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The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"The priesthood in all religions sings the same anthem. First, the abuses are stoutly defended; but when the ground is no longer tenable, then these abuses form no part of the holy faith. If, however, they are always found in its company, you may as well say that the cat's skin is not the cat; the creature will make horrible cries if you attempt to strip it off, and perhaps will die of the operation."

—W. S. LANDOR.

REV. C. A. BERRY
ON
FOOLS, PRIGS, BEASTS, AND VERMIN.

"Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."—JESUS CHRIST.

THE Rev. C. A. Berry, of Wolverhampton, is one of the most distinguished of Nonconformist ministers. He is also a familiar and acceptable figure on political platforms. His utterances, therefore, are better worth attention than those of the ordinary men of God.

Mr. Berry's arduous labors in the Lord's vineyard so far impaired his health that his doctor ordered him to take a long sea voyage. Nearly a year ago he started on a trip round the world. His congregation, we believe, paid all his expenses in addition to his regular salary, or stipend, or whatever they call it in religious circles. This was generous on their part, and fortunate for Mr. Berry. Had the late Charles Bradlaugh been as happily situated as some of these preachers of the gospel of poverty his invaluable life might have been prolonged.

Before leaving England the great Mr. Berry was interviewed on the subject of the secularisation of the Churches which was alleged to be taking place by the editor of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Berry denied the allegation in what he was pleased to call *our* sense of the words; nevertheless he admitted that old dogmas were getting played out, and that the Churches were more and more attending to the secular welfare of the people. This admission was apparently made with reluctance; at any rate it was followed by a burst of ill temper, in which Mr. Berry spoke of "professional infidels."

We replied at the time that Mr. Berry was a "professional" Christian, and that his salary was larger than the platform earnings of all the "professional infidels" in England put together.

Mr. Berry has now returned from his cheap and pleasant trip, and resumed his pulpit at Wolverhampton. We are glad to hear that his health is restored, but sorry to notice that his temper is not improved.

Wolverhampton gave Mr. Berry a very hearty reception on Sunday, March 6, when he resumed his ministry in Queen-street Chapel. His morning sermon, which is reported in the *Christian World*, was from a text in the first epistle to the Phillipians, wherein St. Paul, or whoever wrote it, tells "the brethren" that "the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel." The apostle regarded himself as

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a special favorite of Providence, and the mantle of his self-conceit appears to have fallen upon Mr. Berry. "I was not long," the latter says, in perceiving, in my novel situation, one of the reasons why God had sent me away from home and Church." And again—"The Master had work for me beyond the reach of set discourse and sacred building."

Mr. Berry may take pleasure in regarding himself as "a great gaslight of grace." He may be delighted to feel that all his affairs are specially ordered by "one above," and that even his bodily maladies are not as other men's. It is probable, however, that less interested persons will smile at this touch of ministerial vanity.

During his holiday it appears that Mr. Berry has visited outlandish places, especially in Australia and New Zealand. He found the people there most anxious to hear about "God, Man, Life, Duty, Destiny"—on which subjects, no doubt, Mr. Berry is a greater authority than Darwin, Mill, and Spencer rolled into one. But the same people had the "deepest abhorrence of scholastic and mediæval systems of theology." "Not theology," Mr. Berry says, "but the theologies constituted the great hindrance." Surely the statement is oracular. A man might scratch his head for half-an-hour without understanding it. Is there such a thing as "man" in general without "men" in particular? Can there be "theology" without "theologies"? Are we to regard "theology" as consisting of Mr. Berry's beliefs, and "theologies" as consisting of other men's beliefs?

But all this is by the way. It is a matter for Mr. Berry to settle with other Christians. Our chief object is to notice his attitude towards outsiders. Mr. Berry refers to them as follows:—"What do you suppose I found in those out-regions of unecclesiastical life? Barbarians? Pagans? Moral outlaws? Cynical indifferentists? Dilettante doubters? Well, yes, perhaps one or two of each of these classes, but *only* one or two. There are fools in every crowd; likewise prigs, beasts, vermin."

Here is Christian charity for you! The same charity that Jesus showed to his religious rivals in Jerusalem; the same charity that his disciples have shown ever since to those who rejected their teaching or smiled at their pretensions. Fools, prigs, beasts, vermin! Such are the flowers of Christian courtesy that Mr. Berry has gathered, under God's guidance, while circumnavigating the globe! The first epithet puts him "in danger of hell fire," according to the Sermon on the Mount; the second should take him there, the third keep him there, the fourth give him a seat in the hottest corner.

Mr. Berry is not speaking in a moment of exasperation, but deliberately, in his first sermon after a year's holiday. This is a fact to be noted. It shows the truth of the proverb, "Scratch a Christian and you find a bigot." We thank Mr. Berry for the illustration. It is another warning against his malicious faith.

G. W. FOOTE.

A FISHY FAITH.

As Lent comes round, with its salt cod and egg-sauce, it always reminds me that there is something fishy about Christianity. Look closely into it, and you will find the whole faith as scaly, slimy, and shelly as Billingsgate Market. The head of the Church is always known as the Fisherman at Rome.



The very mitre of the bishops is taken from the fish, as may be seen from the accompanying illustration, taken from Lajard's *Culte de Venus*. The ordinance of fasting, or rather fish-eating, on Friday and for forty days in Lent, ought to be in itself sufficient to convince any misguided sceptics that this divine religion was instituted by fishermen. Jesus Christ, who told his disciples that he would make them fishers of men—and they have been selfish trout-ticklers and flat-catchers, after the loaves and fishes, ever since—was himself, as the early Fathers said, the great *Ichthus*, the fish *par excellence*, who came by water, walked on water, and did all its miracles on the shores of the sea of Galilee, like any dolphin or delphic oracle. Like the Babylonian Oannes, he was at once man, god and fish too. Jahveh's rival, Dagon, too, was a god who, like the mermaids, was half human and half fish.* In the Talmud the Messiah is called Dag, the fish, while Vishnu, one of the Trinity of India, has as his astronomical symbol the fish, and was first incarnated in fish form. Tertullian says, in the beginning of the third century: "But we little fishes [*pisciculi*, as the Christians liked to call themselves], after the example of *Ichthus* [the fish, Jesus Christ], are born in water." St. Augustine says that Jesus is *Ichthus*, for the purity of Jesus Christ is found in the word fish, "for he is a fish that lives in the midst of the waters," while Julius Africanus plainly calls Christ that "great fish who fed from himself the disciples on the shore and offered himself as a fish to the whole world." It has been conjectured that the fish among Orientals was taken as a type of a heavenly messenger, from the fact of fish occasionally falling from the clouds in heavy showers of rain.

Some persons, with more ingenuity than archæology, have conjectured that, since there is no other way to heaven but the way of the tank, the practice of ducking the believer beneath the water in holy baptism gave rise to the comparison between the Christian and the fish. But the fish symbol was an ancient one, long pre-Christian, though it came into special signification about 263 B.C., when the sun entered Pisces.† *Ichthus* was a title not only of Jesus, but of Bacchus and Horus. The Sibylline oracles, which existed long before the Christian era, contained an acrostic on the word *Ichthus*. The early Christians interpreted this as meaning Iesous CHreistos, THEOU UIOS, Soter, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior. Justin Martyr, the earliest Christian writer of undisputed authenticity, in the middle of the second century, appeals to the Sibyl as predicting "in a clear and patent manner, the advent of our Savior Jesus Christ," and Celsus soon after nicknamed the Christians "Sibyllists." Possibly what the Sibylline books predicted was simply that the equinox would pass from Aries into Pisces—from the Lamb of God

into the Divine Fishes. Gerald Massey, in his *Natural Genesis* (vol. i. p. 454), says, "When the equinox passed into the sign of Pisces, the fish became the figure of the Christ on the cross. Hence the fish on the pre-Christian cross which is found in Scotland and Ireland, and the fish type which was continued whenever the reckonings were kept." He further tells us that "Horus in Egypt had been a fish from time immemorial, and when the equinox entered the sign of Pisces, Horus, who was continued by the Gnostics, is portrayed as *Ichthus* with the fish sign over his head." Now Jesus says his only sign is that of Jonas, who was swallowed by a fish, or, as Kenneth Mackenzie says, "absorbed into the *Vesica Pisces*." This writer, in his *Royal Masonic Cyclopædia*, cites an author who says: "In former days, the Grand Master of our Order used to wear a silver fish on his person." Dr. Kenealy, in the curious anonymous hodge podge he called *The Book of God*, said (p. 240), "the fishes mystically signify the Initiated into the Eleusinia." He says (p. 431): "The Marquis d'Urban possesses a white chalcedony, in the form of a truncated cone (a phallos), which is pierced through (a yoni), and which was probably worn as an amulet. On the base of the cone is a figure, youthful, beardless, drawn in profile with the name XPICTOY (of the anointed one) and the image of the fish." In the Roman catacombs one of the most frequent symbols is the fish, generally taken as a sign that those using it were Christians, though this, in the face of the foregoing, must be considered problematical. Everywhere in early Christian symbolism we find prominence given to the fish. It is found on gravestones, mural decorations, seals, lamps, and, indeed, wherever ingenuity could engrave or paint it. It was a private mark which indicated that the persons were of the new covenant, recognising their God under the sign of the *Ichthus*. It proved, in short, as the modern vulgar might say, that they were "up to the time of day."

The catacombs often represent fishes with loaves as a sign of abundance, connected with the good Shepherd of the heavens, our lord and life-giver the sun, who turns water into wine, walks on the water, and rises from the dead. I think it quite possible such representations gave rise to the legends of feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, of the fish that so opportunely paid the taxes, and of the resurrected Lord eating broiled fish and honeycomb, and ascending to his native heavens with this provender stowed in his interior.

Major-General Furlong, in his *Rivers of Life* (vol. i., p. 246), says:

"The fish is universally worshipped in all lands as the most fecundative of all creatures; and where most valued, the superstitious have offered it in sacrifice to their gods, refusing to eat or injure it. Many a time I have travelled through a poor and barren country, where it is all mankind could do to live, and seen rivers and lakes teeming with fine fish which I dared not touch, or only so by stealth as night came on, much to the annoyance of my followers and myself, and the detriment of the people; for so do priests lay upon us burdens grievous to be borne in the name of their gods, making the poor cry out 'is religion a blessing?'"

While some abstained from fish, others partook of it as the sacred food, taken as a preparation for a following feast. Fish are known to be extraordinarily prolific. Ancient dietetics was largely based on the belief that animals noted for any peculiarity imparted their virtues to those who ate them. Tigers' flesh gave courage and that of the hare timidity. The use of fish in connubial feasts is still common, and we may be quite sure that those who first thought it proper and pious to eat fish on Venus Day, or Friday, adhered to a more ancient faith than that which praises those who make themselves eunuchs (Matt. xix. 12). In Japan a typical paper fish is suspended over the doorway of the house wherein a child has been born. Let the student also note what Lajard

* Mergan Kavanagh, in his curious work on the *Origin of Language and Myth*, vol. i., p. 277, says on 1 Sam. v. 4: "According to the marginal note in the Bible, the word *stump* is here used instead of the *fishy part*; by which we are allowed to infer that the part of Dagon which resembled a fish was respected. But why so? Because a fish was called after water, and water after life, of which it is a principal support; and life after the sun, the supposed author of existence, and which was anciently, as we have shown from the admissions of the learned, called a Savior. Hence a fish, though not called after *Savior*, may have often had a name not different from the one expressing this idea."

