

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

SHELLEY'S ATHEISM.

[CONCLUDED.]

SHELLEY'S essay "On a Future State" follows the same line of reasoning as his essay "On Life." He considers it highly probable that *thought* is "no more than the relation between certain parts of that infinitely varied mass, of which the rest of the universe is composed, and which ceases to exist as soon as those parts change their positions with regard to each other." His conclusion is that "the desire to be for ever as we are; the reluctance to a violent and unexperienced change," which is common to man and other living beings, is the "secret persuasion which has given birth to the opinions of a future state."

If we turn to Shelley's published letters we shall find abundant expressions of hostility to and contempt for religion. Those letters may deserve the praise of Matthew Arnold or the censure of Mr. Swinburne; but, in either case, they may be taken as honest documents, written to all sorts of private friends, and never intended for publication. Byron's letters were passed about freely, and largely written for effect; Shelley's were written under ordinary conditions, and he unbosomed himself with freedom and sincerity.

From one of his early letters we find that he contemplated a translation of the *System of Nature*, which is frequently quoted in the notes to *Queen Mab*. He couples Jehovah and Mammon together as fit for the worship of "those who delight in wickedness and slavery." In a letter to Henry Reveley he pictures God as delighted with his creation of the earth, and seeing it spin round the sun; and imagines him taking out "patents to supply all the suns in space with the same manufacture." When the poet was informed by Ollier that a certain gentleman (it was Archdeacon Hare) hoped he would humble his soul and "receive the spirit into him," Shelley replied: "if you know him personally, pray ask him from me what he means by receiving the *spirit into me*; and (if really it is any good) how one is to get at it." He goes on to say: "I was immeasurably amused by the quotation from Schlegel about the way in which the popular faith is destroyed—first the Devil, then the Holy Ghost, then God the Father. I had written a Lucianic essay to prove the same thing." In the very year of his death, writing to John Gisborne, he girds at the popular faith in God, and with reference to one of its most abhorrent doctrines he exclaims—"As if, after sixty years' suffering here, we were to be roasted alive for sixty million more in hell, or charitably annihilated by a *coup de grâce* of the bungler who brought us into existence at first."—A dozen other quotations from Shelley's letters might be given, all to pretty much the same effect, but the foregoing must suffice.

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A thorough analysis of Shelley's poetry, showing the essential Atheism which runs through it from beginning to end, would require more space than we have at our command. We shall therefore simply point out, by means of instances, how indignantly or contemptuously he always refers to religion as the great despot and impostor of mankind.

The *Revolt of Islam* stigmatises "Faith" as "an obscene worm." The sonnet on the Fall of Bonaparte concludes with a reference to "Bloody Faith, the fondest birth of time." Shelley frequently conceives Faith as serpentine and disgusting. In *Rosalind and Helen* he writes—

Grey Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train.

In the great and splendid *Ode to Liberty* the image undergoes a Miltonic sublimation.

Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves
Hung tyranny; beneath, sat deified
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves.

Invariably does the poet class religion and oppression together—"Religion veils her eyes: Oppression shrinks aghast."—"Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood."—"And laughter fills the fane, and curses shake the Throne."

Mr. Herbert Spencer writes with learning and eloquence about the Power of the Universe and the Unknowable. Shelley pricked this bubble of speculation in the following passage:

What is that Power? Some moonstruck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown.

In one verse of the *Ode to Liberty* the poet exclaims:

O that the free would stamp the impious name
Of . . . into the dust or write it there.

What is the omitted word? Mr. Swinburne says the only possible word is—God. We agree with him. Anything else would be a ridiculous anti-climax, and quite inconsistent with the powerful description of—

this foul gordian word,
Which, weak itself as stubble, yet can bind
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
The axes and the rods that awe mankind.

"Pope" and "Christ" are alike impossible. With respect to "mankind" they are but local designations. The word must be universal. It is *God*.

The glorious speech of the Spirit of the Hour, which terminates the third Act of *Prometheus Unbound*—that superb drama of emancipate Humanity—lumps together "Thrones, altars, judgment seats, and prisons," as parts of one gigantic system of spiritual and temporal misrule. Man, when redeemed from falsehood and evil, rejects his books "of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance"; and the veil is torn

aside from all he "believed and hoped." And what is the result? Let the Spirit of the Hour answer.

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
Passionless? no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled Æm in the intense inane.

What a triumphant flight! The poet springs from earth and is speedily away beyond sight—almost beyond conception—like an elemental thing. But his starting-point is definite enough. Man is exempt from awe and worship; from spiritual as well as political and social slavery; king over himself, ruling the anarchy of his own passions. And the same idea is sung by Demogorgon at the close of the fifth Act. The "Earth-born's spell yawns for heaven's despotism," and "Conquest is dragged captive through the deep."

Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length,
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan! is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

This is the Atheism of Shelley. Man is to conquer, by love and hope and thought and endurance, his birthright of happiness and dignity. Humanity is to take the place of God.

It has been argued that if Shelley had lived he would have repented the "indiscretions of his youth," and gravitated towards a more "respectable" philosophy. Well, it is easy to prophesy; and just as easy, and no less effectual, to meet the prophet with a flat contradiction. "Might have been" is no better than "might not have been." Was it not declared that Charles Bradlaugh would have become a Christian if he had lived long enough? Was not the same asserted of John Stuart Mill? One was nearly sixty, the other nearly seventy; and we have to wonder what is the real age of intellectual maturity. Only a few weeks before his death, Shelley wrote of Christianity that "no man of sense could think it true." That was his deliberate and final judgment. Had he lived long enough to lose his sense; had he fallen a victim to some nervous malady, or softening of the brain; had he lingered on to a more than ripe (a rotten) old age, in which senility may unsay the virile words of manhood; it is conceivable that Shelley might have become a devotee of the faith he had despised. But none of these things did happen. What Shelley was is the only object of sane discussion. And what he was we know—an Atheist, a lover of Humanity.

G. W. FOOOTH.

PAGAN BAPTISM.

THAT the sacred ordinance of holy Baptism existed antecedent to Christianity there is abundant evidence. It is, indeed, virtually admitted in the New Testament. Before the preaching of Christ, John the Dipper used the rite, and the Pharisees asked him, "Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" a question which shows their acquaintance with baptism. It was, indeed, the Jewish custom to baptise all proselytes. They had to go through three ceremonies—circumcision, baptism, and offering a sacrifice.* To plunge into the bath of purification was long known among the Jews as a symbol of the change of life, and we see as far back as the time of Elisha and Naaman that the Jordan was regarded as a sacred healing river (2 Kings v. 10).

