

God is apparently to be very much pitied. He created man for loyal followship with himself—at the moment, we suppose, when the anthropoid got down from the trees, and began to use his feet for regular walking. But man—through that "pure cussedness" which God did not foresee—always in the main chose rebellion. So the Holy Spirit "ever baffled in the mass," fell back upon a remnant, the "elect." "Rejected in the world," Mr. Gore says, "he secures for himself a sphere of operations in the Jews." But even by the Jews he was perpetually "baffled." So he fell back again upon a remnant of the remnant, the elect of the elect. These were the prophets of Israel, whose "inspiration" is preserved in the Old Testament. Finally the Holy Spirit found in Christ—who, be it remembered, was really himself—a specimen of perfect and complete humanity, in "ungrudging and unimpaired obedience to the movement of the Divine Spirit."

Now from the call of Abraham to the birth of Christ is nearly two thousand years. During the whole of that period God was preparing the Jews for the advent of the Redeemer; and so beautifully did he prepare them, that when the Redeemer came they crucified him between two thieves. No wonder that Mr. Gore lays stress upon "*the gradualness of the Spirit's method*." No wonder, also, that he is obliged to find something by which to retrieve the character of the Holy Spirit. If all the world was neglected, or set aside as hopeless for two thousand years; if, during the whole of that time the Holy Spirit concentrated its energies upon the Jews; and if, at the finish, the result was so ignominious; this Holy Spirit must be far more incapable than the secular sages and teachers of mankind, who have wrought infinitely more brilliant effects. How is this to be explained? Mr. Gore resorts to a theory which is by no means novel. It has been affected by eminent Catholic theologians, and it was adopted by



one of the chief writes in *Essays and Reviews*. We will give it in Mr. Gore's own words.

"Every race has its special vocation, and we recognise in the great writers of each race the interpreters of that vocation. They are specially gifted individuals, but not merely individuals. The race speaks in them: Rome is interpreted by Virgil, and Greece by Æschylus or Plato. Now every believer in God must see in these special missions of races, a divine inspiration. If we once get down to the bottom of human life, below its pride, its wilfulness, its pretentiousness, down to its essence, we get to God and to a movement of his spirit. Thus every race has its inspiration and its prophets."

Now if this view of Inspiration be correct the Bible will have to relinquish its special claims. It will have to stand, not *apart from*, but *amidst* the world's literature. Moses (not that he really wrote anything) will stand with Homer, Isaiah with Sophocles, Jesus with Buddha, and Paul with Seneca or Epictetus. But is not this fatal? Does not the general "inspiration" of genius practically destroy the particular "inspiration" of any single writer? Is it not the same thing, in fact, as leaving us to our own judgment? And if all genius is inspired, then clearly the English people may set aside the Jew Book. They have a vaster, nobler treasure-house of thought and sentiment in Shakespeare. In the mighty dramatist, according to Mr. Gore's theory, we are to recognise an English "revelation." Very well then. We reject the supernatural idea, but we welcome the exchange. Let the Bible be closed, and let us open Shakespeare. But no. Mr. Gore does not mean that. What then *does* he mean? In reality nothing at all of what he says. The Bible is still *the* Revelation. The "inspiration" of other races than the Jews was for them only, after all; and so, at the end of the argument, the great Protestant fetish is left fixed upon its towering pedestal, with the old word hung out in front of it, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

### THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

IF I should write with a levity ill befitting a story of human suffering, let no reader think I would jeer at any real human tragedy. I hold, not as any outward profession of faith, but in my heart of hearts the sentiment of the Pagan poet—*Homo, sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto*. Educated in the orthodox faith, reverence and sympathy for a man Jesus long outlasted belief in his Godhead. Further investigation, however, showed me how little there was that was historical, how much mythical in the gospel stories, and now in regard to the incidents with which I am dealing, I consider that they are as much works of fiction as those of the *Arabian Nights*. Let the reader examine and compare the narratives for himself, and if possible obtain the opinion of an educated Jew.

All the first three gospels speak of the last supper as the passover. It was the first day of unleavened bread\* (Matt. xxvi., 17; Mark xiv., 12; Luke xxii., 7). Jesus calls the meal the passover (Luke xxii., 15-16.) The apprehension, trial and execution all took place on the following day. Now did this ever occur? If we read of some one being executed on Good Friday or Christmas Day, we should at least inquire narrowly into the circumstances. The day was required to be observed as a Sabbath day and even more solemnly as a day of Holy Convocation (Exod. xii., 16; Levit. xxiii., 7-8; Numb. xxviii., 18; Dent. xvi., 8.) By Jewish law it was forbidden to administer judgment on a high feast or holy day [Youn. Tob. v., 2] and the Mishna distinctly forbids

that a capital offender shall be examined in the night or on the day before the Sabbath or any feast-day.

Rabbi Wise says (*Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 66): "The whole trial from the beginning to the end is contrary to Jewish law and custom as in force in the time of Jesus. No court of justice with jurisdiction in penal cases could or ever did hold its session in the place of the high priest. . . . No court of justice in Israel was permitted to open its sessions at night, and in cases of capital crimes no session could be extended after the evening hour (Mishnah Sanhedrin iv., 1.)"

Rabbi Wise further points out that no court of justice could commence a trial on a Friday or the day previous to a holy day, because it was not lawful to adjourn such cases longer than over night or to continue them on the Sabbath or holiday.

According to John—who wrote letters and perhaps had heard objection against the monstrous incredibility of this story—Jesus ate no paschal meal, did not live to see that feast, was arrested the evening before passover, and crucified before the feast opened. If John's date is true, that of the Synoptics is not, or *vice versa*. Both cannot be true, but both may be false. And that they are so is evident from this, that the supper with its long discourses, the adjournment to Gethsemane, the sleep of disciples, the betrayal by Judas and capture at the Mount of Olives, the examination first before Annas\* and then Caiaphas and all the chief priests, elders, and scribes, the witnesses sought for, found and examined; the examination before Pilate, the remittance to Herod of Galilee, the taking back to Pilate, the release of Barabbas, and the crucifixion at Golgotha are all crowded into the space of one night and the following morning.

According to Mark (xv., 25) he was crucified at the third hour, *i.e.*, 9 a.m., Annas, Caiaphas, all the chief priests, scribes and elders, false witnesses, guards, Pilate, Pilate's wife, Herod of Galilee and the soldiers must have had a busy night. John saw something was wrong, and as he differs from the Synoptics as to the day, so also as to the hour. He says (xix., 14) it was about the sixth hour—*i.e.*, noon—when he was condemned. But perhaps Jesus was crucified at nine a.m., and then put up again in the afternoon.

Look briefly at the details. A person seated at a supper table offers bread and wine as his own flesh and blood. God prays to God that his cup may pass from him, is betrayed by one disciple and deserted by all the rest, who had not only seen his miracles but were endowed with power to work miracles themselves. Though none of them are said to have been present, they report proceedings before various courts, accuse the Jewish judges of suborning false witnesses, and of spitting on a defenceless prisoner. They make a Roman governor not know his own jurisdiction, and execute ignominiously a man in whom he found no fault, in obedience to the clamors of a mob, and then use a Jewish symbol, washing his hands, to repudiate the responsibility of his own act. The sun is darkened for three hours, the veil of the temple is rent, the dead rise from their graves and go into the city, yet the Jews calmly ask Pilate that the legs of the crucified man may be broken, and, when angels roll away the stone of his sepulchre, invent a story that Roman soldiers slept at their watch! The whole narrative has fiction written on its face.