† And 2588 years previously.

says of the Friday worship of the Druses of Lebanon on p. 58 of his *Culte de Venus*. The Jews retain the custom of a Friday fish supper, as do religious Christians, and in especial monks and nuns, the modern *kadeshim*, do of a fish diet on *Dies Veneris*. Lenten fare is a preliminary to the celebration of the spring resurrection.

Students of Christian ichthyology may find further information in the works of Godfrey Higgins, Thomas Inman, and General G. J. R. Forlong. They will find the subject pervaded by what Trinculo calls "an ancient and fish-like smell."

J. M. WHEELER.

A SPECIAL FRIEND OF GOD'S.

THE claims urged on behalf of certain Bible characters have frequently proved a great difficulty with the defenders of popular theology. Unable to harmonise many of the actions of Bible heroes with the principles of modern ethics, orthodox advocates allege that the accounts given of these men in the Old Testament are merely "police reports"; that, like our newspapers, the Bible records the crimes and follies of its heroes, but does not endorse them. Unfortunately this is not so, for the Bible sanctions much of their questionable conduct. It is unfair to compare what are termed the "police reports" of the Bible with the police reports of our newspapers. The two are not in any way analogous. When our newspapers give a record of any great crime it is usually accompanied with a "leading article" denouncing the act or acts referred to. Where, however, are the condemnatory "leading articles" of the Bible? Is it where Noah's weakness and passion pass unrepented? Is it where Abraham's deception and dishonor meet with no rebuke? Is it where Moses is requested to commit reckless murder? Is it where Jacob is encouraged in his fraud? Is it where Jehu is rewarded for his deceit and murder? Is it where the spirit of the Lord prompts Samson to acts of cruelty and injustice? Is it where Jael, after killing her guest while he was asleep, is pronounced "Blessed above all women." Is it where Joshua, with the assistance of God, performs his works of devastation? Are these the proofs of the Bible condemnation of the crimes of its heroes? Even if it were admitted that the actions of these men, as recorded, are simply police reports, the taste of writers may be fairly questioned who could pen narratives in the indecent and coarse phraseology that we find employed by Bible writers. When indelicate cases are heard in our courts of justice the reports, if published at all, are usually issued to the public couched in language that will not offend the public taste, and this is done without the aid of any supposed supernatural inspiration.

If the alleged divine influence has such a marvellous beneficial effect on human conduct; if to "walk and talk with God" purifies the motives of man and promotes the rightness of his actions, it is but reasonable to suppose that those who are said to have been the particular friends of Jehovah would have been the very paragons of virtue and the exemplars of purity, gentleness, and humane behavior. But according to the Bible the very reverse of this is the fact. The men who are there represented as being the special favorites of God, his chosen associates, those whose conduct the deity approved and sometimes rewarded, are not characters which could be emulated to-day without violating truth and honor, and setting at defiance the instincts of exalted humanity.

Amongst God's personal friends was Moses, who is supposed to have been born the third hour of the morning of the seventh day of the month Adar, in the year 2368 after the Creation and the 130th year of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. For the par-

ticulars (such as they are) of his peculiar birth and his novel introduction into the royal household of Pharaoh, the reader is referred to the second chapter of Exodus. Cardinal Newman says: "The history of Moses is valuable to Christians, not only as giving us a pattern of fidelity towards God, of great firmness and meekness, but also as affording us a type or figure of our Savior Christ." The Bible also informs us that "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers xii. 3), and that he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts vii. 22). We learn from the same source that Moses was selected to be the leader and deliverer of God's own peculiar people, and at the same time to act as a kind of prime minister to the deity. He was, in fact, God's constant companion, adviser, and chief agent in all his principal doings. It will, therefore, be interesting to ascertain what was the character of this special friend of Jehovah's.

The first act ascribed to Moses after his training in Pharaoh's palace, is to slay a man, on what to say at least was very insufficient provocation. It appears that he saw an Egyptian striking one of his Jewish brethren, and at this Moses' cholera rose. His passion, however, did not cause him to suspend that craftiness of disposition which marked his whole life. For it was not until he had looked this way and that way, and himself seeing nobody, and thinking nobody saw him—that he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. Here we have the first law-giver of a great people commencing his public career by an act of reckless murder. The New Testament would have us infer (Acts vii. 24, 25) that this act was done from patriotic motives, and for the purpose of showing the Israelites that God intended to deliver them by the hand of Moses. But according to the Old Testament such an inference is not justified by fact. A true patriot who was about to avenge an injured brother would think little about his own safety as Moses did, for it was not until he supposed that no one was watching him that he killed the Egyptian; and it is difficult to understand how this act could prove to the Israelites that Moses was to be their deliverer when he did his best to keep the whole affair as secret as possible. It is apparent that Moses himself had no idea at that time of being Pharaoh's antagonist; for having committed the crime, the criminal fled from the wrath of Pharaoh. But Moses was sanctimonious. The next day, seeing two Hebrews striving together, he interfered by inquiring of one of the combatants, why he smote his fellow? The Hebrew immediately reminded Moses of the murder he had committed on the previous day, and very naturally repudiated his right to rebuke him, when only a few hours previously he had slain an Egyptian, which was by far the greater crime. Moses, overtaken with fear, and no doubt dreading Pharaoh, and finding he was discovered, fled to Midian, where he married a wife, Zipporah. On turning to Exodus iv. 24-26, the reader will find how the Lord attempted to kill his friend; also an amusing account of a scene upon the part of Zipporah with her son. Moses now becomes implicated with petty thefts, and the Jewish women are used as convenient tools to coax away under false pretences the jewels and trinkets from the Egyptian women. When the booty was collected, they, as the Americans would say, "skeddadled" with the whole of the sport. When such things are done in these days, the perpetrators are very properly punished. Moses, however, escaped punishment, being the servant of the Lord. But theft, even on a large scale, would not content a man who had commenced with murder when quite a stripling. Accordingly Moses goes hand in hand with God in all his wholesale murders. We find him the legislator of most cruel laws. For instance, here is a specimen of laws that were to be observed

in warfare, as given by this "meek" friend of God's:—

"When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them" (Deut. xx. 10-17).

If Moses had nothing to do with originating slavery, he certainly took a prominent part in regulating it. And in doing so he exhibited a most cruel and wanton nature. He describes with distinct minuteness the extent to which the Jews could hold slaves, the circumstances under which the slaveholders could buy them, and the gross injuries they could inflict upon their victims without exposing themselves to punishment, giving the slaveholders the liberty of forcing their female slaves into concubinage and of murdering others so long as they did it by a lingering death.

In Exodus xxxii. we read an account of an event in the life of Moses which stamps him at once as being passionate, cruel, and hypocritical. The facts briefly are these. Moses had just been having a warm debate with the Lord; God, who is everywhere, was not at hand in the valley or camp. Moses had therefore to go up to the top of a mountain to see God, although we are told no man could see him and live. Still, Moses saw him and lived. He also managed to convince God of the folly of his getting in a passion. According to the Bible the people rebelled through Moses being absent so long, and they demanded that Aaron should make them other gods. Aaron had no objection, provided they first brought their gold. If they wanted gods they had to do as many have to do at the present time—pay for them. God being a spirit, had the material organ to articulate to Moses on the mountain what was going on below, and to ask him to let him (God) alone that his wrath may wax hot, that he may consume the people. Moses, however, objected to this godlike fury, and using his persuasive powers, he made the unchangeable God repent of the evil he intended to do unto his people. Having settled matters thus far with the Lord, Moses departed to do a little business on his own account. He therefore came down from the mount carrying two valuable tables bearing "the testimony" written by God on both sides. On arriving at the camp Moses found the people amusing themselves by dancing; he also saw a calf which very much annoyed him—so much so that, instead of adopting the course that he had just before suggested to God and endeavoring to convince them of their error, he, disregarding the advice he had given to his superior, threw himself into a passion; his anger waxed hot, and he dashed the tables belonging to his deity beneath him and broke them in pieces. He then took the calf, burnt it in the fire, after which he ground it to powder and made the children of Israel partake of it. His cruel and foolish conduct did not end here, for we are immediately told he stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." And then he exclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay

every man, his brother and every man his companion and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." Now who can reconcile such reckless and outrageous slaughter as this with the statement that "the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were on the face of the earth?" The whole of this disgraceful transaction concludes by Moses assuring the people in that hypocritical manner too often indulged in by some orthodox believers at the present day, that he would go and make atonement for their sins. The result was that he sought another interview with the Lord, and the people were visited by a plague. What was this punishment inflicted for? According to the Bible it was Aaron who made the calf, why then should the people suffer for the crimes of their priest? After accusing Aaron of bringing the sin upon the people, and knowing that his colleague had made the unfortunate victims naked, what did Moses do? Did he punish the guilty? No. But he commanded the slaughter of 3000 of the people while the real offender (if the act was an offence) was allowed to go unpunished. The character of Moses can be summed up in a few words. He was a crafty, cruel and merciless law-giver, an ever ready tool in the hands of his superior to perpetrate the most inhuman acts. His chief glory consisted in slaughtering his fellow creatures and exterminating those upon whom he had fixed his vengeance. True he had at times so far steeped himself in human blood that the sight appalled him, and nature exercising her prerogative, bid him pause in his desolating and heart-rending career. But his cessations were of short duration, for either following the commands of his God or the promptings of his own nature, he resumed his devastating work, making widows and orphans, rendering homes and even whole cities miserable, and converting nation after nation into one huge slaughter-house. And this is one of those prophets put forward by a wise and beneficent God as a benefactor to the world and of whom the Bible says "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses (Deut. xxxiv. 10.) Let us hope for the sake of humanity that this statement is correct, for a second Moses after the Bible type would certainly be a terrible calamity and a deplorable misfortune.

CHARLES WATTS.

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

VI.—A POLITICIAN IN THE PULPIT.

THE famous "Institute"—erstwhile the "Chapel"—in South-place, Finsbury, is a building in which I have spent many happy and helpful hours. Originally the forum from which William Johnson Fox preached the mild philosophic Radicalism of a past generation, the Institute has in these latter days become the centre of practically Freethought propaganda, consecrated and adorned by the ceremonial concessions so dear to the heart of "respectable" well-to-do people. Since the departure of Moncure D. Conway from England the Institute arrangements have "wobbled" considerably. For a time it appeared probable that the "Ethical Culture" gospel of Dr. Stanton Coit would find a permanent home within its walls; but this anticipation has not been realised; and again the supply of teaching from the South-place platform is drawn in a more or less haphazard fashion from various quarters.