The river Ganges is still revered by the Hindus as a sacred stream, bathing in which purifies from sin. Numerous temples with flights of steps leading to the holy water line its banks, and priests known as "Sons of the Ganges" see that the ablutions are duly performed. A traffic, too, is carried on in transporting the sacred water to all parts of the country. Every orthodox Hindu, says Sir Monier Williams (*Hinduism*, p. 157), is perfectly persuaded that the dirtiest water, if taken from the sacred stream and applied to his body, either externally or internally, will purify his soul." Yet Sir M. Williams well knows, though he does not mention, this superstition was protested against ages ago in the divine counsels of Vishnu Sarman. The passage is rendered in Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Hitopadesa* (p. 138), and is as applicable to Christians as to Hindus.

Away with those who preach to us the washing off of sin—
Thine own self is the stream for thee to make ablutions in.
In self-restraint it rises pure—flows clear in tide of truth,
By widening bank of wisdom, in waves of peace and ruth.
Bathe there thou son of Pandu! with reverence and rite,
For never yet was water wet could wash the spirit white.

We have seen baptism was a rite of purification in the Eleusinian mysteries.† A sect of worshippers, of Cottoy, under the patronage of Alciabades, were known as Baptae. Sophocles made Ajax say:

I will retire
Along the shore and seek the running stream,
Avert the wrath of angry Heaven, and wash
My crimes away.‡

A common practice of baptism was ridiculed by Diogenes, who remarked that errors in conduct could be no more washed away by purification than blunders in grammar.§ So Ovid says:

Ah, easy fools, to think that a whole flood
Of water e'er can purge the stain of blood!||

Baptism appears to have arisen from washing the child at birth, and the notion of re-birth from the coming of the child from waters. In Fanti, in Africa, the father, on the eighth day after birth, after thanking the gods for the birth of his child, squirts ardent spirits upon him, and pronounces his name, praying for his future welfare, and "that he may live to be old and become a stay and support to his family."¶ Mungo Park tells of Bushmen baptising a child by spitting in its face. Mr. D. G. Brinton, in his *Myths of the New World* (p. 128), says the rite of baptism "was of immemorial antiquity among the Cherokees, Aztecs, Mayas, and Peruvians," and this rite was "connected with the imposing of a name, done avowedly for the purpose of freeing from inherent sin,

* On Jewish baptism see *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. x., p. 248.

† *Freethinker*, July 3.

‡ *Ajax*, Act iii. l. 590. Francklin's transl.

§ Diogenes Laertius in *Vit*, c. vi., p. 232. C. D. Yonge's transl.; Bohm, 1853.

|| *Fanti* ii. 45.

¶ See Amberley's *Analysis of Religious Belief*, vol. i., p. 58.

believed to produce a spiritual regeneration; nay, in more than one instance called by an indigenous word signifying 'to be born again.'" Prescott, in his *Conquest of Mexico*, chap. 3, says of the Mexican rite: "The lips and bosom of the infant were sprinkled with water, and the Lord was implored to permit the holy drops to wash away the sin that was given to it before the foundation of the world; so that the child might be born anew." Among the Romans, the eighth day after birth for girls and the ninth for boys was a *dies lustricus*, a holy day of lustration, on which names were given.

Among the Scandinavians the Pagan and Christian rite existed for a time side by side. The Pagan rite was called "ansa vatri," while the name for Christian baptism was "skero." The Pagan rite was far older than the introduction of Christianity, and was connected with the savage custom of exposing infants who were not to be reared. If the father acknowledged the child and decided to rear it, then water was poured over it and the father gave it a name. After this baptism he was responsible for its life. Dr. Konrad Maurer, in a monograph on the subject of baptism among the heathen Germans,* shows that the ancient Teutons held similar ideas, and that the Pagan customs and ceremonies were simply adopted by the Christian Church.

A form of baptismal purification prescribed in the Zend Avesta was used by the ancient followers of Zoroaster, as by the modern Parsees. In the description of initiation into the Mithraic mysteries given by Mr. C. S. Wake, he says:

"After the neophyte had undergone his preparatory training he appeared at the door of the sanctuary with his adopted father, who asked that admittance might be granted to him. The door having been opened, the neophyte was introduced to the officiating priest, who offered to him a crown which was suspended from the point of a sword. This he refused, saying, 'Mithra is my crown,' and the initiate was thereupon invested with spiritual armor by the water of baptism, which in the Avesta is called the 'victorious' and 'the giver of victory.'"[†]

The most terrific and disgusting of the ancient baptisms was the regenerating sacrament of the Tauribolum, or baptism of blood, of which Prudentius has left a minute description. The person to be regenerated descended naked into a pit (or cruciform grave). The pit was covered with planks pierced full of holes. A bull, emblem of vigor, decked with garlands, was slaughtered above, and the initiate received the hot blood streaming through this strange shower bath. The Emperors Julian and Heliogabalus submitted to this process. A temple of Magna Mater, where these rites of Tauribolum were celebrated, stood on the Vatican, and a portion of St. Peter's is built on the sacred site. The blood of sprinkling was supposed of such efficacy as to wash away sin (see *I Job. ix. 13, xii. 24; 2 Pet. i. 2*). Sometimes a ram was substituted for a bull; hence we have the nonsense about "washed in the blood of the lamb." Sometimes the pit was made cruciform for the initiate to lie with arms outstretched. This blood-baptism was the original mystery of the Rosycross, the stories of the *ros* or mystic dew, and of the mythical Christian Rosenkreutz with his mystical vault, being late legends for the neophytes.

Potter, in his *Grecian Antiquities*, tells us the Athenians had a less offensive way of obtaining regeneration. The person desirous of it, whether male or female, was slipped through a characteristic part of the feminine habiliments, and thenceforth recognised as one who had been born again.

J. M. WHEELER.

Minister (to little girl): "Child, who made your body?"
Little girl: "I did, sir; but mother put in the sleeves."

* *Ueber die Wasserweihe des Germanische Heidenthums.*
† *Evolution of Morality*, vol. ii., p. 320.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THOMAS COOPER.

III.