Jewish judges never did try a prisoner at night, spit on him, buffet and strike him. No Roman governor, in obedience to a clamoring crowd and in

\* In Acts iv. 6, Annas is called high priest, but there was no Annas high priest till 48 A.D. (Josephus, *Ant.* xx., 5, 2). Luke iii., 2, speaks of Annas and Caiaphas as both being high priests evidently unaware there could not be two high priests; while John says "Caiaphas" was high priest that year (xviii., 13), apparently under the impression that the office was for one year only, whereas it was for life.

\* Josephus also calls the 14th of Nisan the first day of unleavened bread [*Wars* v., 31.]



violence to his expressed conviction that he found no offence with the man, ever handed him over, not only to be crucified with thieves, but scourged (Matthew xxvii., 26), which was not demanded by the mob. History has no precedent and no parallel. Rabbi Wise says (p. 77): "Not one point in the whole trial agrees with Jewish law and custom. It is impossible to save it. It must be given up as a transparent and unskilled invention of a Gentile Christian, of the second century, who knew nothing of Jewish law and custom, and was ignorant of the state of civilisation in Palestine in the time of Jesus."

Some points may be explained. The Hebrews in the second century expected the Redeemer to come on Passover, the time of Israel's redemption from Egypt. Hence "Christ our Passover," "The Lamb of God," was made to accomplish the redemption on the day when the lamb was slaughtered, although that day never fell on a Friday. Again, according to Hebrew tradition [see Wise *op. cit.*, p. 114], the revelation on Sinai took place on Friday between twelve and three. So Calvary was, by tradition, made into a mount, and Zech. xiv., Ps. xxii., xlix., and Is. liii. used to embellish the scene.

The Mithraic rite of the Eucharist was a substitution for the Passover, and consequently the Lord's supper was said to be instituted at the time of the feast of unleavened bread. As to the crucifixion itself, it is certain the Jewish punishment for blasphemy was by stoning and hanging. (Peter said Jesus was hung: Acts v., 30; x., 39; xiii., 29.) Rabbi Wise suggests that the popular sympathy felt for Antigonus, the last of the Maccabees, who was whipped, crucified, and then had his throat cut [B.C. 37], may have been the origin of the Christian story of a crucified king of the Jews, which there is no evidence of being in existence until after the destruction of Jerusalem. J. M. WHEELER.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION.

WHAT is Christianity? A thousand different answers are given by a thousand different persons "who profess and call themselves Christians." Yet Christianity is old enough to be a definite belief. Now as it cannot be expected that we should accept every definition given by a believer, our best plan is to take such definitions as are given by representatives of the various Christian Churches or sects, and see how far Christianity has promoted or fostered those principles and actions of mankind which result in what we call civilisation.

The Catholic defines Christianity to mean faith in an infallible Church with Christ as the spiritual and the Pope as the temporal head, belief in Christ as the Savior of mankind, and the priest as the representative of God on earth. The Protestant takes the Bible as God's revelation to mankind, and alleges that it contains within its pages all that is necessary for the salvation of mankind in this world and another that is to be hereafter. Dissenting bodies of Christians believe the same, but insist that Christianity means not only belief in the Old and New Testaments, but especially the manifestation of such belief by acting up to the rules of conduct as laid down by Christ. So that we may take it that, in the most liberal interpretation we are capable of putting upon it, Christianity implies—first, a belief in God as the author of the Bible, which contains a revelation to mankind; secondly, belief in Christ as in some special sense the Savior of mankind; and thirdly, belief that conduct based upon the teachings of Christ is calculated to promote the highest possible happiness for the individual and for the race.

The next point for consideration is, What is the meaning of civilisation? Undoubtedly this is a hard term to define. Emerson puts it admirably when he says: "A certain degree of progress from the rudest

state in which man is found—a dweller in caves, or on trees, like an ape—a cannibal and eater of pounded snails, worms and offal—a certain degree of progress from this extreme is called civilisation. It is a vague, complex name of many degrees. Nobody has attempted a definition. M. Guizot, writing a book on the subject, does not. It implies the evolution of a highly-organised man, brought to supreme delicacy of sentiment as in practical power, religion, liberty, sense of honor, and taste. In the hesitation to define what it is we usually suggest it by negations. A nation that has no clothing, no iron, no alphabet, no marriage, no arts of peace, no abstract thought, we call barbarous. And after many arts are invented and imported, as among the Turks and Moorish nations, it is often a little complaisant to call them civilised."

Civilisation, then, means growth—intellectually and morally—and in action it means the development of the arts and sciences and their application to the concerns of daily life. Now if God gave man a revelation that was to be sufficient for this life, surely he would have given such instructions as would have enabled man to readily acquire knowledge of natural phenomena, and by the application of such knowledge make steady but certain progress. As a matter of fact, however, if the Bible be true, God only revealed himself to a limited section of mankind and left the rest to struggle and shift for themselves.

It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that all human beings were once in a state of barbarism. What, then, caused the first steps to be taken in the road of civilisation? Necessity—stern necessity—the struggle for existence. The first tribe of savages that made a fire and kept themselves warm while the wild animals about them perished with cold took a decided step onwards. God did not teach the savage this. The next great step was language—articulate speech. God left the savage to construct his own speech. Every nation has had to make its own language. The revelation from heaven was not vouchsafed until men had learnt the most difficult of all arts—the art of speech. Then men are still savages, and one set of savages or semi-savages conquers another and makes them slaves. The divine revelation endorses their action, tells them to make slaves of the heathen round about them, instead of saying that slavery was opposed to God's will, and subversive of all progress, social or moral. The population of the earth grows. The people are brought more and more in contact. Then warfare becomes more general.

Now in so far as warfare has promoted civilisation—and there can be little doubt that the lower forms of civilisation were promoted by this means—believers can take a fair measure of credit for the assistance rendered by the teachings of the Bible in causing and promoting aggressive warfare, in various parts of the earth. And even to-day Christians can claim that the merciless onslaught on the Egyptians a few years ago, who were according to Mr. Gladstone "rightly struggling to be free," had the sanction and approval of the chosen representatives of the Church—viz., the Bishops; while Freethinkers of all shades of belief—Positivists, Agnostics, Atheists—made an unanimous protest against such injustice.

Of course it would be absurd to say that Christians have been opposed to every form of progress. There are a multitude of actions that every rational human being can heartily support in every nation of the earth—actions that have aided very considerably the progress of mankind. No class of men would be against agriculture as a means of augmenting the food supply of the people. Yet agriculture pursued as a livelihood has tended greatly towards civilisation wherever adopted.

Building houses too is a most civilising agency—Yet all peoples, without regard to religious belief—



have built houses to meet the needs of an increasing population. These are not the things, however, by which to test the disposition of a people to advance. What is the test? The Christian maintains that the practice of his religion has promoted civilisation. If however he means the practice of such teachings of Jesus as "Take no thought for the morrow," "resist not evil," "Lay not up treasures on earth," etc., and other such doctrines from the "Sermon on the Mount," I deny it; I think that the very opposite is the truth. I am willing to admit that many persons who call themselves Christians are not opposed to many civilised agencies at work to-day. No Christian is against the printing press to-day. But history shows that the Christian Church was opposed to it in times past. Indeed it is opposed even in this advanced age of the world's progress to the circulation of heretical books—especially cheap works circulated to disturb the minds of believers.

Many Christians are not opposed to the teaching of the physical sciences—provide their application to modern thought and the teachings of the Bible forms no part of the study. Next to the printing press the steam-engine has been a great civilising power. It carries intelligence as well as food wherever it goes. Then telegraphy—by this means intelligence is transmitted from one part of the globe to another at lightening speed. Then the penny post. This is a wonderful agency for promoting progress.