I was attracted to the Institute on March 6 by an announcement that Mr. J. Allanson Picton, M.P., would deliver a discourse on "Faith as a Virtue." Now, this matter of "faith" has always possessed a great deal of interest for me. I have heard good earnest Christians speak in this way to unbelievers: "You have faith in the honesty of a friend to whom

you lend money: therefore you should have faith in the parson when he tells you that Jonah swallowed the whale, or that Christ raised people from the dead." Of course, they don't put it in that bald way; but that is what the argument amounts to when you remove the trimmings. This quality or weakness called "faith," then, is a subject which I desire to understand, if understanding is to be compassed, and I accordingly sat at the feet of Mr. Picton, feeling assured that my time would not be misspent.

Perhaps it is hardly fair to describe Mr. Picton as a "politician," a term which is not devoid of evil associations. It would be more accurate to speak of him as a statesman, although not one of the first rank; for he is a student and a philosopher whose political conduct is guided by fundamental moral principles, not by the party exigencies of the hour. Mr. Picton has himself descended from the sleepy elevation of a Unitarian pulpit to the arena in which the social and political problems of this generation are being solved by the play of opposing forces. He carried into the South-place coterie a slight unconscious flavor of the platform style which, to me at least, was as refreshing as a whiff of sea-breeze.

The readers of the *Freethinker* may remember that the "services" at South-place Institute are modelled to some extent upon orthodox lines. The singing of eclectic hymns and anthems is mingled with readings appropriate to the subject of the discourse which follows them. Mr. Picton selected two passages: one from the writings of Herbert Spencer, in which the main idea was that the object of religion is that which lies at the back of human nature and of all things; the other was taken from the writings of an author who, as Mr. Picton informed us, was "greatly praised by Martin Luther." I did not catch the name of the gentleman, who is probably dead. The quotation from his writings was a quaintly-worded and somewhat verbose amplification of Paul's statement, "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part goes out." I failed to see much relevance in either reading, but I cheerfully attribute that to my own obtuseness.

Then we came to Mr. Picton's paper on "Faith as a Virtue," and I at once found, to my amazement and horror, that I had lost one-half of the matter—the half, moreover, which would *primâ facie* have been to me much more interesting. On the previous Sunday morning Mr. Picton had delivered a discourse on "Faith as a Vice," and I had known nothing of it! For a moment my reason tottered upon its throne; but lamentation was useless, and I determined to make the best of a distressing situation.

Coming, then, to the subject, Mr. Picton pointed out the difficulty of attaching a clear and definite meaning to words. In Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon there was a word which had two opposite meanings according to the circumstances in which it was employed. Sometimes it signified *to know*; at other times it meant *not to know*. Again, the word "simplicity" might be taken to mean silliness, or it might be used to denote the highest and most natural realisation in art. The word "loyalty," too, was taken in the time of the Stuarts, and is even taken in our own day, to signify a superstitious devotion to a more or less worthless family, in defiance of law; but loyalty was in reality obedience to law. Faith, in like manner, was a mischievous vice when it simply meant belief in spite of overwhelming evidence; but a true, intelligent faith was one of the highest virtues.

Mr. Picton then proceeded to give three illustrations of faith as a virtue. In the days of ancient Rome a certain general who had sustained defeat was adjudged worthy of honor by the citizens because he "had not despaired of the Republic." In the face of apparently hopeless reverse, the patriot had retained his faith in the power of his country to surmount all difficulties

and to triumph over all its foes. This faith was counted unto him for righteousness. The second example was drawn from contemporary manners. In the gossip of a club-room, a man might hear a disgraceful accusation made against one of his acquaintances. He would shrug his shoulders, and say, "Well, really! you surprise me!" and the incident would pass from his mind. But if A. heard such a charge made against his intimate friend B., he would at once repel the imputation with scorn and indignation. He would argue thus: From my knowledge of B., of his life and conduct, and his inmost heart, I cannot and will not believe him to be guilty of such a thing. This would be an example of faith as a virtue. Such faith, said Mr. Picton, is sometimes, but very rarely, betrayed. The third illustration was taken from a speech of Mr. John Bright, who, at a time when triumph seemed assured to the side of slavery in the American Civil War, proclaimed his belief in the ultimate victory of right and liberty. In this case Mr. Bright's faith rested on the constancy and inviolability of moral causation. That might well be called justification by faith. The common element in these three examples was a steadfast loyalty of soul, remaining true to the law governing each case.

Mr. Picton then entered upon a half-playful criticism of the pessimist view of life. Of course, in all societies there were some inveterate grumblers, men who held that everything was going to the dogs. Others were more sympathetic, more hopeful, ever eager to work for improvement and progress. Pessimism he (the speaker) always regarded as impossible to rational men. In our conception of the universe, the imagination might be projected backward into the illimitable past or forward into the illimitable future; but in either case we saw the same star-spangled canopy and the same orderly interaction of parts as we now see. Just as the mighty ocean is not disturbed by the beating of its waves upon the shore, so the universe continued its orderly evolutions through eternal space and time. But, if things were ever going from bad to worse, surely the universe itself would have gone to pieces long before this our day. Whatever may be our little joys or sorrows in this corner of time and space—"and I am free to let out a secret and to confess that I am very happy this morning," said Picton the Politician, with a merry twinkle in his eye (induced by the splendid Progressive victory in London)—the eternal order of the universe is not affected by them. The glimpses which we catch of the majestic character of Christ continually show his faith in "the Father," which to us is the order of the world. He is full of a child-like faith that all is well, as witness the very remarkable words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The Churches have been right in regarding faith as one of the highest virtues; but they have been utterly wrong in confounding faith with the acceptance of theological dogmas or with opinions of any kind. The truest, noblest faith was the maintenance of a right relation to the Eternal Order of which we are a part.

Thus far I have tried to place before my readers a fair representation of Mr. Picton's discourse; and I will now climb into the pulpit myself for a few moments in order to express my satisfaction in finding that, according to Mr. Picton's view, faith in its noblest form is possible even to the despised and outcast Atheist. An abiding confidence in the future of humanity is the impulse which prompts our work and sustains us in times of trial and difficulty. In the case of religious believers there is always a possibility of suspicion that a selfish motive, a *quid pro quo*, is at the bottom of devotion. They may suffer one per cent. here to gain 100 per cent. hereafter. But the Atheist cannot hope to share in the

fruition of his labor. Those who enter into his reward will never know that he existed. Even the chill comfort of posthumous appreciation is denied to him. Nevertheless, the Secular party counts amongst its members many men who, nearing the close of a long and active life, retain the generous enthusiasm, the unshaken confidence in their principles which has inspired them from the days of their youth. And I for one am proud that the cause which I hold dear can show such shining and conspicuous examples of Faith as a Virtue.

GEORGE STANDRING.

LETTER OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS, FILS,
To M. GEORGE BOYER, Editor of the "Petit Journal."

(Translated by A. WOHLGEMUTH.)

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is a very, very long time, about three weeks—three centuries at Paris—the 4th of July, 1890, since you addressed a very amiable letter through the columns of the supplement of the *Petit Journal* with reference to a prize of 1,000 francs to be awarded to the author of the best work in the French tongue about the following question: "The Struggle for Life."

You are afraid of the unhappy extension which Darwin's theory—that, besides, is generally misunderstood—has taken, and ask me to intervene in the debate—to thrust, as you express yourself, a solid stick into the wheels of the social carriage that runs towards the precipice.

As a journalist, you attach a greater importance to words than they actually possess. More than eighteen hundred years ago the problem in question has been solved by somebody, who was immediately put to death in order to teach him solving problems. "Love one another" said he that is still called the Son of God. A humorist of good wit, but whose name I do not remember—a proof that having wit is not of great advantage—a humorist, I say, remarked once that man read instead of "Aimez-vous les uns les autres" (Love one another), "Armez-vous les uns les autres" (Arm yourself against each other), and that he recommenced to make war with greater exasperation than before, this law of love itself furnishing a new pretext for bloody struggles that have probably not yet reached their end.

What this struggle for life is, my dear friend, Monsieur de la Palisse (Pat) will be better able to tell you than I: It is the universal and eternal struggle.

There is not only the physical struggle, but there is also the social, moral, intellectual, and spiritual struggle, not only to enjoy the earthly life, but also in order to ensure that other life which we have invented, and which is said to follow this life here, but as regards which, it must be said, we have only very vague foundations.

In all these different struggles, who is destined to be finally right? The strongest. And what do we try to be, all of us, in all conditions and in all phases of life? We try to be those strongest ones by natural want and by vital instinct. We do, now and then, nay often, wrong in order to arrive at our end, but we do not do it always, and our excuse is that we are even convinced that we do good or that the good is at least the end we are aiming at. When the Church, charged to spread the gospel, burned Jews and heretics, she did not doubt one moment but that she was acting for the welfare of mankind. So are even the best mistaken.

Some people like to reduce Darwin's interesting and ingenious theory to the proportions of some infamous villains and if they see an Eyraud who covets the money of a Gouffé and finds no better means to bring it into his possession than to hang Gouffé, with or without Gabrielle Bompard's noose they shout, "There, you see where Darwin's theories will lead to." This is childish. Eyraud was Cain, already before Darwin, and Gouffé was not Eyraud's brother.

All those that talk of Darwin—have they read his writings? It is doubtful. Darwin pretends with very tempting arguments, but without always irrefutably proving it, that all animated matter, from animals to plants, are in vital competition, and that individuals first, species after, the stronger kill the feebler. But he explains, at the same time, by what coincidence of immigration of place and of environment and always in favor of the group of the greater value, the development of the one proceeds on the destruction of the others. We have here not the necessary space to enter into the details of his thesis.

According to this, there is a law of nature against which we can do nothing, and to which man is subjected, like

plants and animals, because he forms a part of nature. They, however, obstinately consider (who? they? men!) some of them pretending that man received the precious gift of intellect with a heart and a soul from heaven; they obstinately consider, I say with him, as the result of reasoning and premeditation that which is in reality only one of the consequences—the supremest, if you like—of this universal law of instinct and of gravitation. Gravitation towards what? Towards God? Let us return quickly, as we should otherwise lose ourselves in the void, where the million of your readers have no desire of following us.

Among the most celebrated sayings of the Church is this one, "Man proposes, but God disposes." Do these words contain a truth? They ought to anyhow, as they come from one of the lights of the Church. If yes, we have only, in combining this truth with the one Darwin has derived from natural selection, to consider force as one of the means of God; and besides, it is one he employs. It is he who gives first the example of abusing force. Are you sure that a man, be he as depraved as you can possibly imagine him, would have the cruelty to make the world as it actually is? He leads us somewhere, wherever he likes, without telling us where and without heeding our complaint. Let him go on. He that kills me is stronger than I; but I have only not to fear death, and I am stronger than he. This is my last revenge. God wants this human force, apparently unjust, as he wants the lightning that kills the shepherds who have taken shelter under the trees, as he wants epidemics, contagions, and hereditary diseases. What can be done? He is the strongest. You will always be forced to return to this conclusion. You wish that injustice, tyranny, war, and all the manifestations of brutal force (which is said to be blind) disappear, and that the human race live in peace and joy, working all day long and reading the *Petit Journal* in the evening.