"COOPER the Chartist" was no common man—there can be no harm in saying that, for that is what he thought himself. There is no end to the eccentricities which would make a full biography of him very amusing reading. Mr. George Anderson tells me he remembers him stalking into a crowded assembly to whom he came to lecture, making the most of his stature and more of his feet, whose resounding tread called attention to his approach. Singing was going on at the time, when, with conspicuous meekness he sat down on the lowest step of the platform stair until the singing ceased. It was right to show deference to the singers, but the interrupting tread and the disturbing appearance were better omitted. But who cared for the double ostentation and humility during the inspiring lecture which followed?

My friend, Mr. G. Julian Harney (who has written an excellent paper on Mr. Cooper in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*), knew from personal experience Mr. Cooper had egotism, but thinks that it is impossible to be a public man without this gift. The best public men I have known have not had it. But where great merit accompanies self-assertion, it is the interest of the public to honor the service and forgive the egotism. Like Mr. W. E. Forster, or Mr. Chamberlain, or Lord Beaconsfield, the ambition of distinction was Mr. Cooper's ruling passion; but he never sought to suppress rivals; he was content with exalting himself.

Mr. Cooper's predilections this way were exemplified in his being a Dodwellian. Dodwell was a dogmatic clergyman, mentioned by Macaulay, who maintained that immortality was not a perquisite of ordinary man but a gift specially bestowed by heaven, which gave a Dodwellian distinction to those holding that tenet, since immortality would not be conferred upon any who failed to hold the Dodwellian creed.

Mr. Cooper relates in his *Life* that the manager of the *Leicestershire Mercury* told him to seek a new situation, which he ascribes to his having written while he was on the *Mercury* staff in the *Chartist's Illuminator*. The real reason was that he disclosed to the readers of the *Illuminator* that an article which they deemed objectionable was "written by the Rev. J. P. Mursell, who, as a Christian minister, ought to be ashamed of himself." This was a gross breach of confidence, since he could only know the authorship by being a member of the *Mercury* staff. Mr. Cooper was then a young member of the press, and possibly unaware of the rule of honor which binds a staff, as it binds members of the Cabinet, to reticence in things understood to be private.

Mr. Cooper was by turns a Wesleyan, Chartist, Secularist, and Saint. The Wesleyan does not believe in pre-election to heaven or hell, but that every man may make his own self-election to bliss by believing the right thing, thus making the chance of salvation universal. The Wesleyan also believes in sudden conversion, which is impossible. Sudden impressions may occur, but conversion means change of character, which is an affair of time.

A Chartist is a six-point man—a good program rule. No program should be longer, for six essential things is more than any one government ever yet carried. The Chartist's six points all tended to democratic equality, but the framers of the Charter left it unsettled whether it was to be obtained by force or reason. The more impetuous, Mr. Cooper among them, went for force, which made disunion and delayed success.

Mr. Cooper next became a Sceptic in respect to theology only. Strauss's criticisms carried him away. He was not a Sceptic in all things, no man ever was. He believed in honor, honesty, sincerity, and truth

when he was a Christian; and he believed in them more strongly when he was a Sceptic.

He soon became a Secularist who works on a material basis, guided by the Utilitarian rule, which measures morality by its conduciveness to the welfare of others, makes moral duty an affair of conscience, and substitutes the creed of conduct for the creed of orthodoxy.

His last stage was that of the saint, which I do not use as a term of reproach. He went wandering about the empire like Wesley did. Saintship was his ambition, and he was as much a saint as any man ever was, for he gave up worldly usefulness for the safety of his soul—which proved that the soul was less worth saving when he was a saint than when he was a Secularist. The saint lives to serve God—the Secularist to serve man. The saint is for the Kingdom of the Lord—the Secularist, like Clifford, is for the Kingdom of humanity. I know no example which better shows the superiority of Secularism over the demoralisation of orthodoxy than Mr. Cooper's relapse into Christianity. He took over all at once the entire stock of Christianity—not only the goods in the front window, but the back stock, faded, damaged and unsaleable, and, as Talleyrand said "theologians" did, he spent his days "picking very large bones for very little meat." But he never forgot the lesson he learned during his Freethinking period. His sermons were more scientific, more instructive, than those of any other Wesleyan preacher. If he had not been a convert he would have been counted an infidel by the Church which he had joined, by reason of the secular features of his discourses. By this means he preserved a superiority over his rivals, and he owed this to his Secular training with us.

The fault of Mr. Cooper's conversion was its being, as the Americans say, "too previous." Within a week of his appearing on the platform as a Free-thought speaker he announced his conversion. Had he been an artist in conversion, he would have waited twelve months while his convictions were confirmed, which would have won for him belief in his sincerity, which many whom he might have influenced never thought real. He showed a certain uncertainty of confidence in himself. In York, he obliged me to discuss questions of miracle, inspiration, and other questions of theology, but would never discuss mine, which tested Christianity by its moral meaning. Mr. Grant did this. Against my protest he put down Reign of Terror questions, because mere discussion of them would damage me in Christian eyes. The Rev. Henry Townley followed me into the *Leader* office, which I always kept clear of my personal opinions, that my colleagues, who did not share them, might not be compromised by them. To oblige him I discussed the question of the existence of God—the only time I ever did so. The effect was to give foolish people the impression that Secularism was Atheism. Such existence, being indeterminate by reason, is not a Secular question.

Mr. Cooper was but a type of the theologians of the day who will never discuss the ethical truth of Christianity. Only preachers of very small bore—ignorant of the policy of the sacred canons of greater calibre, will venture upon submitting Christianity to moral tests, which Secularism was invented to enforce.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

(To be concluded.)

When men have come to regard a certain class of their fellow creatures as doomed by Almighty God to eternal and excruciating tortures and agonies, and when theology directs their minds with intense and realising earnestness to the contemplation of such agonies, the result will be indifference to the suffering of those whom they deem the enemies of their God, as absolute as it is perhaps possible for human nature to attain.—*Lecky*.

THEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES AT OXFORD.

(CONCLUDED.)

DR. FAIRBAIRN having finished his replies to his questioners (which were dealt with in our article last week), it was Professor Dods' turn to endeavor to satisfy a few inquirers. Replying to other questioners, the professor said:

1. "If I asked you, What is the Bible, you would say, It is the word of God. But there are many words of God. There are facts and experiences in your life, you say, which are as truly the word of God to you as the Bible. So with the words of a preacher, and of many books." Here the Bible and personal experience are regarded as being analagous. But they are not so by any means. Experiences are purely personal, and may or may not be useful in their results, while the Bible is claimed by theologians to be of undoubted benefit to all who read its contents. Besides, the "many words of God" recorded in the Bible or manifested in the facts and experiences of daily life, are of a contradictory character, and therefore they cannot all be relied upon as being accurate. It is precisely the same with "the words of a preacher and of many books." Of course it is not claimed that all such words are God's, and the professor omitted to supply a test whereby the difference between "God's word" and that of man could be recognised. This is truly a novel way of "clearing up difficulties."