But what has Christianity to do with these things? Nothing whatever. If Christianity had never been heard of, such things would have played as important a part in the world's history as they do now. They are the necessities of the age, they satisfy a want, and they are always the result of secular effort. And though Christianity may in some small way have promoted civilisation—in the same way as any other great religion may have done—I think we may fairly conclude that Necessity—the desires and wants of the people, have promoted civilisation in all European nations, apart altogether from creeds, whether Christian or otherwise. Necessity was always the mother of invention, and therefore necessity may be truly said to be the one fruitful source of our civilisation.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

#### LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL Meeting held at Hall of Science, July 3. Mr. G. Standing in the chair.—The Secretary read a letter from the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, explaining his and Mr. J. M. Wheeler's absence, and mentioning that at the next meeting he would propose some plans for an active winter campaign, to commence in September. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and signed. A deficit on course of free lectures at Milton Hall was ordered to be discharged. Applications for grants in aid of out-door propaganda were referred to the Open-Air Committee. Mr. Turner (East London) moved, and Mr. V. Roger (Westminster) seconded, "That the editors of the *National Reformer* and *Freethinker* be asked to insert official reports of the proceedings of the Council of the L. S. F.," carried. Mr. Courtney reported that the course of free lectures given under the auspices of the Federation at Hammersmith had been very successful, and the work was to be continued by open-air lectures at Hammersmith Bridge. Mr. Standing mentioned a report of these lectures which had appeared in the *Church Reformer*, and to which he had replied. The lecture list for August was ordered to be printed. Mr. Enderby introduced the matter of disturbances at Freethought lectures in Finsbury Park, and after some discussion the subject was deferred, it being understood, however, that a committee of the N. S. S. had been appointed to inquire into the matter. The treasurer, Mr. R. O. Smith, made a satisfactory financial statement. A motion "That the Federation consider the advisability of conducting science classes during the coming session," was met with some opposition and was not put to the vote. The Council then adjourned till the first Thursday in August.

EDMUND POWNCEBY.

## ACID DROPS.

During his "Darkest Africa" travels Stanley met with some curious specimens of the Genus Homo. Many of the dwarfs had "small, cunning, monkey eyes, close and deeply set." One "monkey-eyed woman had a remarkable pair of mischievous orbs, protruding lips overhanging her chin, a prominent abdomen, narrow, flat chest, sloping shoulders, long arms, feet turned greatly inwards, and very short lower legs, as being fitly characteristic of the link long sought between the average modern humanity and its Darwinian progenitors." Such an interesting specimen of the human race, which is of course made in the image of God, would be very serviceable in England. It might be taken round to point a sermon in every English town on the holy anthropology of Genesis.

On the other hand some of the superior African breeds were, if anything, rather more moral than Christians. One of Stanley's officers, being seized with a vertigo, reclined and sank in the grass, where he was left, his comrades not noticing the incident. Presently there came up a native warrior, armed with spear, bow and arrows. Did he kill or rob the stranger? Not he. He went off and returned in half an hour with a large gourd filled with fresh, cool milk. This revived the officer, and he marched forward to join his party. That poor savage never heard the story of the good Samaritan. He did not want Jesus Christ to tell him to help a fellow man in distress.

Stanley is rather wild with Emin because he didn't want to be rescued, and wouldn't come to Europe, and wouldn't be lionised, and wouldn't eat public dinners and exhibit himself for a big figure on lecture platforms. "His love of science," Stanley says, "borders on fanaticism. I have attempted to discover during our daily chats whether he was Christian or Moslem, Jew or Pagan, and I rather suspect that he is nothing more than a Materialist." Poor Emin! This is his last sin in the eyes of pious Henry Stanley. Still, having Stanley's opinion of Emin's materialism, we should like to have Emin's opinion of Stanley's religion. Some day or other, perhaps, it will leak out, and the not-too-modest Christian may then spend a bad quarter of an hour.

The Bishop of St. Asaph was badly reported. Addressing his old parishioners at Carmarthen, he referred to "his younger and rasher days," and the papers turned it into his "younger and *masher* days."

Resurrection is a Christian doctrine, but it does not get much recognition in the law courts, although "Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land." A will case was heard in the Court of Queen's Bench the other day, and it was stated that the ghost of the testator had recently visited a sexton and expressed disapproval of the disposal of the property. Lord Justice Bowen facetiously asked if the ghost was to be summoned as a witness. Of course it would be difficult to subpoena the ghost, but it might turn up in court of its own accord, and furnish some good copy for the morning papers.

Deibler, the French executioner, is perhaps neither a scientist nor a metaphysician, but he has seen death in all its nakedness more than most people, and his opinion on the subject is worth noting. After the recent execution of Vodable, a most brutal murderer, Deibler talked to a couple of journalists. He maintained that the guillotine was the most painless way of killing people. "As to the notion of there being an after-life," he added, "I can only say that I have seen nearly three hundred heads fall under the knife, and I do not believe a word of it."

The Ritualistic *Church Times* is not sanguine as to the purport of the coming judgment of Archbishop Benson upon the Bishop of Lincoln's case. It says: "The authority by which the Archbishop sits in the court in which he is trying the Bishop of Lincoln is either Papal or Erastian." This should show their mistake to those who fancied the Archbishop's authority would please all parties. The truth is the Ritualists will acknowledge no law that does not endorse their own proceedings. They know the judgment of the Archbishop will be an attempt to compromise between two



parties, and hope, by showing themselves the most refractory, to make the balance incline their way.

The *Church Times* makes a point against the *Rock* when it asks whether, in the event of the Bishop of Lincoln succeeding to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, the anti-Ritualists would accept him as the supreme and sole spiritual authority in the Province. Of course they would not. The Church of England is a house divided against itself, and it only contrives to stand because all parties are united on the one basis of preserving the loaves and fishes.

The Church Congress at Hull next October will be something like a clerical social science congress. To make their proceedings attractive they find they have to give the major portion of their time to secular subjects, such as the hours of labor and the housing of the poor.

Gambling is one of the subjects set down for the attention of the Black Congress. The utterances of the clergy on this topic usually show gross exaggeration. They forget that gambling, like every other vice, is sanctioned by scripture. Palestine was divided among the tribes by lot, and a successor to Judas was chosen in the same way. They forget, too, the Church bazaar, raffles, lottery tickets and trickery for pious objects. Above all, they forget the gambling with truth and conscience for which their own order is pre-eminently distinguished. No doubt we are in need of moral improvement in this as in other respects, but we doubt of its coming through these blind guides who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

What with the police difficulty, and that of the postmen, one would think the London papers were under no necessity of inventing big gooseberries and sea serpents. However, they are printing (at least the *Echo* is) a prize cock-and-bull story about a young French miracle worker, who cures the sick by putting his feet against theirs and making mystic movements with his hands. Patients unable to walk are carried to him on their beds, just as the sick were brought to Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. This wonderful Frenchman is only eighteen. What will he do by the time he is forty? We should say that ascending to heaven is the smallest feat that could be expected of him then.

A Church vicar taking a Wesleyan superintendent by the collar is an edifying illustration of Christian charity. Such a scene was recently witnessed at Coatham. The vicar insisted on reading the Church burial service over the corpse of a Wesleyan teacher, and when the Wesleyan superintendent afterwards led the singing of a hymn, the irate representative of the established form of skyology collared him and ordered him to desist. According to the papers, what followed "baffles description." Amen.

The founder of the Jezreelites, who was never to die, went the way of all flesh; and his wife, who also was never to die, soon followed him. Since then poor Noah Drew, a Michigan farmer, whom they induced to sell his estate and give it all to Jezreel "for the Lord," has also died, it is said of a broken heart, and as the Jezreelites refused to bury him he was interred in a pauper's grave.