I too wish it, but I should like them to read the *Petit Journal* in the morning and go to the theatre in the evening. But in order to arrive at these happy ends, my dear friend, we should have to start by suppressing human foolishness, the direct outcome of which are ignorance, violence, murder, and war. This human foolishness is so profound, so widespread, so tenacious, that it is certainly, too, one of the indispensable factors of blind-folded providence that leads man and the world.

Foolishness is the cause, force the means, truth and happiness the end; and the world is not likely to finish yet. Try to get out of that if you can.

Meanwhile let us sift and discuss; in that manner we can always pass a moment or so. But it is not I who will solve the problem of universal harmony. Only a great ruler of an empire could attempt this solution, but he should have the power of Nero with the soul of Jesus. Count therefore no more on him than on me.—Faithfully yours,

A. DUMAS.

ACID DROPS.

Archdeacon Sinclair has been holding forth on Church Schools. He thinks the Church Schools will have to go, and that the Church party must get on the School Boards in order to prevent a "godless education." "The Secularists," he says, "treat religion with suspicion and disdain, and consider it to be nothing but antiquated superstition. They have in France banished the very name of God and of religion from the schools, and they force all children alike to attend these godless institutions." This statement only shows the Archdeacon's ignorance. There are private as well as public schools in France, just as there are in England.

Another statement of Archdeacon Sinclair's was this. What is it, he asked, that holds India for the English? Their armies, their ships, their civil servants? No, it is Christ. Well now, let the armies, ships, and civil servants come away from India, and see how long Christ will hold it for the English.

"General" Booth's tour in India was apparently not such a glowing success as he pretends. His exposition of the Social Scheme was listened to with respect and some admiration, but his lecture on "The Religion of Humanity" was thought a complete failure. Some of the most educated Hindus said "he stooped to all the tricks of a demagogue."

The *Standard* makes an awful suggestion. It is that "General" Booth should go into Parliament and represent a Fifth party. The S.A. at present eschews politics, but nevertheless all its force is available for Prohibitionists. Booth's party would be energetic in suppressing all sinners who disagreed with Booth.

As a fruit of the Salvation Army, Mr. P. O'Brien has given notice in the House of Commons that on the earliest opportunity he will introduce a Bill to abolish the clauses of the Catholic Emancipation Act which prohibit religious processions passing through the streets.

It was shameful bad manners of Booth's doers not to hear the "General" explain his social schemes, but when we read that wood-choppers and others thrown out of work by Booth's competition took part in the gathering at the Grecian, we cannot wonder it was noisy.

A correspondent of the *Christian World* complains of the "coarse and sensuous spiritual songs" that are still in use by the Wesleyan Methodists. He also states that after a Sunday evening sermon recently in a Wesleyan Methodist chapel, the minister gave out a hymn headed for "For Condemned Malefactors," which was "sung with solemn unction by a large and very respectable audience."

Principal Fairbairn also protests against certain Christian hymns. In his last sermon at Mansfield College Chapel, before sailing for America, he said there were "modern hymns, full of loathsome lusciousness." They say "sweet Savior," "precious Jesus," and "dear Christ," and they "make men utterly feeble, flaccid, and sentimental." True. But is not the religion they express also feeble, flaccid, and sentimental?

"Most readers," says the *Christian World* in a review of Sir W. Muir's book on *The Caliphate*, "will be astonished to find that for nearly a century after Mahomet the leaders of Islam were tolerant men." But why will the reader be astonished? Simply because he has been stuffed with the lie that Christianity is a sweet, gentle, mild, and tolerant religion, while Mohammedanism is cruel, savage, and persecuting; whereas a study of past history clearly proves the very opposite—at least relatively. It is safe to say that the "leaders of Christendom" have very rarely been tolerant. Monarchs and statesmen who have displayed that virtue in Christian countries have generally been sceptics or indifferentists.

Prophet Baxter, his colleagues and his dupes, are very scurvily treated by the *Christian World*. It denounces them as fools or worse, yet it admits that "It is now generally recognised that the Early Church, including the Apostles, looked for the Second Advent in their own day." Were the apostles, then, fools or worse? Or had they a special privilege to be absurd, which does not belong to Baxter and the Baxterites.

Our Christian contemporary refers to Napier, the great Scottish mathematician, who invented logarithms, and who constructed out of Daniel and the Apocalypse a theory which brought the end of the world to the year 1786. Of course the event did not come off, and Napier's failure is a sufficient reply to those who quote certain "scientific" authorities on the subject of prophecy.

At an address delivered by the Rev. M. Baxter, otherwise known as Prophet Baxter, at Middleton Hall, Upper-street, Islington, N., on Wednesday, March 9, after a number of questions had been put by Salvationists, Christadelphians, Christian Evidence lecturers, and, in fact, Christians of all denominations, and to all of which questions Mr. Baxter gave evasive replies, or replies which evidently did not satisfy his audience, Mr. Ward, of the National Secular Society, asked whether, seeing Mr. Baxter had admitted having made so many mistakes as to the final ending of all things, it was not reasonable to come to the conclusion that he himself was not quite certain about it. The question was not so much as to the mistake in his prophecy, but whether he really believed it himself. (This question was received by the audience with uproarious applause.)

Mr. Ward went on to say that he thought the matter should be brought to a practical issue, and proposed to put

Mr. Baxter to the following practical test. Had he (Mr. Baxter) sufficient belief in his prophecy that April 11, 1901, was to be the final ending of all things, to execute a deed of gift handing over to some charitable institution all that he might be possessed of on May 1 of that year? After a burst of applause from the audience, Mr. Baxter hesitatingly replied that he should of course have no objection to do so, as no one would be then alive. Whereupon Mr. Ward said that was not the question. Would he do it? If so, he (Mr. Ward) would be pleased to become one of the trustees. Mr. Baxter immediately left the platform, leaving another gentleman to talk the audience out, and they immediately commenced to disperse.

Here are two items from the *Kent Messenger*. One of the services in memory of the late Duke of Clarence was attended by three persons—the parson, the clerk, and the parson's manservant. It was just enough to make up the "two or three gathered together," and the sky-pilot was just able to say "dearly beloved brethren." The other item is an instance of East Kent orthodoxy. The Chatham Assistants' Bible Class has unanimously resolved that no one who rejects the doctrine of three distinct persons in the Trinity shall take part in the Society's meetings and debates. The three-headed deity is safe in that quarter.

Talmage has engaged in patching up and mending "the holes in the Bible." It's a large job, and as all the gospel ministers in the world have been engaged at it for several hundred years, the holes growing larger and more ragged edged all the time, the prospect for the Brooklyn clown's mending them is not cheering. No one desires the holes mended, for they now serve an admirable purpose for the ministers to slip through and come out in other places, like the jack-in-a-box. It has been patched and tinkered now until, like a beggar's rags, it is difficult, aye impossible, to tell the texture of the original.—*Progressive Thinker*.

The annual tea meeting of the Stephenson-street Church, North Shields, wound up by a vote of thanks moved by Mr. Clarke, "to God Almighty for his blessing vouchsafed during the past years." Mr. T. Mackenzie seconded, and it was "carried by acclamation." The Almighty must be highly gratified, and though no response is reported, he doubtless bowed his acknowledgments for the compliment.

The Rev. Ythil Barrington, vicar of St. Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich, has been rating his congregation for not subscribing more liberally to the church funds. He finds £4 14s. a miserable collection for a Sunday morning, and called upon all good people to deny themselves something during the solemn season of Lent and devote the proceeds to his church.

In the upper Assyrian room of the British Museum, case B 36, there is a very ancient Assyrian seal, which Mr. Pinches says cannot be less than 4,000 years old. Upon it is represented a tree with hanging fruit, and upon the right side of the tree a man is sitting, and on the left a woman behind whom is a serpent. The woman's hand is stretched out towards the tree as though persuading her husband to take some of the fruit for his hand is also extended towards the tree. This is cited by the Rev. S. Kinns, author of *Graven in the Rock*, as a striking confirmation of the story in Genesis. Mr. Kinns should remember that the seal is very far older than any writing in the Bible. He should moreover consider that as engraved ideographs precede writing it is just possible that the story found in the Bible has been made up from some such representations as that on the ancient Assyrian seal, and that possibly the original meaning of the symbols depicted, may have been mistaken by the later writer.

The list of the Lord's misdoings is continually augmenting. A colliery explosion in Belgium, destroying two hundred lives; a blizzard in America, wrecking property and freezing many persons to death; snow-storms in Wales, leading to heavy mortality among the lambs; typhus in Mexico, floods in Spain, distress in Austria, Hungary, and India, and famine in Russia, remind us that "God is good, the Lord is kind."

Rev. John M. Laird is in gaol at East St. Louis. Before his promotion to gaol, Laird ran a Methodist church at Gillespie, Ill. On his own confession he tried to levy 1,000 dols.

blackmail on a prominent man of East St. Louis, on the charge of intimacy with his wife. Upon being arrested, Laird confessed that he had slandered his wife and family and the party whom it was attempted to blackmail. By their fruits ye shall know them.

The orthodox Church in Russia has the usual Christian ideas of toleration and free discussion. It permits discussion with the Stundists, but the arguments of the Nonconformists must be first submitted in writing to the provincial ecclesiastical authority, who of course expunges any telling point. Moreover, persons converting members of the orthodox religion to Stundism are liable to severe punishment. The Russians have had Christianity some nine hundred years, but it has not yet made them tolerant.

Professor Blackie tells a story of two Scotchmen who were walking fifteen miles to a parish church in Skye. As it was the blessed Sabbath they walked on for some miles without exchanging a word. At length the younger one said, "It's a verra fine day." The elder one looked at him and replied, gravely, "Yes, it is a fine day; but is this a day to be talking about days?"

Canon Fleming's funeral sermon on the poor dear Duke of Clarence has had a big sale as a pamphlet. It concludes with the following bit of most superlative blasphemy:—

'Tis finished! All is finished!
His fight with death and sin;
Fling open wide the golden gates
And let the VICTOR — in!

Mr. Gladstone has written a letter to the late Mr. Spurgeon's private secretary. "There are profound interests at stake," he says, "which I had hoped he might have lived to promote with his great earnestness and power." We presume this is an allusion to the doctrines of future punishment and the inspiration of the Bible. On these subjects Mr. Gladstone is old-fashioned enough for a country parson or a professional revivalist.

"Supreme Wisdom has ordered it otherwise," says Mr. Gladstone. Which means, if it means anything, that although profound interests are at stake, God has deprived us of the aid of one who would have promoted them with great earnestness and power. Is this generous? Is it the action of a Father?