2. "What then was the value of the Bible? It was the fountain of authority to us because it was written by the men who were the organs of the great historical revelation which culminated in Jesus Christ." The Bible is not "the fountain of authority," inasmuch as it has to be submitted to a much higher authority—that of human reason—for the purpose of ascertaining what its authoritative value really is. Moreover, the professor's answer is based upon the assumptions that he knows who the writers of the Bible were, which he does not; and that the historical and revealed are identical, which they are not. History is a collection of facts and general events, discovered and recorded by human genius, and not received through any revelation from some supposed supernatural power. History, says Volney, "is an inquest of facts which reach us through the medium of other persons." Revelation, in a theological sense, is an influence from God, and must be confined to the individuals to whom the revelation is made.

3. "The higher criticism of the Bible," remarked the Professor, is "the application of the scientific method of investigation, not to the essential truths of the Bible, but to its literature, authorship, and its human elements." This is theological confusion with a vengeance. It is not stated what the essential truths of the Bible are apart from "its human elements." The higher criticism has robbed the Bible of its false halo of "divine infallibility," and made it merely a human production. It has also shown that much of its literature is questionable, and that its authorship is unknown. Judged by this modern standard, the book must be estimated by its internal value and not by the doubtful history with which the church has surrounded it. The important question to us is, not who wrote the Bible, but the worth of what is written therein. This is the triumph of the discrimination of reason over blind allegiance to ecclesiastical authority.

4. The professor says, that he cannot understand "how the supposed difficulties in the Bible should imperil a man's soul." Neither can we. It is not the *supposed*, but the real difficulties of the book that have, we fear, imperilled not the soul, but the minds of too many of its orthodox believers. The professor continues, "To an uneducated man who might ask how much of the Bible he might take as truth, he would say, take all as truth till

you find an error; and, if you do that, the errors you will find will be very few." The advice here given is unobjectionable, but how the "uneducated man" is to find the "very few" errors, or how such errors come into the god-inspired organ of historical revelation, we are not informed. Perhaps it is like "the peace of God," it "passeth all understanding."

5. To the important question: "If God forgives us when we are penitent, why need Christ have died?" The professor answered: "Christ died in order that we might be made penitent; for there was no true penitence save that which was got at the cross of Christ." This is an exquisite specimen of orthodox conceit. The idea of supposing that a God who is said to be the father of billions of human creatures should have no pity or forgiveness for any of his children outside the comparatively few professed followers of Christ. The exclusive nature of the Christian faith is always apparent when it is brought under cross-examination; then we find all the affection of God is centred on one spot and on one event in Judea. The doctor's answer leaves the question of God's forgiving the penitent just where it was, except that his reply adds to the difficulty by alleging that God will not forgive members of other religions because penitence is not sought for at "the cross of Christ." The universal love and forgiving nature of Christianity are here seen in the fact that the Cross is the only means of salvation, and that in the "order of God's providence" two-thirds of the human race have never heard of this wonderful Cross.

Dr. Dodds concluded his efforts to "settle difficulties" by asserting "that though God must always seek the lost, yet a man's character and will might be so set that the man cannot be saved." If this be correct, universal salvation is impossible, and the New Testament teaching that men "were before of old ordained to this condemnation" is endorsed. But then the question arises, Who arranged the character and will of man so that he could not be saved? And further, was it just to form men so that to them salvation was impossible, even if God sought to save them? Besides, if God be all wise he must know who are destined to be lost, and therefore it is useless to seek to save those "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Romans ix.) A faith with such teachings as these is far from being "a Gospel of glad tidings." It is rather a creed of injustice, gloom and despair, destitute of every feature that is calculated to enhance the joy and happiness of human life.

Perhaps the gem of the remarkable proceedings of these learned divines was the following exhibition: Professor Bruce, it is reported, "carefully answered some questions bearing on the resurrection, but he said his object was not to convince or refute unbelieving dogmatists, much less dogmatic believers. He confessed his inability to explain mystery. Anyone else was at liberty to try." We might have fairly supposed that no "unbelieving dogmatists" were present at Mansfield College, Oxford, and as the Professor cared less to convince "dogmatic believers," of whom doubtless hundreds were before him, who was he seeking to convince? What he said in reference to the resurrection is not reported, but his final words are full of wisdom: "He confessed his inability to explain mystery. Anyone else could try." This was candid at least, and if divines in general were like Professor Bruce in this particular, there would be much less theological nonsense under the name of "Christian evidence" inflicted upon a long-suffering people than there has been of late. One of the follies of Christian exponents is that they desire to emulate St. Paul when he said, "Behold, I show you a mystery"; and, overlooking the fact that St. Paul failed in carrying out his promise, his would-be imitators endeavor to persuade their followers that "the oracle" can be worked to-day. Not so with

Professor Bruce, with him a mystery is a mystery, and there is an end of it. True, it may be fairly urged that the whole of the Christian theological scheme is a mystery—from the birth of Jesus to the supposed final resurrection of the dead at "the last day." Still there are some believers who think they have the "inner light" which enables them with the "eye of faith" to see "the invisible things" (Romans i.), being under the impression that they "look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. iv.) Many professors, however, prefer following a different light; probably thinking that God has "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes" (Luke x.)

CHARLES WATTS.

WHY SHOULD A FREETHINKER FEAR TO DIE?

IT is commonly said to those who have given up orthodox superstitions, and, instead, rely on reason and science, "Ah, your opinions are all very well to live with, but they will fail you in the hour of death." These, it is well known among Freethinkers, are the words of the false prophet. We used to say in the old days, "In the hour of death and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us," and were constantly reminded that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Yet many tombstones attest the fact that many have fallen asleep in the arms of the second person of the trinity. Is it not clearly a deeper ground of apprehension that evil consequences will follow getting into the clutches of that other person who is said to have some likeness to a roaring lion? If all is true that has been said about him, he is a fearful character, and is almost as brutal as the God of the Old Testament. There is one thing that will prevent the fear of either or both of them, and that is, a total disbelief in them.