A true epitaph, setting forth these facts, was drawn up for a tombstone subscribed for by some persons who pitied the fate of poor old Noah Drew. But the Chatham Burial Board would only sanction the first six lines, on the ground that the rest was "controversial matter." Perhaps they did not like to see the crimes of any Christian sect recorded so flagrantly.

Dean Plumtre has been defending the Mosaic authorship, or at least the antiquity of Deuteronomy. What he does is to point to certain customs which probably arose before the temple worship was established. But those who contend that the books ascribed to Moses were written nearly a thousand years after his date do not deny that they contain references to earlier institutions than those existing when they were written. What Dr. Plumtre has to do is to show that the elaborate tabernacle worship was set up in the wilderness, and that the laws concerning the same were not only given but recorded there. It is needless to say he does not attempt this.

Poor old Moses! Even the *Methodist Times* is "not confident" as to "the harmony, between Geology and Genesis," and "looks with suspicion upon all such enterprises as poor Hugh Miller so chivalrously undertook and failed in."

Dr. Bruce, the Scotch heretic who *isn't* turned out of the Church, has been holding forth on faith in Christ. He declares that the sceptic who does not bow to the yoke of Jesus has the lawless freedom of the wild colt. Perhaps so. But isn't that as good as the lawful servitude of the domestic jackass?

Now for a sample of the yoke of Christ's influence on the intellect. Dr. Bruce has just issued a new edition of his book, *The Kingdom of God*, one part of which deals with the now much-debated question of Inspiration. According to Dr. Bruce, "the Evangelists have various degrees of exactness," or, in other words, various degrees of inexactness. He tells us that "inspiration does not exclude the hypothesis that the Evangelists may in some instances have modified the form of our Lord's words, for good and worthy reasons, such as a regard to the spiritual needs of their first readers."

Could anything be more monstrous? God Almighty—or at least a third part of him—comes to give a revelation to mankind. He "inspires" a number of gentlemen to report his words, and they, not thinking his words altogether what is required, report them with considerable improvements. What a compliment to God Almighty! What a tribute to the "inspiration" of his reporters! And what a puzzle to set ordinary people is this problem of finding out what God did say from a large mass of what he did not say! Freethinkers may well be proud of their wild freedom if this jugglery with reason is the moral result of bowing to the yoke of Christ.

The *Church Times*, in noticing Prof. Huxley's *Nineteenth Century* article on "The Lights of the Church and the Lights of Science," says "he satisfies himself that the story of Noah's flood is unhistorical. But he thinks that for some generations to come people will on the whole, continue to be *irrationally* convinced of the truth of the Bible. And here at least we are glad to find ourselves in agreement with the Professor." Just so. It is natural for the *Church Times* to rejoice in irrationality. The more irrational people are the more glad it would be.

The Rev. Charles Gore, of *Lux Mundi* notoriety, in advocating Sisterhoods for India, said, "We had alienated the sympathies of the Hindoos by treating him with an exclusiveness and contempt which the Pagan Romans could hardly have exceeded." No doubt this is true of Christians in India, and the statement shows what protestations of Christian brotherhood are really worth. If a Hindoo becomes a Mohammedan he is treated as a brother in Islam. If he becomes a Christian he is not one whit nearer a position of social equality than before.

Dr. MacRae and the Hawick Kirk are in arms against the local mill-owners who kept their mills going on the last Fast Day. The men are to have another holiday, but this does not satisfy the religionists. It is not the men's welfare or comfort they are anxious about, but the observation of their special times for solemn foolery.

The Rev. B. Forster, of the Willesborough School Board, is a facetious gentleman, though we suspect his humor is of the order which is called unconscious. There was a row on the Board about the officious visits of the Rev. T. F. Dixon to the school, but the Church majority passed a resolution thanking him for "the valuable religious instruction he has so kindly given to the children." During the debate the Rev. B. Forster remarked that "if any distinct doctrines were taught, children did not comprehend or understand them, and so no harm was done."

Several instances of the disastrous results of superstition are given in Sir Alfred Lyall's account of official Polytheism in China in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*. The regard paid to the propitiation of spirits is a tax not only on private individuals, but on the Government. A memorial from the Governor of Formosa, recorded in the *Pekin Gazette* describes an outburst of pestilence in the



island, where the savage tribes "endeavored, according to their ordinary custom, to avert it by putting people to death." The New Testament notion that disease is the work of evil spirits has often led to such atrocities. In India, says Sir A. Lyall, "a mysterious and apparently aimless murder may be occasionally explained as the fulfilment of a secret vow to one of the fiercer divinities." In China human beings were formerly sacrificed at the burial of great persons.

Sir A. Lyall says "That the plain, unvarnished worship of ghosts, demons and animals may be traced upward to the higher forms of anthropomorphic religion, is a well-known and well-evidenced theory, supported by the survival in the later stages of some incongruous habit or function obviously belonging to the earlier conceptions." Some such survivals may even be traced in Christianity. Baptism, the sign of the cross, the consecration of burial grounds, and bell-ringing are all originally rites to ward off evil spirits.

Sir A. Lyall supports the idea that the gods of polytheism were deified men. This view, he says, is supported by direct observation in India, "while in China it not only rests upon ample evidence, but is officially attested."

Russia is quite the classic land of liberty. A Lutheran pastor at Riga has been deprived of all civil rights and condemned to ten years' exile for converting two or three members of the Orthodox Greek Church to his own persuasion. To complete this noble act of justice it only remains to punish in the same way the wicked persons who got converted.

The Rev. H. Higgins writes to the *Morning Post*, Allahabad, and declares that there is something rotten in the missionary system. Of the 2,000 delegates to the Indian Congress, he reckons that only 28 were Christians, and "amongst these are included a proportion of natives who have found occupation by a change of religion." The missionaries have provided a large number of Hindus with a good education, but the Christianity that was mixed with it has just passed out of their systems without being assimilated.

The Wesleyan Methodists have patched up their missionary quarrel, and not a moment too soon. We have just seen a printed circular, which states that the condition of Methodism at the present time demands the serious and anxious attention of all who love it." Its "spiritual power has become greatly impaired," prayer-meetings are neglected, coldness has crept into the public services, and "for many years past the returns have compared very unfavorably with those of earlier periods."

Piety, says Euthyphero, in his dialogue with Socrates, "is an art which gods and men have of doing business with each other." A "Constant Reader" of the *Christian Commonwealth* tells how he brings the powers that be to terms. He was, he says, in difficulties as to meeting a payment. He had sufficient goods but not enough ready cash, so earnestly prayed God to send him a customer to whom he could dispose goods sufficient to meet the amount. He says, "I called upon heaven, earth, and the Bible, as it were, to bear testimony to my prayer and petition with a reserved feeling that if it were not answered and granted, I should disbelieve a good deal of that which I had for years been taught to believe in." This reserve did the business. Old Jacob adopted a similar attitude towards Jehovah, and at once brought him to terms. So the *Constant Reader* was able to chronicle a success. A customer came and he was enabled to pay his debt. God cannot afford to disoblige a man of such robust faith as this.

As a pendant to this case of answered prayer read the letter of the poor man Oakes, who, with his wife, killed themselves after destroying their child. "We have now done everything that we possibly can think of to avert this wicked proceeding, but can discover no ray of hope." God sends a customer to one man to enable him to pay his debts punctually. Another starves with his wife and child, and is driven to suicide without any assistance.