The *Carrier Dove* continues the exposure of M^{de}. Blavatsky in connection with "Spiritualism and the Wisdom-Religion," by Wm. Emmette Coleman. Those who wish to be fully acquainted with the career of the eminent adventuress must not miss these articles.

Sir Joseph Fayrer lecturing to the old ladies of the Victoria Institute on Serpent Worship and Mortality from serpent bites in India, said that the loss of human life from this cause alone could not now be rated at less than 20,000 annually. Evidently our heavenly Father has considerable regard for his snakes. What the aforesaid old ladies thought of it is not reported in the newspapers, but may find a place in the transactions of the Institute.

Mr. Dent, a veteran Freethinker, sends Mr. Wheeler the following illustration of Providence:—"Sir,—Your interesting summary of events in 1842 recalls an experience. I had been long ill, and spent a week at Queenwood, where I was in touch with Robert Owen, Lloyd Jones, and others. I made a voyage to Hull in 1843, and, seeing the steamer Pegasus preparing to leave for Leith, I took a passage in her and made a very pleasant trip, intending to return by her on the following Wednesday. But on that day I encountered Thomas Paterson, just arrived from London for duty in Edinburgh. He, knowing no one in Edinburgh, prevailed on me to defer my return till Saturday, pressing on me two shillings to eke out my means. That Wednesday night the Pegasus foundered on the Fern Islands, with great loss of life, Elton the actor amongst some fifty or sixty others. 'Providence'?"

"My friend," said a solemn man, "have you ever done ought to make the community in which you live the better for your living in it?" "I have done much, sir," replied the other, humbly, "to purify the homes of my fellow beings."

"Ah," continued the solemn man, with a pleased look, "you distribute tracts?" "No, I clean carpets."

A correspondent of the *Two Worlds* writes: "Just a line to let you know the sort of stuff the Rev. Bentley preaches. He is the minister at the Wesleyan Chapel, Luton. He told his hearers last night 'That if men like Voltaire, Tom Paine, and Charles Bradlaugh were to get into heaven, they would turn it into hell, and give Jesus Christ three months' notice to quit.'" Mr. Bentley has evidently been affected by the preaching of Secularism at Luton and finds his craft in danger.

The Rev. Alex Craib, who has been writing on "America and the Americans," finds that Uncle Sam unites the worship of God and Mammon. Dollars are the voice of prayer in the morning and the voice of thanksgiving at night. John Wanamaker, who runs the biggest Sunday-school in the country, and pirates the *Encyclopædia Britannica* without paying the authors anything for their labor, and as postmaster tries to suppress Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*, is a good type of the average pious American.

The old Lord's Day Observance Act, passed [in the pious reign of Charles II., has been trotted out at Ipswich to worry a poor hairdresser, who shaved some of her Majesty's subjects on Sunday, much to the detriment of the realm and the annoyance of the Sunday monopolists. The magistrates imposed a fine of one shilling.

A prominent Spiritist materialising medium named Archer has been exposed as a fraud at Chicago, and all his paraphernalia used in personating spirits, captured. Colonel Bundy, editor of the spiritist *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, says "There is not a materialising show in America that is entitled to confidence." We believe it.

Dr. Pentecost, an American missionary, has been preaching the gospel in India, and his Christian "meekness" does not seem to captivate the natives. A writer in the *Hindu* protests against his gibes and sneers, and says that Hindus are grieved at constantly hearing themselves spoken of as "heathens" and their country as "a land of heathen darkness."

The Pope is much interested in the reactionary Education Bill in Germany, which he sees will open the door to clerical influence in the schools and enable the Vatican to obtain preponderating power in the State. Rome always uses its acquisitions as a stepping-stone to demand more.

Some of the churches have been holding "thanksgiving services on the departure of the influenza epidemic." "Thank you for going away" is a back-handed compliment to the deity.

Mr. E. A. Baldwin, schoolmaster and church organist of Attleborough, Nuneaton, had the audacity to smoke in the presence of the vicar (the Rev. E. A. Cooke). The parson entered his house and stood aghast at this unholy insolence. Mr. Baldwin has to resign his situation as organist.

Sir Morgan O'Doherty, the epicure, was slightly profane. He said printers' devils were a blank nuisance and blue devils blankable; the only devil worth a "d" was a slice of roasted ham, basted with Madeira and spiced with cayenne pepper.

Mr. Stead's *Review of Reviews* for March 15 contains a character sketch of the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon. It is written in the usual interesting style, but it does not elevate one's idea of Spurgeon's intellect. The portraits, too, are far from fascinating. The youthful Spurgeon of 1855 has a certain cocky, quack-doctory expression; and the older Spurgeon of 1878 looks terribly gross and commonplace.

The pictures of Spurgeon's house indicate that his lines were cast in pleasant places on this side of Jordan. He appears to have had plenty of material consolation while journeying through this miserable vale of tears. Charles Bradlaugh's earthly home was a poor affair in comparison with Charles Haddon Spurgeon's. And now the latter has a heavenly mansion too!

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, March 20, Exchange Hall, Wolverhampton: at 11, "Is Christianity the Friend of the People?"; at 3, "Manning, Spurgeon, and Bradlaugh"; at 7, "The Follies of Theosophy."

Monday, March 21, Co-operative Hall, Winwick-street, Warrington, at 8, "Oration on Charles Bradlaugh."

Thursday, March 24, Hall of Science, Old-street, London: at 8, "God the Son."

March 27, Hall of Science; 29, Bethnal Green; 31, Hall of Science.

April 3 and 10, Hall of Science; 17, Sheffield; 24, Hall of Science.

May 1, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—March 20 (morning and evening), Hall of Science, London; 22 and 23, public debate at Sheffield; 27, Birmingham. April 3, Manchester; 10 and 17, Birmingham; 24, Sheffield. May 1 and 8 (morning and evening) Hall of Science; 15 and 22, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

A. W. O.—We are obliged to you for the pamphlet by C. R. Parsons of Bristol. It hardly calls for notice, however. Pleased to hear that you learn from friends in Bristol how the recent debate sowed seeds of Freethought; also that you have got three new subscribers for us among your shopmates.

JOSEPH BROWN.—See paragraphs. Mr. Foote has written to you on the other matter. We hope the engineer's strike will soon be over. It seems a pity that the French system of conciliation boards does not obtain in England.

W. JENKINSON.—Sorry to hear of the severe illness in your family last year, but glad to hear that, although no longer secretary of the Leyton Branch, you are still an active member of the committee.

E. T. B.—Under consideration.

A. T. DIPPER.—It is painful to learn that you have to find a new situation in consequence of your assisting in the stand against the Loader prosecution. We hope your advertisement will bring you what you require.

REPORT.—The time and place of Mr. Foote's lectures are printed at the top of the first column on our ninth page weekly. We take note of your suggestion.

PAT.—We do oppose priestcraft, but, as Voltaire said, it is useless to do that without attacking the dogmas on which it rests.

ELY.—The idea was pictorially illustrated in one of our old special numbers.

J. T. WALTERS.—Mr. Foote is nearly himself again. He hopes to pay Merthyr a visit shortly. No doubt a good Branch could be established there.

W. LAPPAGE.—Thanks for the extracts.

W. G. RENN.—See paragraph. The better the day the better the deed.

A DAMNED SINNER.—(1) You ask us if we should have believed the story of the Resurrection if it had been recorded by every historian who lived at the time. We answer—The historians didn't record it, and we cannot reply to hypothetical questions. (2) We do not give opinions about other English Freethought journals.

W. F. EDWARDS.—Paragraph inserted. Your former notice must have miscarried.

S. THORN.—Cuttings are always welcome.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) We know nothing of Dr. Kennedy's book. (2) You are mistaken if you suppose it makes no difference whether a man's opinions are true or false. Christians and Freethinkers are bound to differ, in exact proportion to their honesty, on many questions—moral, social and political.

G. HARDIX.—The law subjecting people to penalties for not going to church is still on the Statute Book.

J. NEATE, 388 Bethnal Green-road, London, E., will be glad to receive the present address of W. Warren, formerly of Francis-terrace, Upper Clapton.

A. MEEK, newsagent, Markhouse-road, Walthamstow, supplies this journal and other Secular publications.

J. TRENCHARD.—Mr. Gott is secretary of the Bradford Branch. You may rely upon his treating you honestly. Persons who have ordered from his advertisement assure us they have had good value for their money.

W. HOLLAND.—(1) The last time Mr. Foote's height was taken was early in 1883 in Newgate Prison. He was 5ft. 10½in. in his shoes. (2) Thanks for obtaining twelve subscribers for us in two years.

A. H. B.—The poem you refer to, "The Atheist's Grave," is printed on one of our Tracts. Mr. Forder will supply you with any quantity at sixpence per hundred.

H. THORP.—The verse is not without merit, but we cannot find space for it in this journal. Good verse cannot be written at the first start, any more than shoes can be made by a week-old apprentice.

BRUTUS.—Pleased to hear from one of our converts. We fear the two pursuits are hardly compatible. He who desires to serve Freethought on the platform and in the press must "scorn delights and live laborious days." He must also have plenty of courage and resolution, for the road is difficult and full of hardship.

J. KEAST.—Your letter is indeed "good news from Bristol." See paragraph.

W. H. WHITNEY, secretary of the Derby Branch, sends the following resolution passed at a members' meeting last Sunday: "That this Branch expresses its unshaken confidence in Mr. G. W. Foote and thoroughly agrees with the action he has taken in the scheme for acquiring a suitable Memorial to Charles Bradlaugh."

S. H. ALISON.—Thanks for copy of the West Ham Branch's resolution of confidence in Mr. Foote and his policy as President. Mr. Foote is quite sure he has the confidence of the N. S. S. He hopes the Branches will not trouble to pass any more resolutions.

MISS E. VANCE, 24 Caroline-street, Camden Town, N.W., writes that the Milton Hall Amateur Dramatic Club has one or two vacancies for members of the N. S. S.

E. JAGGER.—"Pillars of the earth" are spoken of in 1 Sam. ii. 8; Job ix. 6. (See also Job xxxviii. 4, 5, 6.) Psalms lxxv. 3. (See also Psalm cii. 25). "Ends of the earth" are mentioned in many places, as 1 Sam. ii. 10; Job xxviii. 24; Psalm lix. 13; Prov. xxx. 4; Isaiah xl. 28; Jer. xvi. 19, etc.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Fritankaren—Truthseeker—Lichtfreund—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—Western Figaro—Boston Investigator—Freedom—Liberty—Der Arme Teufel—Progressive Thinker—Cosmopolitan—Flaming Sword—Better Way—Echo—Ironclad Age—Lucifer—Crossbearer—Critic—Ipswich Journal—Shield's Daily Gazette—Merthyr and Dowlais Times—Suffolk Chronicle—La Verité—Watts's Literary Guide—Auckland Times and Herald—Kensington News—Juvenile Missionary Herald—Sunday Chronicle—Twentieth Century—Open Court.