It is assumed that the Freethinker does fear death, and the reason is his *unbelief* in the beings that are said to be the causes of fear, which is manifestly absurd. It is the *believer* alone that can have any apprehension as to what either God or the Devil may do in the future. It is somewhat singular that so simple a matter as this should be completely misrepresented. Those who own no shares have no apprehension of the bank breaking, and people out of business do not dread the Bankruptcy Court.

Even the crows will settle on the wooden guns which experience tells them never go off. You can't catch old birds with chaff. I used to call the horses by putting small pebbles in the box instead of beans, but it failed after a little practice.

The believer may not, but the Freethinker can see only *childish bogeys* in all the pictures of departing scenes. It is manifest that any one who fears must believe in or imagine something to fear. What is more natural than that a wicked man should fear *the old one*, as the country folks call him? But here is confirmation of it—a murderer—the most diabolical creature, believing he has been washed in the blood of the lamb that was slain for sinners, goes cheerfully to the scaffold, uttering holy words of advice to the wicked world he is leaving, worthy of an Archbishop of the Church. In fact, instead of being hanged, he ought to be ordained. A murderer flies among the angels full of joy, while the poor Freethinker is supposed to be sobbing away his life, because he has not believed all the theological rubbish heaped up for his benefit through past generations.

Anyone duly and solemnly impressed with the theology almost universally taught fifty years ago may be pardoned for being apprehensive as to his fate. The many were called, but few were chosen; so that the chances were many to one that you might

find the door of heaven at the last moment slammed in your face. The only way to get clear of doubt was to get a ticket for the private boxes—call yourself "one of the elect." Nothing can upset that. No matter what happens, if you make your "calling and election sure." The profane used to say this meant a flourishing business and a seat on the council.

It is not surprising that death should have some terror to one who believes in eternal torment; escape from it resting with the mercy of God, who may fail to exercise it; for it is said that he sends one to heaven and ten to hell, not for any good or ill they have done, but in the exercise of his own sweet will. Burns thought it could give small pleasure even to a Devil to scald poor wretches and hear them squeal. Still he seemed to have been under some apprehension that "the deity offended" was a serious thing to encounter. People transfer their own petty tempers and whims to an eternal God, and bid us beware! Man enlarges his own failings till he is alarmed at his own portrait.

The believer of the old time had no idea of a Freethinker except of a man that lived a life of vice and died in terror. Hence he has given us sketches of Paine, Voltaire, and others, which the originals, did they re-appear, would be unable to recognise. Christianity was the only sleeping draught that could be administered with a certainty—no sound sleep after death guaranteed by any but this patent medicine. Woe be to him who, in the last sad moments, refused to drink of the water of life. Whatever he may have said or done for mankind—all was lost except he bowed to the name of Jesus.

The influence of the pictures painted of the Atheist and the infidel survives to this day, although hundreds die in peace every year in England holding the same views. Christians seem determined, out of their own very good nature, not to allow an unbeliever to die in peace or be buried in his own way. And if one dies suddenly, when no person is present, they invent one who reports what he did *not* say. It seems impossible to control Christian generosity or Christian imagination in the hour of the dying unbeliever. One who dies among bigots may see in his mind's eye the futility of their rage—

Let them rave,
Thou art quiet in thy grave.

It must not be inferred that death is not welcome or unwelcome to the Freethinker, according to circumstances, as it is to other men. The difference is that he looks upon death as natural like birth, which has no superstitious surroundings of the same kind as death has. Rejoicing and mourning are not special characteristics of Christians. The birth, growth, and death of every object in nature excites feelings in the minds of all of every creed, and of none. But the feeling varies in different individuals and at different seasons. The emerald green of spring, the blossoms of summer, the many-varied tints of autumn, are very different from the sour and wrinkled face of winter. Nature dies and sleeps. Shelley remarked:

How wonderful is death!
And his brother sleep.

I confess to a feeling of preference for "his brother sleep," but death prevails everywhere and through all time.

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!

Its universality and its inevitable character, and its similarity in its operations and effects, have furnished themes for poets and sages through all time.

C. C. CATTELL.

(To be concluded.)

The noblest employment of the mind is the study of nature or truth.—Aristotle.

ACID DROPS.

Oath taking in the House of Commons is such a hasty and blasphemous business that the *Christian World* is compelled to cry out against it. Our contemporary thinks it "will be well for religion and for decency" when the oath is absolutely abolished. We agree as to "decency" but cannot affect any concern for "religion."

We wish the *Christian World* would have the "decency" to be accurate. It speaks of the Oaths Act as "passed to enable Mr. Bradlaugh to make an affirmation in lieu of oath." This is not true. The House of Commons did not oblige Mr. Bradlaugh in that way. He took the oath and his seat at the opening of a new Parliament, when the Speaker had the sense and courage to stand against the old unconstitutional game of "baiting Bradlaugh." It was afterwards that the Oaths Act was carried. It was introduced by Mr. Bradlaugh himself, and only carried after long and careful nursing and lobbying on his part. Even then the original Bill had to be altered to suit the less enlightened part of the House of Commons, or it would have been rejected.

Mr. John Morley, the Freethinker, is sure to be opposed by a great many bigots when he goes to Newcastle for re-election. The practice of putting a cabinet minister through a wearing and expensive contest in the constituency which has already elected him is perfectly foolish now that the people have votes and members of the government are only nominally "servants of the crown." It is a great pity that a comparatively poor man like Mr. Morley should be harassed in this way. His enemies at Newcastle profess to be sorry on personal grounds, but on principle they feel they must rally round Mr. Ralli. We earnestly hope that every Freethinker in Newcastle, unless he is really opposed to Mr. Morley's program, will work hard for his return. His presence in the House of Commons, and still more in the ministry, will be of great advantage when the Liberty of Bequest Bill is introduced.

Lord Halsbury (Sir Hardinge Giffard), ex-Lord Chancellor, has good reasons for being orthodox. His services to his country consisted in baiting Mr. Bradlaugh and sending Mr. Foote to prison. For this he was elevated to the woolsack. While he sat upon it he received £10,000 a year, and now he has ceased sitting he enjoys a pension of £5,000 a year for life. His lordship has found that godliness is great gain.

At a recent meeting of the Victoria Philosophical Institute, Lord Halsbury sneered at "infidelity," and declared that *his* testimony to the Christian faith was worth something, as he was accustomed to look at both sides and weigh evidence. Yes, as a successful lawyer, he *has* been accustomed to look at both sides—or any side, or all sides, as you prefer. But the side he sided with was always the side that put the biggest fee on its brief.