An inquest has been held at Grays on the body of Reuben Vaughan, aged four years and four months, who died of diphtheria. His parents belonged to the Peculiar

People. On the father being asked by the coroner what doctors were sent for if not to be used, he replied that those who love the Lord prefer oil and faith. Yes, and so should every Christian. That is the New Testament prescription. Of course the coroner "wished those people would come to their senses," but it would be well for him to recognise that they are real Christians while he is only a pretender.

Most people prefer health to sickness. But not so Spurgeon. He regards a good disease as one of the greatest of blessings. A month of rheumatism, he says, would mellow some men marvellously, especially the preachers, who would deliver better sermons if they had "a twist now and then." Perhaps they would. Anyhow we don't mind the thing being tried. If pain is a blessing, we hope the Heavenly Father will send it all to the elect. Any Christian can have our share on application.

There is a poor harmless lunatic who frequents Ramsgate in the summer. He sits near the sands with his face to the rolling deep and his back to the people. Holding the Bible open in his left hand, and using the other to pick up grains of sand or bits of other stray matter, he reads out texts and comments upon them. The other morning he was holding forth to "the sad sea waves" and three irreverent boys on the parable of the lilies. Presently he came to "Solomon in all his glory." This gave him a fine chance to air his knowledge. Solomon, he said, was not arrayed like the lilies, that could suit themselves to all weathers. When the wise king went to the seaside, he had to take an overcoat for the cold evenings, and an umbrella for the wet days. Doubtless the poor fellow didn't know that umbrellas are a very modern invention, and that Solomon with a gingham was a frightful anachronism. However, the poor lunatic preacher was harming no one. His comments were not very profound, and his history was mixed; but, after all, you may hear as indifferent sermons in church. And when all is said and done, Solomon's umbrella is not a greater absurdity than three-fourths of what is droned from the pulpit by the professional men of God.

The clergy of Lille refused Christian burial to a lady who had contracted a civil marriage after being divorced from her husband. She was a lady of blameless life. But the Church does not recognise divorce except after a special dispensation from the Pope, and that can only be obtained by persons of great wealth or position. Persons of inferior means or standing are granted no such indulgence. They must bear the full weight of the Church's yoke.

According to a private advice from Sydney, the New South Wales Cabinet, at a meeting on May 15, resolved to prosecute any person selling the London *Freethinker*. We fancy the authorities out there will fail in their crusade against this journal. Unfortunately, as Australia is so distant, we have to wait for news as to the result of the Cabinet's decision.

#### SPURGEON ON THE GROWING HERESY.

Is it not a serious question for our country how far existing want of honesty may be traceable to the corrupt example set by the professing church, when, by its ministers and members, it sets aside solemn covenants, trust-deeds, and confessions of faith, and deals with them as current opinion demands? If the foundations of morality be destroyed, what can the nation do? What will be done in the matter? We don't care to prophesy; but if our Scotch brethren have degenerated to the English level, they will do nothing. The sound will shield the unsound, the Evangelical will pat the Rationalistic on the back, and say that "they trust they will not go too far"; and all will live together in that form of peace which is not peace, but treachery to God and His truth. The scribes and priests of Israel are now linked in unhallowed confederacies, in which there is unbounded toleration for error: at the rate at which they are now advancing, those same confederacies will soon have no tolerance for orthodoxy. Even now the sneers and sarcasms at the old faith are more than self-respecting and truth-loving men ought to bear. Yet behind the ruling cliques there are hosts of plain, godly men, who will be heard of before very long.—*Sword and Trowel*.



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, July 13, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, London, at 7.30, "Professor Huxley on Noah's Flood."

July 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. WARRY.—The North London Secular Society was not a Branch of the N. S. S. It ceased to exist very many years ago. We have no means of ascertaining if it had the name of Coles on its members' list. We are far too busy to trouble about such a trivial matter.

W. L.—Thanks for the jokes. Robert Owen was a philanthropist; so was Jeremy Bentham. Both were Freethinkers. Voltaire's liberality was infinite. Mr. Mitchell, who founded the Mitchell Free Library at Glasgow, was a Freethinker. Stephen Girard, who endowed the Girard College in America, was a Freethinker. His will forbade a minister to enter the place, but the orthodox party got hold of the endowment and they defy the provisions of his will. Lick, who endowed the great Lick Observatory, was also a Freethinker.

J. BURRELL.—Glad to hear the Westminster Branch will join the Federation Excursion.

W. H. STEVENS.—Can you tell us of any hall in Bristol less costly than the St. James's? The city is to be visited by Mr. Foote and Mr. Forder, for the purpose of starting a good Branch, but information is needed as to halls.

C. BATLEY.—The Portsmouth burial joke has already been dealt with in "Acid Drops." Glad to hear you find the *Freethinker* "a boon."

INQUIRER.—There is a Branch at Oldham, but it is merely a nominal one. We hope the new South Lancashire Federation will put fresh life into the whole locality.

J. WEBB.—Your MS. shall be returned with Mr. Foote's opinion, on his return to town.

J. L. S.—Thanks.

L. SPURGEON.—Halstead shall not be neglected. The matter will go before the Organisation Committee.

HIGH JINKS.—Received. Shall be acknowledged in next list. We fancy you would do most good by circulating *outside* the Branches. You are more likely to reach fresh readers.

GROCER'S ASSISTANT.—Sorry to hear your distribution of twenty copies of "Jesus at the Derby" nearly cost you your situation. Mr. Foote will be glad to see you at the Excursion if you introduce yourself. Why not join the Battersea Branch and see what can be done to obtain better premises? We are pleased to have been the cause of your freedom from superstition.

J. SAUNDERS.—Thanks. Mr. Wheeler *has* the book. We have no faith in patent medicines. Generally speaking, we agree with Macbeth, who says "Throw physic to the dogs"—only it is rather rough on the dogs.

G. NAEWIGER.—Subjects shall be sent in good time.

JAMES NEATE.—The bigots who wouldn't let their halls are anxious to convert you. That they want to do it without discussion is only natural.

C. WINNING.—Darwin *did* express sorrow for having used the word Creation. See Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God*, pp. 34, 35, where the passage is quoted from the *Life and Letters*. We know nothing of the gentleman who "challenged Mr. Foote." Mr. Foote only debates as a representative, and with representatives.

C. K. LAPORTE.—Hardly up to your usual level.

C. DOEG.—We hope to hear good news from Liverpool by next week.

WELL WISHER.—Thanks.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Neues Freireligioses 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—Loyal American—Secular Thought—Open Court—Star—Adelaide Advertiser—People's Press—Countryman—Toscin

—Spiritualist's Magazine—Philadelphian Inquirer—Lucifer—Reading Standard—Protestant Standard—Der Lichtfreund—Birmingham Daily Post—Evening Standard—The White Cross—Twentieth Century.

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.

Professor Huxley has an important article in the *Nineteenth Century* on "The Lights of the Church and the Light of Science." It deals particularly with the Story of the Flood. Mr. Foote will make it the basis of his lecture at the London Hall of Science this evening (July 13).

Mr. Axel Lennstrand, brother of Viktor Lennstrand, favored us with a call on Tuesday. He is a very pleasant gentleman, and we hope to see him again before he leaves England. His brother Viktor has suffered greatly in health from his imprisonment, and if the new trial results in a fresh sentence, it will be advisable to bring him away to England. He is not physically strong, and another imprisonment would probably mean death or insanity. Still, his courage is firm; he would rather break than bend. But Mr. Axel Lennstrand is not disposed to let the brave fellow be killed by the Swedish bigots. He is inclined to exercise an elder brother's authority, and bring Viktor Lennstrand away from Sweden with a high hand, at least for a time, until he has recovered his strength.

Captain Otto Thomson is in good health and spirits. His worst fears are financial. The *Fritankeren* is a great tax on their resources.