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

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.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

People are beginning to find out that the *Freethinker* is a good advertising medium. It will be some time, however, before we have to decline advertisements for want of space. We are still open to receive them in large or small quantities. Those who neglect us in this respect stand in their own light. The circulation of the *Freethinker* is steadily improving, and the paper goes into all classes of society in every part of the United Kingdom, to say nothing of the Colonies.

Mr. Foote's special course of four lectures on the Life of Christ opened at the London Hall of Science last Thursday evening (March 10). Owing to the brief notice the Christian Evidence Society had not been able to send a representative. Some good-tempered opposition, however, was offered by a stranger in the body of the hall. The second lecture of this course is to be delivered on Thursday, March 17, the special subject being "The Mythical Christ." Mr. Engstrom, the Christian Evidence Society's secretary, has arranged to send the Rev. Frederic Belton, senior curate of Chelsea, who will divide with the lecturer the hour allowed for discussion. Mr. Engstrom hopes to make suitable arrangements for the two remaining lectures.

Capital audiences assembled in the Manchester Secular Hall on Sunday. In the morning the chair was taken by Mr. Jones. Mr. Foote's lecture was on "Secularism and its Enemies: Black and White." Despite the severe weather the meeting was an unusually good one for a morning. It included the chairman of Celestine Edwards's committee and two other members. Each of these gentlemen took part in the discussion. One of them said that he had no objection to polygamy; he didn't see why a man shouldn't have more than one wife if he liked. This declaration was of course greeted with shouts of laughter, for the negro champion's

strong point against Secularism is the absurd objection that it "wants to tamper with marriage and brutalise women."

One thing Celestine Edwards's friends found it impossible to do. They could not explain how it is he boasts that no one will meet him in debate, while at the same time he fences every challenge of the Secularists. Probably he knows his own weakness. As a matter of fact, he is curiously ignorant, if we may judge by his pamphlets. Were it not for his color we believe he would attract dozens instead of thousands of listeners. There is something novel about a negro preaching Christianity to white men, and Edwards is causing a temporary sensation. A new Christian Evidence Society is being formed in Manchester, which is to sweep "infidelity" out of the city. That is the prospectus we believe, but it will never be realised. The truth is, the more the Christians oppose Secularism the more it flourishes.

Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture was presided over by Mr. Hemingway. In the evening Mr. Sam Standing took the chair and made a strong appeal on behalf of the projected South Lancashire Federation. The hall was packed in every part by a most enthusiastic audience. The lecture was on "Manning, Spurgeon, and Bradlaugh."

A good collection was made at Manchester for the N. S. S. General Fund. We are happy to report also that the Branch is making excellent progress. It has more members than ever, and its financial position is much improved.

To-day (March 20) Mr. Foote lectures at Wolverhampton. On Monday evening he pays Warrington a first visit under the auspices of the Cheshire Branch. The subject chosen is the Oration on Charles Bradlaugh. No doubt all the readers of this journal in the Warrington district will attend, to hear Mr. Foote and pay honor to his great predecessor in the President's chair.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured at the London Hall of Science last Sunday. There was a much improved audience in the morning and a large gathering in the evening. Both lectures were very warmly applauded. Mr. Watts occupies the same platform again to-day (March 20), both morning and evening.

The public discussion between the Rev. Dr. McCann and Mr. Charles Watts, on Secularism and Christianity, will take place in the Music Hall, Sheffield, on Tuesday and Wednesday next, March 22 and 23. Both gentlemen being well-trained debaters, the encounter is looked forward to with great interest. The demand for tickets, we are informed, is very large.

Mr. Holyoake informs us that he has had the pleasure of visiting Baskerville Hall, Birmingham, to deliver the lecture which he was prevented delivering in December. He found the hall and the dwelling part occupied by Mr. Watts improved in a degree quite equal to the expectations which must have been raised in the minds of readers by the notices which have from time to time appeared in the *Freethinker*. The repainting of the hall, the erection of a large stove which sufficiently warms it, give it a creditable air of brightness and comfort. The subject of the evening lecture was "The Grounds of Public and Civic Interest in Freethought." The audience was larger than usual. Mr. Holyoake would have lectured to the National Secular Society in the morning, but the arrangements were not matured.

Mr. Holyoake had previously delivered two lectures to the National Secular Society at Manchester, when he was the guest of Mr. Hartley. He met at the hall Mr. Sam Standing, whose acquaintance he had not previously made. Mr. Holyoake was interested in his animation and readiness as an agitator, and thought him "built that way."

The following evening Mr. Holyoake, Mr. Daniel Baker, and Mr. Watts were entertained by Mr. Carter at dinner at the Grand Hotel. Some influential friends were invited, the object being to discuss the means of rendering the Baskerville Hall a centre of Midland Secularism.

The Finsbury Branch is going to celebrate Good Friday in a most unorthodox fashion. On the bogus anniversary of the Crucifixion it will hold its annual tea party and smoking concert at the Hall of Science. Tea on the table at 5;

concert at 7. Ladies are "specially invited." The tickets, one shilling each, can be obtained at the Hall, or of W. G. Renn, 12 Cambridge-terrace, St. Peter's-street, Islington, N.

The *Merthyr and Dowlais Times* gives a good report of the lectures delivered by Mr. Stanley Jones as substitute for Mr. Foote, and also prints in full Mr. Foote's letter to the Merthyr Secularists.

A very large audience assembled at the Chatham Hall, Battersea, on Monday evening to hear the debate between the Rev. T. Sutherland and Mr. W. Heaford. The rev. gentleman proved a very courteous opponent, and good feeling prevailed right through the debate. Mr. Heaford enunciated the principles of Secularism, compared them with the teachings of Jesus Christ (particularly the Sermon on the Mount), and showed what a foolish and impracticable guide the latter were to mankind. The Rev. Sunderland found it rather difficult to reply, and wandered rather away from the subject, going through the lives of eminent Freethinkers, forgetting that the debate was on principles, not men, and that many Christians had not lived very upright lives. Mr. Heaford's denunciation of Christian teaching as found in the Bible made the godly part of the audience "sit up." Mr. Smith, a local Christian and schoolmaster, presided in a very able and impartial manner.

A further debate between the two disputants will probably be arranged at some future date; the subject to be "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Progress is being made with the Guarantee Fund for keeping Mr. Sam Standing at Freethought work in Manchester and the neighborhood. We hope the Fund will be supported promptly as well as generously by the local Freethinkers. Mr. Standing is bent on breaking new ground. Next Tuesday (March 22) he is to start a new Branch at Pendlebury by lecturing in the Co-operative Hall, at 7.30, on "Atheism and Life."

A Branch of the N. S. S. is to be formed at Ashford. Freethinkers desiring to join it are invited to attend a meeting this evening (March 20) at 7, at Mr. J. Edmonds's, Savings Bank-court, High-street, opposite the Co-operative Stores. Those who cannot be present, but will assist later on, should communicate with Mr. W. J. Edwards, 45 Lower Denmark-road, South Ashford, Kent.

The Spennymoor Secular Society held a successful social gathering in the Central Hall, Dundas-street, last Monday. The *Auckland Times and Herald* gave a report.

The pious gentlemen who flatter themselves that Freethought has no influence in Bristol may soon be undeceived. On Sunday evening a good meeting of Freethinkers took place at St. James's Hall. It was decided to form a Branch of the National Secular Society, and thirty-five persons gave in their names for membership. Mr. J. Keast was elected secretary, and Mr. K. Hunt as treasurer. Many other persons have promised to join the new Branch, which will carry on as active propaganda of Freethought as is possible in a city like Bristol. It is Mr. Foote's intention to go down and deliver a course of lectures.

All members of the Finsbury Park Branch should attend the special general meeting at Rook-street at 7 this evening (March 20). A very important question has to be determined.

Mr. Kenner, M.A., lecturing at the Jews' College on Philo, described the purpose of that philosopher and alleged contemporary of Christ as "to show that Judaism could be put into the mould of Hellenic culture." Philo shows that Judaism was broadening at the time when Christianity took its rise. Mr. Alfred Cohen, the chairman, mentioned that the Palestinian Jews had been so opposed to translations of their sacred books that they banned the Septuagint version, and ordained a fast on 8th Tebeth to keep their shame in remembrance.

An immense mass meeting in favor of the Sunday opening of the World's Fair was held in Chicago on Feb. 27, under the auspices of the American Secular Union. The meeting was presided over by Judge Waite, and addresses were given

by Mrs. M. A. Freeman, Dr. Juliet Severance, T. B. Wakeman, B. F. Underwood, and T. J. Morgan. The motto hung over the speakers' stand was, "The Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."

The South Shields Guardians had a letter from the Convocation of York, suggesting a chaplain, the building of a chapel, and otherwise making spiritual provision for the inmates of workhouses. The guardians peremptorily decided that the letter should lie on the table.

The Hull *Critic* contains the report of a lecture by Mr. Conrad Naewiger, delivered before the Hull Sunday Association on the subject of "Atheism Philosophically Considered."

A convention of delegates of the French Freethought Federation will be held at the Salle de l'Ermitage, 29 Rue de Jussieu, Paris, on Sunday, April 17. The proceedings will include the election of the central council.

The *Bulletin Mensuel* of the French Federation gives a report of the *réunion* at the Tivoli, Vauxhall. It was noticeable for the number of deputies to the French Chamber who were present and spoke. These included M. Gustav Hubbard, president; MM. Baulard, Chassaing and Lavy. Among the other speakers was Maria Deraismes. Resolutions were passed in favor of an active propaganda for the separation of Church and State.

The Newcastle Conference sub-committee held a meeting on Sunday to make preliminary arrangements. A local guarantee fund has been started, and it is believed that all the expenses will be raised without calling upon the N. S. S. Executive for a single farthing.

Secular lecturers who want to lecture on Sundays only in the Tyneside are informed that they must communicate with the Branch secretaries. Those who want to make a tour in the district must place themselves in the hands of the North Eastern Secular Federation's secretary.

THE DAWN OF SCIENCE.

DURING the first sixteen centuries of Christian history little if anything was done towards promoting the well-being of the masses. Kings and priests had conducted the affairs of the world with a high hand, and the result was that corruption in the Church abounded; luxury and vice characterised those in authority, while ignorance and misery existed to an appalling extent among the people.* Whenever a brave man appeared with courage enough to proclaim an unpopular truth he was persecuted to an almost unbearable extent; and if he still persisted in making himself unpleasant to those in authority, was subjected to physical torture, which often culminated in death.