More recently still, at the same Victoria Institute, Mr. W. St. C. Boscawen read a paper on the recently discovered city of Sepharvaim, in the course of which he referred to an inscription dating 3,800 B.C. Perhaps the ex-Lord Chancellor will take a brief for the Bible and explain how this fits in with the Mosaic chronology.

The Catholics are already organising a big pilgrimage to Rome for Feb. 1893. Their object is to impose better terms on the Italian Government by a display of foreign sympathisers with the Pope.

Cardinal Vaughan's investiture at Brompton Oratory is described in the papers as "an imposing ceremony." The Catholic Church is always great in man-millinery and general display. It knows that the show business attracts the fools of all classes—rich and poor, aristocratic and plebeian.

The Pallium with which Archbishop Vaughan was invested on Tuesday is a sort of stole, the significance of which, according to some archaeologists, is the same as that of the looped cross, a remnant of phallic symbolism. When an archbishop dies his pallium is always buried with him, and should an archbishop be lost at sea, his pallium is not given to his successor, but is either buried in the ground or burnt.

The *Rock*, learning that the Catholics of the continent are praying for the conversion of England, asks for united prayer that this country may not be drifted away to Romanism by the Ritualists, but remain Protestant. The spectacle of God listening to see which side prays the most fervently must be an edifying one to religionists.

The Rev. J. R. Foster, secretary of the Clergy Fees Reform Association, charges the secretaries of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol with appropriating at the induction of ministers "at least 100 per cent. over and above the amount they are entitled to." They have been written to repeatedly, but maintain a discreet silence.

The late Bishop Claughton's palace, near Chelmsford, with the park, comprising 303 acres, is now for sale. The property cost £30,000 in 1847. Blessed be ye poor!

The bishops preach "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," but they cling to their emoluments even when physically unable to perform their duties. Sumner, Bishop of Winchester, having drawn over £294,000, refused to resign until guaranteed a pension of £2,000 a year. At present above a third of the bishops should resign from old age and frailties, but refuse to do so since sufficient provision is not made for them.

Father Ignatius has been having high jinks at Llanthony Abbey. His costly vestments were illuminated by the blaze of hundreds of wax tapers; and a handsome copy of the Bible was carried on a cushion and placed in the centre of the church, where it was solemnly kissed by all the worshippers. Father Ignatius thinks this a good reply to modern Biblical criticism.

The Rev. H. W. Haygarth, vicar of Wimbledon, sends us (printed on the back of a postcard) an invitation to the vicarage garden on Thursday, Aug. 18, at 4 p.m. The Rev. C. L. Engstrom and the not-yet-reverend Celestine Edwards will address the merry meeting on "the Dangers of Unbelief and the successful efforts of the Christian Evidence Society in stemming its progress." Both themes are purely imaginary and afford scope for flowery eloquence. No doubt it would be a great treat to listen, and it may be guessed how sorry we are that we cannot accept the invitation. There is to be "tea and coffee after the meeting." Cigars and cigarettes are not mentioned. We suppose they "go without saying."

Walter Snod, in the *Daily News*, gives a dreadful account of the sufferings of the Jews who fled from Russia to Palestine, and winds up by calling them "the chosen people of God." To be chosen by God seems a great misfortune. The people he doesn't choose get on ever so much better.

St. Mary's Church, Strand, one of the city obstructions, has an average congregation of twenty. The ratepayers of the neighborhood have to make up the rector's salary. Such is the law, and such it will continue until the people cut up rough. Then we guess the State Church will go to the devil.

The Rev. E. J. Edwards, of Hatfield, is wanted by the police. The offences alleged against him are those to which men of God seem prone. Owing to his aristocratic connexions he was able to get off before the warrant arrived for his apprehension.

Daniel Grinstead, of Bromley, coal merchant and churchwarden, has been fined £1 and costs for giving short weight. One bag was found to be as much as 30lb short. Daniel said it was his workmen's fault, but he had to pay all the same.

The Rev. Robert Hall Baynes, canon of Worcester, seems going from bad to worse. Some time ago he was arrested for being drunk and disorderly, then for having stolen a port-manteau, and now he is committed to trial on a charge of indecent assault on children of the ages of ten and eight years.

A warrant has been issued against the Rev. Thomas Kempthorne, rector of Kersley, Shropshire, on a charge of criminal assault upon his domestic maid-servant, Emily Edwards. Men of God seem specially assaulted by temptations from Satan and Satan's ready servants, the female sex.

Patrick Gibbons, who awaits execution for cutting his mother's throat at Oldham, like the rest of his fraternity, is confident of another and a better world. What must it be to be there?

Joseph Jarvis, yeast dealer, of George-street, Barnsley, local preacher, district visitor, and prayer leader, has been imprisoned for three months with hard labor for indecently assaulting Sarah Goodworth, a delicate little girl, eleven years of age. The dirty scoundrel was in the habit of going to the girl's house and praying with her father, who was ill in bed.

H. Vonglehu, of Narborough, Leicester, threw himself under a train at Blackpool. He was taken to the Sanatorium in a precarious but conscious condition. While refusing to give an account of himself, he acknowledged the attempt to commit suicide. He is not an Atheist, but a curate of the Church of England.

The *Star* man is on the track of "King Solomon," who carries on business at the "Ark of Refuge," near Plaistow. This is probably the gentleman who recently gloried at Brighton. According to the *Star* man, the males of the establishment are few and the females many, and it is "pretty certain that the sleeping accommodation of the Ark is a bit mixed." The wife of a sea captain joined the community, and the police had to assist him in getting her out and taking her to a lunatic asylum. King Solomon's landlord wants to clear the place, and has removed the windows, but the community won't be dislodged. The neighbors are looking for the next move in the game.

Mr. Sam Standing, some time last summer, was mobbed at Luton. The cowardly wretch who incited the crowd against him had a local reputation for piety. His morality, however, is less conspicuous. At the present moment he is lodging at his country's expense. In 1889 his wife obtained a judicial separation, the magistrate ordering him to contribute 12s. 6d. per week towards the maintenance of his family. He has since allowed them to become chargeable to the parish, and being taken on a warrant to Stoke-on-Trent, he was told by the magistrate that it was "a very bad case," and sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labor.