Next Sunday (July 20) the London Secular Federation's annual excursion will be made to Epping Forest. A very large party is expected. All who intend to join it should apply to the Secretary of the nearest Branch for tickets, or at the Hall of Science, whence an extra contingent will start at half-past nine. Special weather is ordered for the occasion.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Ernest Parke is released after serving half his vindictive sentence of twelve months' imprisonment. Mr. Parke made a mistake as a journalist—that is all. He struck too boldly at the Cleveland Street scandals. The culprits all went scot free, but the journalist whose exposure was prompted by honorable motives paid a severe penalty for his daring. Mr. Parke is a Secularist.

Last "Lord's Day" the members and friends of the Sunday League visited Apsley House, by special permission of the Duke of Wellington, and inspected its artistic and historical treasures. On two Sundays in August the Duke of Westminster has agreed to open Grosvenor House in the same way.

Mr. Toleman-Garner feels sufficiently well to resume his lecturing work. He will be glad to hear from provincial Branches desiring his services during the winter season.

Last Sunday evening Mr. W. Heaford delivered the first lecture for the Hyde Park Branch at its new station at the end of Hammersmith Bridge, his subject being "Christianity Weighed and found Wanting." There was a large and very attentive audience, but no opposition. There was a good sale of *Freethinkers* and other literature, and a good collection was made towards the future expenses of the station.

Mr. Charles Voysey, who still attaches the Rev. to his name, has been delivering a course of Theistic sermons, which are being published with the Title "Revelation Tested on Moral Grounds." The three numbers we have seen are well worth reading.

The Lancashire Secular Federation was started on Sunday afternoon at Manchester. The constitution adopted was that of the London Federation, with some slight changes. Mr. Charles Pegg was elected president; Mr. E. H. Jones secretary; and Messrs. Smith, Brooks, Bilcliffe, and Hurd vice-presidents. Mr. Jones's address is 47 Pigott Street, Green-



hays, Manchester. We hope the new Federation will get to work at once, that all the Lancashire Branches will promptly affiliate, and that new Branches will be formed in that great centre of population.

The N. E. Secular Federation's annual picnic takes place on Sunday, August 3. Durham is the destination. There will be a singing contest, and a public meeting in the Square. Addresses are to be delivered by Messrs. Peacock, Thompson, and other local Freethinkers, and also Mr. A. B. Moss. Tickets can be had at Mr. Peter Weston's, 77 Newgate Street, Newcastle.

Mr. A. B. Moss is going to spend his holiday in Freethought missionary work. The N. E. Federation has engaged his services for a week. He still has two weeks open. This is a good opportunity for districts in want of open-air lectures.

The Leicester *Countryman* reproduces some of our "Acid Drops," and gives a good notice of Mr. Wheeler's *Christian Doctrine of Hell*.

Kaliprasanna Kavyabisharad, the editor of the *Cosmopolitan*, a Calcutta Freethought monthly sends us a tract he has issued entitled "India Beware." He warns his countrymen against the flattery and occult pretences of the Theosophists. Science needs neither mystery or Mahatmas.

The Westminster Branch N. S. S. held the half-yearly general meeting on Sunday night last, at the "Duke of Ormonde," Princes Street. A favorable balance-sheet and report were read. The following gentlemen form the Executive: Mr. Stace, chairman; Mr. E. L. Stace, vice-chairman; Mr. Burrell, secretary; Mr. W. Wheeler, treasurer; Mr. V. Roger, member of the Council; Messrs. Balance and S. Rous, delegates; Messrs. H. Rous and E. L. Stace, auditors. The following form the Committee: Messrs. Bell, Efford, S. and H. Rous, Williams, Roger, Ross, Balance, Martin. During the evening an address on vellum was presented to Mr. W. Wheeler, late chairman. The presentation was made on behalf of the members by Mr. G. S. Ross in a most eloquent speech, commenting on Mr. Wheeler's zeal and abilities during the three years of his chairmanship, and paying a tribute to his unselfish devotion to the cause of Secularism. Messrs. Burrell and Roger also made short addresses. Mr. Wheeler, in his reply, said, although not occupying the position of chairman, he was still with us; and all present hoped that he would long remain so. A hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Woolley for his kindness in placing the room at our disposal closed the meeting.—J. BURRELL.

The *Reading Standard*, a Conservative paper, gives a good report of Mr. Foot's lecture on "Secular Salvation," in reply to Rev. S. McComb.

Both the Editor of the *Freethinker* and his "sub." are taking a little much-needed change at the seaside. They hope the reader will pardon any deficiency there may be in this number.

#### AN M.P. ON RIDICULE.

"I du believe in Freedom's cause,  
Ez fur away ez Paris is."

THE sentiment embodied in the above quotation from the "Editor's Creed" in *The Biglow Papers*, and applied to time instead of to space, aptly describes the attitude of Justin H. McCarthy, M.P., in his recently published *French Revolution*. He introduces his subject with fervid promises of impartial treatment which, it must be admitted, he has fairly realised. His judgments on Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and other famous Freethinkers of last century are noteworthy as appearing in a book of the kind. But his stock of impartiality appears to have been entirely exhausted in treating of the stirring times of which he writes, so that he ludicrously mis-states contemporary facts. In justifying Voltaire's use of ridicule and sarcasm he adds: "To do so now would be wholly inexcusable, because it would be wholly unnecessary. Where each man has full and equal freedom to preach, pray, and profess what he pleases, nothing but malignity or vulgarity can prompt anyone to make a public gibe of his neighbor's ceremonials of worship, even although his neighbor's moral practices may appear somewhat inconsistent with true worship of any kind. To satirise the prac-

tices or doctrines of the established Church of any civilised country now argues not courage, but sheer impertinence and vulgarity." And this writer witnessed the expulsion of a member of Parliament because of his speculative opinions. I charitably conclude that he did not personally aid in that monstrous injustice; but brothers in strife did help with a fanatical zeal which it cannot be comforting for an Irish Freethinker to look back on. He knew that a child had been torn from its mother because she was an Atheist. He knew that men had suffered imprisonment for blasphemy a year or two ago in the country in which he wrote; and he might have known that while his words were passing through the press a man in Sweden was suffering for the mere statement of opinions differing from the Established Church.

How jocose and comfortable one can be when toleration has reached the level of his own capacity for and audacity of thought, and with what an indignant sternness of reproof can he chide those who dare go further. But is it not carrying the mummery too far to tell a man, in gaol for promulgating his opinions, that he has full freedom to preach, pray and profess what he pleases. It is a sorry spectacle. The riots of '80' are a thing of the past; Catholic emancipation is complete; then in the words of the song "What could we wish for more!"

IOMAG.

#### TWO CAREERS.

##### I.

So much one thought about the life beyond,  
He did not drain the waters of the pond;

And when death laid his children 'neath the sod  
He called it the "mysterious will of God."

He would not strive for worldly gain, not he—  
His wealth, he said, was stored in God's To Be.

He kept his mortal body poorly dressed,  
And talked about the garments of the blessed;

And when to his last sleep he laid him down,  
His only mourner begged her widow's gown.

##### II.

One was not so sure there was a life to come,  
So made a Heaven of his earthly home.

He strove for wealth, and with an open hand  
He comforted the needy in his land.

He wore new garments often, and the old  
Helped many a brother to keep out the cold.

He said this life was such a little span,  
Man ought to make the most of it for man;

And when he died, the fortune that he left  
Gave succor to the needy and bereft.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox, in "*Leslie's Monthly*."