In the sixteenth century the bravest of the sons of men appeared—Giordano Bruno; and the terrible fate he met is one of the most pathetic chapters in history. And what was his crime? He dared to challenge the pretensions of priests; he dared to think for himself; he dared to formulate his own views of the universe; and having expressed his thoughts, he dared to defend them. Giordano Bruno was a man of science; his observations of natural phenomena led him to repudiate the teachings of the Bible. He was wise enough to see that ancient ignorance and modern science would not harmonise—especially the astronomical aspect of the subject, which he had made a special study—and courage enough to say so. And though Bruno was tortured and martyred by malicious priests and cowardly bigots, the truths he uttered did not die with him. No; truth may be crushed to earth for a while, but it is certain in the fulness of time to rise again and take root in more fertile soil.

The sixteenth century saw the introduction of science into Europe. Catholicism as the great religious power had begun to lose its influence over the masses. The Saracens had invented the method of making

paper from linen rags; the Venetians had introduced into Europe the art of printing, which they had learned in China;† and with the introduction of the art of printing, Catholicism received its severest blow. Previously the Catholic Church had monopolised all power. Now the printing press was to play an important part in the world's history; and in proportion as the influence of the press strengthened, that of the Church naturally lost it power. But Catholicism did not give in without a struggle. On the contrary it fought with desperate energy. As soon as the tendency of the press to weaken its power was recognised, it got up all sorts of restraints in the form of censorship. It claimed the right to examine into the contents of books before they were printed; and fines and punishments were meted out to printers who dared to print, and publishers who dared to sell, any books that contained a sentence in the slightest degree derogatory to the orthodox faith. So complete was this censorship that "a bull of excommunication was issued in 1501 by Alexander VI. against printers who should publish pernicious doctrines."‡ Before a book could be issued, therefore, the writer, or printer, or both, had to get a certificate to say that it was a pious or godly production, containing nothing calculated to disturb the tender susceptibilities of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Despite all such precautions, however, the truth would sometimes leak out. In course of time the people found a mode of exchanging ideas which culminated in the production of a sort of ancient form of our modern newspaper. That discovery enabled the people to place their feet upon the first rung of the ladder of freedom. The people cultivated the art of reading, which in the course of time became almost general among European nations. In this and the subsequent century several important causes led to substantial material progress—the mariner's compass and the discovery of America by Columbus, and the circumnavigation of the earth by Magellan. This last achievement was most important, since it destroyed once and for ever one of the chief teachings of the Catholic Church, viz., the dogma that this earth is flat and that the sun and the innumerable stars that stud the heavens were placed there by God to act as perpetual illuminators to this globe. Moreover, the discovery of America opened out a wide field for enterprise, and in a short time maritime adventure absorbed the zeal and enthusiasm of many who had previously devoted them to religious objects.

Ever and anon new discoveries were made in the realm of science, especially the science of astronomy, which caused the people to modify their ideas concerning the teachings of the Bible. The tendency to call in question and challenge the authority of the priest in matters of religion reached its highest point in the appearance of a brave German monk named Martin Luther, during this century. Martin Luther claimed the right to put his own interpretation upon the declarations of the Bible. This was flying directly in the face of all authority, and no doubt Martin Luther would have shared the fate of other religious reformers had not a large number of people, who had come to partially accept the new doctrine, stood steadfastly by him in the hour of danger. As it was, Luther had to submit to the common fate of all reformers—to bear the grossest insults that could be showered upon him, calumnies of such a character that only malignant priests and bigotted laymen could have been guilty of inventing or pious scoundrels of circulating. But abuse is of no avail as a weapon against truth, if truth can only get a reasonably fair hearing. And so Luther found—and so he stuck bravely to his point, and in the end achieved a splendid triumph. In the sixteenth century, then, science dawned upon a priest-ridden Europe; and before the century closed science had diverted the attention of mankind in some small degree from the considerations of another life to the contemplation and study of the affairs of this; while Martin Luther, by claiming the right of private judgment, had really given expression, without knowing it, to the fundamental principle of Freethought, viz., the

* See Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 123, and Hallam's *Europe During the Middle Ages*, p. 353.

† Draper's *Conflict of Science and Religion*, p. 293.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

right for every man to think and judge for himself, and to make reason the sole arbiter of truth or falsehood.

Men have sung the praises of an unquestioning faith. To us it remains to extol the wisdom of the use of the noblest faculty of man—Reason; for without reason man is a fool, and by the aid of it he may become a philosopher, a statesman, a *Savior of Mankind*.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED?

BY A MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO BAR.

(From the "Truthseeker," New York.)

(CONCLUDED.)

THERE are several other circumstances related by the Evangelists in connexion with the crucifixion that are highly improbable, and go to discredit the whole story.

It is hard to believe that a people who had just given Christ a triumph, could so soon change about as to demand his death. Only a few days before, in the same Jerusalem, the populace welcomed him with songs and palm branches, and threw their garments at his feet, crying, "Hosannah! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" and now this populace is represented as crying with equal enthusiasm, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate himself is represented, with great inconsistency, as so afraid of Christ's popularity that he had to crucify him to suppress it, and so afraid of his unpopularity that he had to crucify him to please the people.

It is hard to believe, also, that when Christ was so popular that his enemies could not arrest him on a feast-day lest the people should make an uproar, but had to take him by stealth, through betrayal—it is hard to believe, we say, that such a popular person would be so demanded by the populace for crucifixion that the governor did not dare to spare his life. Why was it necessary that Christ should be betrayed, in order to be tried and executed, when the people wanted him to die? The service of Judas was wholly unnecessary, and could not, in those Jewish eyes, have been worth thirty pieces of silver.

Another difficulty in the way of accepting the story of the crucifixion is that no place can be found about Jerusalem to correspond to Calvary, where the crucifixion is alleged to have occurred, or to Gethsemane, the scene of Christ's previous sufferings. The traditional site of Golgotha, at least, could not, in view of all the circumstances, have been the place of crucifixion. If Christ was crucified at all the place has been lost to mankind, and it would almost seem that the scene was laid in aftertimes by persons at a distance from Jerusalem, who were not acquainted with the surroundings.

Another small matter of improbability is that Jesus should decline to drink the anodyne which was given to ease his pain. This was an acid wine mingled with myrrh, and was commonly given to sufferers on the cross out of pity. It is said that when he tasted of it he would not drink. It seems improbable, we say, that he should thus refuse to quist his pain, especially as he was so soon after to ask for a draught to quench his thirst. The fact, moreover, that such a quieting draught was offered him seems strangely inconsistent with the inhumanity of the rest of the transaction, in which, according to the gospels, the crucifiers tried by insults and outrage to aggravate his sufferings rather than to mitigate them, and with the charge that the drink offered was "vinegar mingled with gall."

A more serious difficulty in the way of accepting the story of Christ's crucifixion is that his death is alleged to have occurred after six hours. His death could not, under such circumstances, have been the result of crucifixion. The time was too short. It usually required from two to three days to die on the cross. Crucifixion affected directly no vital organ, and was a lingering death. In some instances the crucified have lingered a week, and examples are given by several writers of persons who have been restored to health after hanging on the cross several days. It would seem from this circumstance alone, either that the whole story of the crucifixion is false, or that Christ, if crucified, never died from it. We are told that his disciples were charged with stealing his body from the grave. It is more likely,

according to the natural theory, that they stole his body from the cross before he was dead and resuscitated him.

A last objection to receiving the story of Christ's crucifixion is that, after this event, he is alleged to have been seen alive, and by many persons at different times. As the unbeliever rejects the story of the resurrection, he must conclude, if Christ was subsequently seen, either that he was taken from the cross alive, as just intimated, or that the crucifixion never took place at all. In either event Christ was not crucified "according to the Gospel."

In view of all the difficulties named—history, legal, and scientific—the question becomes a serious one whether Jesus was actually crucified. It is not a question merely of whether all the details as related are true, but whether the main fact occurred. For it is the essentials of the story that are most doubtful, and not the details. The transaction as a whole is involved in so many great improbabilities that those who do not accept the Scriptures as inspired cannot find sufficient evidence to establish it at all. It must, in their view, seem more probable that those who got up the miracles of Christ got up the story of his crucifixion, and that they were both the invention of a subsequent age (which for the purposes of propagating a religion required a dramatic and pathetic death quite as much as miracles). The startling extremes of goodness and badness, the keeping of them in constant juxtaposition through the whole transaction, and the crowding of so many dramatic incidents in one short space, could only be the work of a master imagination. The treachery by such a bad Judas of such a good Jesus, the betrayal by the most affectionate sign—a kiss—the forsaking by all his disciples of so faithful a friend, the denial by Peter on the heels of his protest, "Though all deny thee yet will not I," the corruption of all the judges, the perjury of all the witnesses, the hypocritical maladministration of Pilate and Herod, the choice by the people of Barabbas, a robber, in preference to Jesus Christ, the craziness of the mob and cruelty of the soldiers to such a tender nature as Christ's, the placing of the spotless Jesus between two thieves, the plea by the dying thief for remembrance (together with the instant promise by Christ of Paradise to him), and finally the piteous cries of agony mingled with the prayer for his crucifiers, constitute the greatest chain of dramatic situations found in either history or fiction, and such a whole as could not have actually occurred. All this, too, must be taken in connexion with the fact that it is related with miraculous circumstances—the darkening of the sun and the resurrection of the dead—and that it follows in a life composed largely of miracles.

AUSTIN BIERDOWER.

A PREACHER'S QUALIFICATIONS.

A poor ignorant colored man, who had some experience at an "exhorter," wanted a licence to preach, and the following is given in regard to his qualifications, after due examination—

"Who was the most prominent woman mentioned in the Bible?" was asked.

"Jezebel," the negro answered.

"Why?"

"Because when de troops marched frow de city, she stood at de sebeth storey window ob de palace, and dey said, 'Frow her down,' and dey frowed her down; and dey said, 'Frow her down seben times,' and dey frowed her down seben times; and dey said, 'Frow her down sebhenty times seben,' and dey frowed her down sebhenty times seben. Moreover, de dogs came and licked her sores. And dey took from de fragments twelve basketsful and said, 'Lord, at de resurrection day whose wife shall she be?'"

A GENTLE HINT.

A minister's seven-year old son, one day after service was over and the family had returned from meeting, said:—"Papa, do you ever look at me while you are preaching?" The father, thinking that he was a little hurt by supposed neglect, said, "Certainly, my son, I often look at you and think of you when I am preaching." "But to-day you did not notice me at all." "Yes, I did, my son, several times," said the father. "Well, did you see me wink at you two or three times?" "No, my son. What did you wink at me for?" "I winked at you, papa, to get you to stop; you were going it too long."

BOOK CHAT.

The March number of the *Fortnightly Review* contains a remarkable article by the sub-editor, Henry Blanchamp, entitled "Thoughts of a Human Automaton." Such a downright, or as some would say "brutal" piece of Atheism, would never have been printed in a leading magazine fifteen or twenty years ago. Its appearance to-day is a striking sign of the times.