To show themselves up to the time of day the Mohammedans have, like the Christians, produced a revised version of their scriptures, which has received the endorsement of the Caliph. The Mollahs in Constantinople, however, express their dissatisfaction with the amended book, which is said not to contain some vital passages of the original text, such as these: "God doth not love oppressors"; "He that avengeth a wrong shall not be punished, but only he who doeth violence unrighteously."

Prophet Baxter has issued a new edition of his *Fifteen Predicted Events* from 1892 until the end of this age on April 11, 1901. We suppose April 11 is a misprint for April 1. Some of the pictures are interesting. There is one of the Great Earthquake which is to happen in January, 1901. It will be worth seeing when it occurs. Baxter's present trouble is that he is in want of an Antichrist. He has had several before, but they all died soon after he selected them. There is now a vacancy, and Baxter may have to advertise for applicants.

The following epitaph is reported:—"She was first cousin to Lady Jones. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"National Church Sunday" will be observed this year on October 20. The Almighty is to be specially wrestled with on behalf of the Establishment, which is in a weaker position than ever since the general elections. The Church Defence Institution admits that the elections have "distinctly strengthened the hands of the Disestablishment party in Wales," and Churchmen must go in for "more work, more heart, more faith." Let them. It will have as much practical effect as a dog's howling at the moon.

A Society paper pokes fun at the holy articles sold in Catholic shops:—"Mary, as crowned Queen of Heaven, extends a hand from which depends a label, with the following inscription, 'Sixteen shillings anywhere else, but only eight here.' The Holy Child clasps a card which informs

the public he is reduced to one and sixpence three-farthings; that six Good Shepherds will be sold very cheap to make room for more stock."

Notions of heaven are very various. Everybody fancies it will provide what he likes best. No wonder, therefore, that the Rev. Dr. Robert Collyer, in opening a library at Otley, said that if he got to heaven and found no books there, he would want to come back and haunt his library. We sympathise with Dr. Collyer. To a book-lover a good library is infinitely more attractive than the Petticoat-lane Paradise of the book of Revelation.

We all know there are angels in heaven, and learned divines have declared how many there are and into what orders they are divided. Lately, however, the clergy have been chary of going into such details. But there is one clergyman, the venerable Archdeacon Farrar, who has just disclosed the interesting fact that "Gabriel does not envy Michael for his celestial sword, nor Michael vex Gabriel for his radiant flight, and Raphael rejoices in Uriel's sun-like brightness, and Uriel in Raphael's enchanting grace." How pretty! But fancy a man being paid over a thousand a year for such easy skyology!

The Rev. G. W. McCree says the future of Temperance is bright. "All the discoveries of science," he exclaims, "all fresh [dishonest] biblical criticism, all practical experiments, all hospital treatment, and all legislation are in our favor. Best of all—God is with us." That's it. God brings up the rear. He is not the leader, but the camp follower, of the army of progress.

Superstition seems to reign in the Transvaal Parliament. The "voetganger," or locusts, were declared to be like those sent to Pharaoh—a plague from God. One member proposed a day of fasting and humiliation, and even the president told a story of a man whose farm was always spared by the locusts until one day he caused some to be killed. His farm was devastated. Such arguments as these were used against using concerted action against the locusts. The scriptures were largely quoted, and one member conjured them not to constitute themselves terrestrial gods and oppose the Almighty. Evidently this part of South Africa will not remain for ever in the hands of such stupid Dutchmen as these. They will have to give way before those who care less for locusts and deities.

The damage done by the volcanic eruption at Sangir Island did not end with the destruction of lives and property. Nearly all the rivers and wells are completely choked with mud. Thousands are in the utmost distress for want of food and water; the rice and maize crops in all parts of the island are totally destroyed.

In Spain a tremendous thunderstorm burst over La Huesca. The lightning set fire to a number of buildings, two quarters of the town eventually being destroyed. The crops have suffered severely from the hail, and the losses are very great.

In Queensland they have droughts, while in Tasmania they have floods. Wicked Atheists may see in this an absence of Providence, but a true believer can explain it as a striking illustration of divine government. In this way. In Queensland the most praying man is a brickmaker, who always wants fine weather to dry his clay. In Tasmania the leading man of prayer is a maker of umbrellas. What people have got to do is not to grumble at God, but understand the ways of divine providence, and induce the umbrella maker to migrate to Queensland, and the brickmaker to go to Tasmania.

Providence sent a wolf mad near Lodz, in Russian Poland. It ran into the town and bit twenty adults and ten children, besides horses, cattle, pigs, and sheep. Many of the human victims went mad and took to howling. Good old Providence!

Bishop Jayne has a practical disciple at Aberdovey, where the Dovey Hotel is kept by the Rev. D. Lewis Davies, who gave up the curacy of the Welsh Church at Aberystwyth to serve another kind of refreshment to thirsty men and women. He is now both a sinner and a publican.

The *Hongkong Telegraph* devotes an article to the anti-

Christian tracts published in Hunan, China. They show that the utmost animosity against Christianity—or, as it is invariably called, the Pig religion—is manifest in that part. The familiarity of women with the priests gives rise to much scandal in the Chinese mind, and the tracts assert that "every Christian home keeps one of its daughters for the service of the priest when he comes round." The Chinese seem to have as prejudiced a view of the Christians as Christians have of Freethinkers.

A new Mahdi, or Messiah, has arisen in Morocco. His name is Hmam, and he is credited with prophetic power and believed to be divinely protected from the bullets of the enemy. Even the temporary rise of such fanatics throws light on the origin of more successful faiths.

The local Freethinkers who have opened a new outdoor station at the junction of Canonbury-lane with Upper-street, Islington, were prevented by rowdy opposition from holding a meeting last Sunday night. Since the opening of this station, the O.E.S. have sent representatives to lecture at that place, and with them has come a gang of young followers of meek and lowly Jesus, who on Sunday, by shouting and hustling, prevented the speakers from the Freethought platform from being heard. The chief offender was a large-faced, pale-eyed, red-bearded man, displaying the garb of a gentleman and the conduct of a drunken coster. From this portrait some readers may recognise a certain systematic disturber of our meetings. This fellow who so industriously carries on the work described as to lead us to suspect that he is a paid rough, openly declared on Sunday last his intention to prevent the meetings from being held. Freethinkers who can make it convenient to attend, are asked to do so next Sunday evening at 8.30 to support the speakers.