#### A TRUE THOUGH ANCIENT WHALE STORY.

JONAH'S is not the only instance of a man's taking up a lodging in a whale's belly. The same thing happened to the grave and accurate, not to say inspired, Lucian, who has put the matter beyond dispute or doubt by giving a circumstantial account in his *True History*. He was out upon an expedition of discovery, in a ship that carried over fifty men. They had sailed a considerable distance westward of the pillars of Hercules when they met a number of whales much larger than any they had seen before. This did not surprise Lucian, who was a philosopher, aware that new discovered objects, like ancient events, are always the more extraordinary as you have the farther to go for them. One of the animals took a gulp and swallowed them, ship, sails, tackling, and all. The pilot, a skillful fellow, steered so dextrously through the cavity left in the upper jaw by a rotten tooth that they cleared the breakers on each side and came to a safe anchor in the belly of the whale. It was a great chamber, very broad, long, and high also. In the midst there was a number of masts of ships, anchors, and men's bones, and cargo of all sorts. Also there was some land with small rising hills. This they took to be composed of mud the beast swallowed when he went down to the bottom of the sea. Here they



stayed no paltry three days and nights, but nine months, a whole term of gestation. They planted vines and ate the fruit; met two countrymen, the survivors of a large company that had undergone a like catastrophe some twenty-eight years before, and after vain battle and fortune escaped by the same channel they came in at, by setting fire for several days to one of the largest forests their host had in his belly; whereupon he died of heartburn; and they had to prop open his jaws with the strongest beams they could find in order to make their escape. The accurate and, we believe, inspired chronicler was at the pains of measuring the length of the beast and found it exactly sixteen hundred stadia, or something like one hundred and eighty-eight miles seven furlongs. The further voyages of Lucian to the sea of milk, the island made of cheese, the hole of the blessed, the abode of the wicked, and the land of dreams, all as true as gospel and a great deal more interesting, may be read in the excellent version by Mr. A. J. Church.

#### A FREETHINKER'S DEATH-BED.

By HUGH O. PENTECOST.

(Continued from page 322.)

THE Freethinker looks at death just as it is, so far as we know anything about it—the end of life. He does not hope nor expect to live after death. He admits that he may, just as there may be a planet in which water runs up hill. But all the facts known to science—including with no disrespect, as not yet generally accepted, alleged “spirit” phenomena—prove as well as anything can be proved that he will not. He, therefore, maps out his life with absolutely no reference to alleged heavens or hells or any kind of spirit world. He lives just as he would if he absolutely knew that death ends all. He goes through this world seeking his own welfare and knowing from the open book of history and his own experience that he can promote his own welfare only by promoting the welfare of every other man, woman and child in the world; knowing that he cannot be as happy as he might while any one else is miserable. He knows that death is as natural as birth. He knows that as we were unconscious of our birth we will be unconscious of our death, and that in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred death is preceded by days or hours of unconsciousness. He knows that if death puts a final end to him as a person, as science seems to prove, it cannot be an evil. He suffered nothing before he was. He will suffer nothing if he ceases to be. He will not even know that he is dead. When the Freethinker is in his sober senses he knows that he can suffer nothing but the consequences in his own character of his own acts if he wakes from death as from a sleep, and that annihilation cannot be an evil, simply because it is just being nothing at all—the fading of a rose, the blowing out of a candle, the pouring of a pint of water into the sea, the puffing of smoke into a hurricane.

Why should not such a man or woman meet death with composure? Do not common soldiers with very little intelligence rush into the cannon's mouth? Do not vulgar murderers walk to the gallows and die without a tremor? Do not rich Christians, who have mixed the blood of their employes and the heart fibre of the poor with their stolen meat and drink, die like saints? Do not pitiable creatures jump from bridges and go over Niagara Falls in barrels? Do not burglars take their lives in their hands and risk exchanging them for the chance to steal the value of a few paltry dollars? Do not love-sick girls and weak-willed men take poison or blow their brains out? And is death, so easy to all of these, a thing which a thinking man or woman living worthily from day to day must needs fear because he does not happen to believe in certain fables and will not hope for immortality against the evidence of his own senses and the conclusions of his own reason?

What folly is this to suppose that in order to properly prepare for death we must reject the testimony of history, deny the evidence of our senses, despise the conclusions of our highest reason, and blindly swallow all sorts of cock and bull stories. If I am intelligent and courageous in my thinking I am, forsooth, unfit to die, but if I believe the impossibilities of a book, written by nobody knows whom, I am ready to face the tomb. If I live an honest and upright life, dealing fairly and kindly with my neighbors, I will die with shrieks of horror, but if I swindle my neighbors and beat my children and despise the poor, as many Christians do, if I murder my wife and then repent, the angels will come for me. This is absurd. Do not be deceived or frightened by

such nonsense. Sit down and think the thing out for yourself.

If you honestly and rationally believe in God and immortality I have nothing to say. I am glad if such beliefs help you to live well and to think happily of death. But if you find no God and no hope of immortality among the facts about you or within you, do not allow any one to frighten you by rattling skeletons at you. The problems of life and death cannot be settled by fear. No conclusions arrived at by scaring reason with a ghost will in the long run hold.

Death is a fact to be studied and accepted for what it really is, just as we study the composition and movements of a comet. You cannot reach a satisfactory conclusion about it if you tremble.

All this is not meant for braggadocia. I have already admitted that death is no trifling matter. But I would like to make it plain to you that death is no worse for a Freethinker than for a Christian. If it seems so it is only because we all have inherited weak nerves from countless generations of frightened and superstitious ancestors. We have all fallen into the habit of calling death a mystery, and we are afraid of mysteries. We tremble at what we do not understand. But I think you will discover that if you bravely accept the facts about death as they are invariably presented to us you will cease to regard it as a mystery, and then it will be less and less a thing to fear. We may never learn to look upon death without fear, but it is quite possible to regard it with no *superstitious* fear, and that is the point in question. We fear a surgical operation, but we fear it for what it is. Religion has nothing to do with the case. We fear the lightning, but we no longer believe it to be a flash from the eye or the fiery breath of an angry God. What needs now is that we should learn to get over our *superstitious* fear of death, learn that religion has no more to do with preparing us for death than it has to do with any other simple and universal fact of human experience.

If you want to know how I think you should prepare for death I will tell you, and if any priest or minister knows a better way I have yet to hear it. Honestly and earnestly think out your beliefs; then they will stay by you in storm and in sunshine. Do nothing that you are ashamed of *after* it is done. Live exactly as if this were the only life you will ever have. Live so that the last year of your life, be it this year or next or any other, will be the best. Do not injure your body, for you cannot be happy unless you are physically well. Do not wrong another, for your welfare is inseparably bound up with the welfare of every one else. Accustom yourself to face your own thoughts, and bear your own sorrows and burdens. Keep yourself clean. Earn every penny that you spend. Make people respect and love you, by being worthy of respect and love. Have no skeletons of regret in your closet. Get over all your fear of ghosts. Be sure that when you come to die you will not wish you had lived other than you have. Whatever goblins haunt you in your last hour, do not let there be any spectres of memory. If you live in this way, if you are careful to do only those things that make for your own welfare, you may not, indeed, die with hallelujahs on your tongue, but you may be reasonably sure that your sun will go down irradiating the clouds that shadow the world you leave with a silent, soft and many-colored light.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### A FREETHOUGHT MUSEUM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I think the idea suggested by “Civis Sum” in last week's *Freethinker* to found a Freethought Museum is an excellent one, and would bear good fruit. It would also act as a great moral lesson, as it should include models of the instruments of torture formerly used as *arguments* against heretics. The thumb-screw, the iron boot, the rack—the collar of torture, the scavenger's daughter, etc., etc., all should be represented. A literary department could also be made very interesting, as there are many who would doubtless contribute some rarities. I should be pleased to contribute a letter written by the grand old martyr, Richard Carlile, to my father more than fifty years ago. I disinterred it lately from an old desk, where it had been quietly locked up for many years.