Mr. Blanchamp opens as a conscious automaton addressing his fellow automata. After a fling at the theologians who are trying to put off the evil day by patronising Evolution, he proceeds to describe religion as "a form of intellectual measles, an illness through which nations and individuals have to pass in their childhood; if they catch it in later years, it becomes a disease fraught with danger." Contrasting the philosophy of Determinism with Christianity, he writes as follows:—"I have no desire to contrast invidiously the teaching of Christ with the ethical principles derivable from the doctrine of Epicurus. Every allowance must be made for Christ's absolute ignorance of science, an ignorance due to the narrow-minded bigotry which informed the contemporary system of education. Nor should I venture for a moment to estimate comparatively the influence on the human race of these two mighty personalities. I desire only to contrast a few main points, in order to exhibit the inferiority of the Jewish philosopher so far as the universality of his ethics is concerned. His noble passions, his tenderness of heart, his overflowing sympathy carried him into an excess of love (amounting to prejudice) for the meek and the weak. In his passively feminine soul emotion triumphed over reason, and herein was the source of his power: for emotion appeals to women and undeveloped men—the vast majority of mankind."

As the scientific faith "runs counter to the most cherished beliefs and traditions," Mr. Blanchamp says the latter must no longer be allowed to cramp the minds of our children. These are his words:—"Religion must be entirely excluded from the curriculum. It is unscientific and therefore unnecessary, except perhaps so far as it serves as a *memoria technica* for a few imperfect ethical principles. These are, however, so deeply imbedded in the stratum of fiction that the compound is in all likelihood rather injurious than beneficial to the youthful mind. 'But,' cries the horror-stricken British family father, 'what will then become of morality? Everybody will be robbing and murdering and' . . . In fact, he describes an impending reign of terror. It is the old prejudice: without religion no morality. And what, pray, has religion to do with morality? What is morality? Morality consists in the first principles of conduct deduced from a certain conception of life. The religious conception of life is scientifically untenable and false, and the first principles of religious morality are impaired in proportion to that falsity."

Mr. Blanchamp's conclusion is that "Religion can no more mix with Science than oil with water," and the old bond between religion and morality must be finally severed. Determinism is both more intellectual and more moral. It abolishes "sin" and with it "punishment," and does away with both pride and humility. "Its ethics," he says, "are more universal and its consolation more assured; for they both rest on irrefragable scientific truth. The Determinist is consequently never harassed by doubts—the Rock of Ages is fragile compared with the adamantine foundations of his creed."

"Mr. Meredith in his Poems" is the title of another article in the *Fortnightly*. It is by Professor Dowden, and is well-written and appreciative. It is not an ideally good piece of work, though; yet it will set some readers on the track of a great poet, for such Mr Meredith is, despite the neglect with which his poetry is treated. We shall shortly have occasion to write upon his poetry in the *Freethinker*.

Samuel Laing, author of *The Modern Zoroastrian*, etc., is engaged upon a new work dealing with *Modern Origins*.

Miss M. A. Courtney, in *Cornish Feasts and Folk Lore* says that the belief in charms, ghosts, witches, and fairies still remains in that corner of England.

The influence of Comte and his disciples on education is discussed by R. Thama in a French work entitled *Education et Positivisme*, published by F. Alcan.

Prof. Tyndall has not done very much work since his aristocratic marriage, but he has collected together a number of his scattered articles, which are now published by Messrs. Longmans, under the title *New Fragments*. Most of the fragments are of a scientific caste, but the Recollections of Carlyle and the account of Count Rumford are of general interest.

Mr. Fisher Unwin announces a cheaper edition of Miss Olive Schreiner's *Dreams*. A portrait of the authoress, who has gone back to her South African farm, will accompany the volume.

Mr. E. L. Garbett, who lately issued a pamphlet with the insolent title *Huxley's Veracity*, has now put forward a lay sermon on *Free Wifehood*, in which he contends that Christ was married before he was baptised, and had two young sons, possibly the Alexander and Rufus mentioned Mark xv. 21.

The *Quarterly Review*, in its article on Hafiz the Persian poet, says: "Many eastern philosophers ended by falling into what is now termed Agnosticism; they were sceptics who had passed through all the grades, and whose nescience amounted to intellectual despair. Traces of such a feeling are discernible enough in the brilliant pages before us."

GENTLE JESUS.

(A long time after Watts.)

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
When he was a little child,
Cursed a boy and struck him blind,
Gentle Jesus, oh! how kind.

Gentle Jesus, when a man,
Acting on this gentle plan,
Said unbelievers should be damn'd,
That into hell they'd all be cramm'd.

Gentle Jesus cheeked his mother,
Told man to hate his wife and brother
Gentle Jesus, so 'tis said,
Raised old Lazarus from the dead.

Gentle Jesus, God divine,
Turned the water into wine,
Cursed the tree that bore no figs,
And played the devil with the pigs.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild;
Gentle Jesus, don't get wild;
Gentle Jesus, do not grieve,
I'll be damn'd if I believe. J. N. F.

An Irish tramp was brought up for robbing a miser, and when asked his motive, said: "Shure, your worship, an' we're tould in the Bible that the way for a man to get to heaven is to sell all he has, and give the money to the poor; an' this mane ould cratur 'ud never have done that of his own accord, so I just helped him on the good road mesilf, an' seuld all I took and gave the money to the poor according. Anyhow, I gave it to mesilf, ye see; an' faith, I'm as poor as a starved-out robin."

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PROFANE JOKES.

Western Union Telegraph Office, eight o'clock this morning. Operator received the following—"Christ (abbreviation for Christian) died at eleven o'clock last night." Rushes to the manager—"What shall we do about this, Mr. Langhoun?" "About what?" (Reads the despatch.) "Why, that infernal idiot of the New York office has been holding this for nearly 1,900 years."

First Citizen—"Strange, isn't it, that the inhabitants of China should maltreat the missionaries sent to them from Christian countries?" Second Citizen—"Simply incomprehensible. Hello! What's the row down street?" "Oh, nothing but a lot of fun-loving boys pounding a Chinese."

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: 7, G. N. Baker, "State Pensions for Old Age" (free).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Theodore R. Wright (Fabian), "Alleged Over Population" (free). Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic class. Thursday, at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7, musical selections; 7.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Some Effects of Christianity"; 9.30, free concert and dance.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30, debating class, Mr. Hartmann, "The Agnostic Religion; or the Worship of the Unknowable"; 7.30, H. Snell, "Lay it all on Jesus."

Deptford—Lecture Hall, High-street: 7.30, A. B. Moss, "Bible Prophets."

Forest Gate—The Hall (Liberal and Radical Association, Broadway, E.: Thursday, at 8, a free lecture.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "The Political Situation" (free); 6.45, music; 7.15, Charles Watts, "Materialism and Spiritualism Tested by Reason" (3d., 6d., and 1s.). Thursday, at 8, G. W. Foote, "God the Son" (opposed by representatives of the Christian Evidence Society) (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

Hammersmith—Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove: Thursday, at 8, W. Heaford, "The Story of a Virgin Mother."

Milton Hall, Hawley-crescent, Kentish Town-road, N.W.: 7, orchestral band; 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Mr. Stead's Ghosts." At 7 Kentish Town-road, at 3.30, debating class.

Tottenham—Lecture Hall (corner of Seven Sisters'-road): 3.30, Mr. May, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Walthamstow—Working Men's Club and Institute, High-street: Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen, "The Evolution of the Devil" (free).

West Ham—Secular Hall, 121 Broadway, Plaistow: 7, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Conversion of the English." Thursday at 8, open debate.

West London—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road (close to Latimer-road Station): Friday, at 8.30, Mr. Dowdall will lecture.

Westminster—Liberal and Radical Club, Chapter-street: 7, C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Slavery."

Woolwich—"Sussex Arms," Assembly Room, 60 Plumstead-road (entrance, Maxey-road): 7.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. Cohen, "Ethics and Theology."

Finbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, W. Norrish, "Christianity Not Sufficient for Man"; 3.30, F. Haslam will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble Arch): 11.30, H. Courtney, "Saints and Sinners."

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, social entertainment in aid of Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

Crook—35 Gladstone-terrace, Sunnyside, Tow Law: 6.30, business meeting.

Derby—Mr. McGuinness's, 20 Newland-street: 7, Mr. Whitney, "The God Idea.—II."

Edinburgh—Labor Hall, 50 South Bridge: 2.30, reading circle for young members; 6.30, J. D. Crawford, M.A., "Faith and Freethought."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: Miss Ada Campbell, 11, "Secularism and Christianity"; 2.30, "The Cross and the Crescent"; 6.30, "The Real Atonement; or Man's Live Savior."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Mr. Booth, "The Use and Abuse of Mental Faculties."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Meaning of Atheism"; 3, "Old Age Pensions"; 6.30, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, Mr. Koppel's logic class; 7, A. T. Dipper, "Christian Prophecy as a Test of Truth."

Nottingham—Secular Hall, Beck-street: Sam Standing, 3, "Christ's Failure"; 7, "Man's Search for God."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: F. Haslam, 3, "Jesus: Man, God, or Myth"; 7, "How I Became a Secularist, and Why I Remain one."

Reading—Forester's Hall, West-street: W. Heaford, 3, "A Freethinker's View of Christ"; 7, "Secularism, a Better Guide than Christianity."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, music, etc.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 3, mutual improvement class, Mr. Bowe, "Land Tenure"; 7, business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Nottingham—Sneinton Market: 11, Sam Standing, "Labor and Secularism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—March 24, West Ham. April 3, Merthyr; 17, Hall of Science; 24, Milton Hall.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—March 20 and 27, Deptford. April 10, Mile End; 17, Westminster; 24, Hornsey. May 1, Camberwell; 8, Clerkenwell; 15, Westminster; 22, Mile End. June 5, Camberwell; 12, Clerkenwell; 19, Hornsey. July 3, Camberwell; 10, Clerkenwell; 17, Westminster.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—March 20, Westminster; 27, Camberwell. April 3, Hyde Park; 10, Kilburn; April 17 to May 1, Annual Tour. May to Sept., all mornings booked.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—March 20, Camberwell; 27, evening, Newington Reform Club. April 3, Southampton; 10, morning, Bethnal Green; evening, Battersea; 24, morning, Victoria Park; evening, Camberwell. May 1, morning, Victoria Park; evening, Battersea.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—March 20, morning, Battersea. April 3, afternoon, Victoria Park; 10, morning, Bethnal Green; afternoon, Victoria Park; 17, morning, Mile End Waste; 24, afternoon, Victoria Park.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—March 20, Woolwich; 27, West Ham. April 3, morning, Finsbury Park; 17, morning, Battersea. May 1, morning, Clerkenwell Green; 8, Newcastle.

SAM STANDING, 2 Morton-street, C.-on-M., Manchester.—March 20, Nottingham. April 3, Leeds.

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One of the Society's rules secures that no member shall be eligible as a Director unless he is a member of the National Secular Society.

IMMEDIATE OBJECT.

The purchase of the Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London, E.C., and the conversion of the same into a first-class Secular Hall and Institute.

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The front part of the premises must be re-built, at a cost of £2,500, within ten years. It is proposed to do this as soon as possible.

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