W. H. MORRIS.

Bright Villa, 141 Cheltenham Road, Bristol.



## DR. MARTINEAU ON CHRISTIANITY.

"CHRISTIANITY as defined or understood in all the Churches which formulate it has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources; from what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. The blight of birth-sin with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption with its vicarious salvation; the incarnation with its low postulates of the relation between God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis. And so nearly do these vain imaginations pre-occupy the creeds that not a moral or spiritual element finds entrance there except 'the forgiveness of sins.' To consecrate and diffuse, under the name of 'Christianity,' a theory of the world's economy thus made up of illusions from obsolete stages of civilisation, immense resources, material and moral, are expended, with effect no less deplorable in the province of religion than would be, in that of science, hierarchies and missions for propagating the Ptolemaic astronomy, and inculcating the rules of necromancy and exorcism. The spreading alienation of the intellectual classes of European society from Christendom, and the detention of the rest in their spiritual culture at a level not much above that of the Salvation Army, are social phenomena which ought to bring home a very solemn appeal to the conscience of stationary churches. For their long arrear of debt to the intelligence of mankind they adroitly seek to make amends by elaborate beauty of ritual art. The apology soothes for a time, but it will not last for ever."—*The Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 650.

## PROFANE JOKES.

Rev. Dr. Prim: "Do you preach extempore, Brother Yallerby, or do you take notes?" Brother Yallerby (from the South): "Well, sah, thar was once a time I took notes, but I've found it safest, down in my deestrick, to insist on habin' de cash down."

"Maria," said the pious husband, "them Smiths are allowing their children to play in the yard on Sunday. To-morrow I'll set the dog on their chickens. The judgment of heaven must be visited on 'em some way."

Scene—Village Sunday-school. Clergyman questioning a lot of small boys in a farming district. Clergyman: "How did Jacob know that it was Joseph sending for him from Egypt?" Small Boy (excitedly): "He seed the name on the waggons."

St. Peter: "Any credentials?" Newly arrived soul (confidently): "I spent my life getting up stories about Atheists struck dumb, profane men struck by lightning, etc., to be telegraphed by the press associations. Highly moral work, sir." St. Peter (confidentially): "Come in, then. The place across the way claims a larger population than we have, and I can make you useful in the census department."

## 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.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station), 7.30, Mr. W. Norrish, "For God's Sake." Social evening every Monday. Friday, at 8, discussion.

Camberwell—81 New Church Road, S.E., 7.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Religious Guide Posts."

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, Mr. F. Haslam, "Who was Jesus, and What did he Teach?"

Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C., 7.30, Mr. G. W. Foote, "Professor Huxley on Noah's Flood."

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club (in the hall), 1 The Grove, Broadway, on July 17, at 8, Mr. W. Heaford, "Secularism Superior to Christianity."

Mile End—Assembly Rooms, Beaumont Street, Mile End Road, 7, Mr. Cohen, "Evolution of Man." Admission free.

West Ham—121 Broadway, Plaistow, 10.30, members' quarterly meeting; 7.30, Mr. J. Woodward, "Electricity."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park Gates 11.15, Mr. Norrish, "Saintly David."

Bethnal Green—Opposite St. John's Church, 11.15, Mr. W. Heaford, "The Difficulties of Theism."

Camberwell—Station Road, 11.30, Mr. S. Soddy, "Other Worlds than Ours."

Clerkenwell Green, 11.30, Mr. G. Standring, "Freethought and the Bible." All members intending to go with the Excursion on the 20th are requested to be present.

Edmonton—Corner of Angel Road, 6.30, Mr. L. Keen, "I and my Father are One."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand), 3.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Why Fear Death and After?"

Hammersmith Bridge, 7, a lecture.

Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, 11.15, Mr. C. J. Hunt, "Christian Sojourn." July 16, at 8, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Apostles of Freethought."

Kingsland Green, 11.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "The Morality of the Messiah."

Midland Arches, St. Pancras Road, N.W., 11.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Why Fear Death and After?"

Mile End Waste, 11.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Who are the Infidels?"

Regent's Park, near Gloucester Gate, 3.30, a debate between Mr. C. J. Hunt and the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, "The Teachings of Christ."

Tottenham—Corner of Seven Sisters Road, 3.30, Mr. P. H. Snelling, "Morality and the Messiah."

Victoria Park, near the fountain, 3.15, Mr. Hunt, "Miracles."

Westminster—Old Pimlico Pier, 11.30, Mr. Ramsey, "Original Sin." Tickets for Excursion can be obtained up to Wednesday the 16th, at the "Duke of Ormonde," 13 Prince's Street.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers' Hill, 11.30, Mr. R. Rosetti, "Is Easter a Christian Festival?"

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

## COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, 7, members' quarterly meeting.

Heckmondwike—at Mr. John Rothera's, Bottoms, 2.30, a meeting.

Hull Branch—No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion Street, 6.30, Mr. Smith, "The Christian Religion."

Liverpool Branch N. S. S., Camden Hall, Camden Street—11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Haslam, "The Influence of Poetry."

Manchester N. S. S., Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, All Saints—6.30, Mr. Stanley Jones, "Evolution."

Newcastle—4 Hall's Court, Newgate Street, 11, business meeting of Sunday Music League; 3, usual fortnightly meeting of members of N. S. S.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Southsea, 7, Mr. Hore, a reading from "Looking Backward."

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone Road, 6.30, Mr. J. Grange, "Does Man Survive Death?"

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham Street.—Members and friends go to Wharnclyffe Side; meeting near Monolith, Fargate, at 2.30.

South Shields—Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King Street, 7, usual weekly meeting.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Leeds—Vicar's Croft, 3, Mr. H. W. Riley, "Secularism: a Vindication and a Defence." At 7, on Holbeck Moor, Mr. Fisher, "Is Man a Fallen Angel or a Risen Ape?"

Manchester—Corner of Denmark Road and Oxford Road, 3, Mr. Stanley Jones, "The Gospel of the Future."

Rochdale—Town Hall Square (weather permitting), Mr. J. Grange, 3, "Ashamed to be a Christian."

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon Road, London, S.E.—July 13 (morning), Mile End, (evening) Camberwell; 20 (afternoon), Victoria Park; 27, North-East Secular Federation tour. August 24 (morning), Clerkenwell, (afternoon), Regent's Park, (evening), Camberwell; 27, Hyde Park; 31 (morning) Pimlico, (evening), Woolwich. Sept. 7 (morning), Pimlico; 14 (morning), Bethnal Green, (afternoon), Victoria Park; 21 (morning), Midland Arches; 28 (morning), Clerkenwell, (evening), Woolwich.

H. SMITH, 3 Breck Place, Breck Road, Everton Road, Liverpool.—July 20, Liverpool.

E. STANLEY JONES, 3 Letta Street, City Road, Walton, Liverpool.—July 13 (afternoon out-door, and evening in hall), Manchester; 20, Sheffield. August 3, Liverpool.

T. THURLOW, 7 Dickson's Villas, Rutland Road, East Ham.—Aug. 10 (morning), Midland Arches; 24 (morning), Plaistow. Sept. 21 (morning out-door, and evening in the hall), Plaistow.

TOLEMAN-GARNER, 8 Heyworth Road, Stratford, London, E.—August 17 (morning), Plaistow Green. Sept. 7, Chatham; 21 (evening), Woolwich. Oct. 5, Woolwich.

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