Some poor men, who have had experience of the Salvation Army shelters, spoke in very disparaging terms of them at Hyde Park. Instead of being satisfied with the sword of the spirit, Booth prosecuted the men for stealing S.A. towels. They were acquitted, and now continue their disparaging remarks more sedulously than ever.

"Yes, dear wife," and he closed his eyes, "the end is near. The world grows dark about me. There is a mist around me gathering thicker and thicker, and there, as through a cloud, I hear the music of angels—sweet and sad." "No, no, John dear; that's the brass band at the corner." "What!" said the man, jumping from his bed and flinging the bootjack at the leader, "have those scoundrels dared to come round here when I am dying?" And he recovered.

Mr. H. D. Trail, writing under "The World of Letters" in the *Graphic*, expresses high admiration of the Shelley Centenary proceedings at Horsham, and of Mr. Gosse's address in especial. He very naturally sneers at the celebrants who attach some importance to Shelley's principles. "Those who kept Shelley's birthday at the Hall of Science," he says, "doubtless place the crude *Queen Mab* far above the *Prometheus* or the *Adonais*." Surely the "doubtless" is delicious. Mr. Trail would never have written this absurdity if he had taken the trouble to inform himself as to the facts, instead of playing the oracle. The Hall of Science speakers know Shelley's writings as well as he does, and their reverence does not affect their discrimination. They are quite aware that the *Prometheus* and *Adonais* are great poems, and that *Queen Mab* is chiefly rhetoric; but they also know, if Mr. Trail does not, that the thought expressed in *Queen Mab*, however immaturely, was the thought of Shelley's whole life to the very day of his death.

The *Arena* for July, which has probably been sent to us in mistake for the August number, contains a strong editorial article against the Sunday closing of the World's Fair at Chicago. It declares that the Church and the Saloon (American for drinking-shop) are marshalled under one banner. "The saloon," it says, "knows that for every dollar spent to secure the closing of the World's Fair, hundreds, if not thousands will flow into the coffers of the liquor traffic; while the other two members of the trinity of night, the brothel and the gambling hell, will be correspondingly benefited. The Church expects to gain a few more auditors for one or two hours in the twenty-four." "What shall we say," the *Arena* asks, "of the cost to morality which will inevitably follow the triumph of this unholy alliance?"

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 21, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. : at 7.30, "Did we Live Before we were Born?"

August 28, Hall of Science, London.
Sept. 4, Glasgow; 11, Aberdeen; 18, Hall of Science, London; 25, Bristol.
October 9 and 16, Hall of Science, London; 23, Newcastle; 30, South Shields.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—August 21, Manchester; 28, Grimsby. September 3 and 4, Rushden; 11, Town Hall, Birmingham; 18, Birmingham; 25, Hall of Science. Oct. 2, Hall of Science; 9 and 16, Birmingham; 19, 20 and 21, Aberdeen; 23, Glasgow; 25 and 26, Belfast; 30, Edinburgh; Nov. 6 and 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield; 27, Hall of Science, London. Dec. 4, Hall of Science; 11, Manchester; 18 and 25, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

A. M. REYNOLDS.—Sorry the newsagent will not display our contents-sheet. Everything is against us in trade channels, but we hope to live down bigoted opposition.

J. S. MITCHELL.—Thanks for the interesting cutting.

G. F. WENBOEN.—See acknowledgment in "Sugar Plums." We intend to find or make as much leisure as possible before the winter season begins.

W. H. L.—Glad to have your approval. The subscription is divided as you desire.

M. K. SHEPPARD.—The speeches of Mr. Foote and Mr. Shaw at the Shelley meeting were not reported verbatim. In addition to the *Freethinker* paragraphs, brief summary reports appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Your letter is handed to the N.S.S. secretary.

JOSEPH BROWN.—Thanks. It shall have attention in due course.

C. E. SMITH.—Cuttings received with thanks.

C. WRIGHT.—"Praise God" Barebones was said to be the baptismal name of a member of the Commonwealth Parliament. His proper name was Barbon, and he sat for London. He had a son, who was generally known as "Damned Barebones," and said to have been baptised, "If Christ had not died for me I should have been damned-Barbon."

W. R.—Cuttings delayed through not being sent to us direct. Thanks.

W. HOLLAND.—Thanks for the cuttings.

T. R. JOHNSON, 51 Mytongate, Hull, sells this journal and other Secular publications.

THE Hackney Radical Club, through Charles Hyde, sends us £1 for the Bradlaugh Memorial, with a letter from which we extract the following: "The Political Council, in whose hands the matter rested, are perfectly satisfied that in the purchase of the Hall of Science will be found the best means of giving expression to Radical regard for the late Mr. Bradlaugh; and they wish you hearty success in your efforts."

T. FOREMAN.—It is pleasant to find that the friend to whom you introduced the *Freethinker* is so appreciative of its contents as to subscribe to the Sustentation Fund and to promise to do so annually, if necessary. Certainly, if those who are willing to pay twopence for this journal, were to buy two or three copies weekly at the present price, and give them away to their acquaintances, it would be a way out of our difficulty. A couple of thousand extra copies taken in this way would be a great help.

A. TRIPP will subscribe annually to the Sustentation Fund if the *Freethinker* is kept at "the popular price of one penny."

S. SYKES.—Mr. Foote is just offering Liverpool a date.—Dr. Samuel Davidson was the author of the work you mention and other writings; we know nothing of his personal history.—*Will Christ Save Us?* will be issued in pamphlet form when the three remaining instalments have appeared in the *Freethinker*.

J. DOBSON.—Glad to hear of Mr. Heaford's success at Huddersfield. It was hard lines to be opposed by a Salvation Army band and a blind organ-grinder. No wonder Mr. Heaford was a bit hoarse when we met him at Manchester.

J. W. HOWSON.—It hardly calls for special comment, there being so many children short of food in this Bible-reading, Church-ridden country.

P. K.—We have placed your cheque to the credit of the Sustentation Fund instead of dividing the amount. It comes to the same thing practically.

G. ONOENSON.—Paper forwarded to Mr. Holyoake. Glad to hear you are deeply interested in his articles on Thomas Cooper. Mr. Holyoake is seeing the other articles you refer to through the press in book form, to be entitled *Fifty Years of an Agitator's Life*.

A. GUNTER.—We hope the Islington open-air station will be properly supported. Christian rowdies must not be allowed to thwart our propaganda. The fellow you mention is a living refutation of the Design Argument.

J. SAMSON.—Thanks for cuttings, etc.

A. ROBERTS (Sheffield).—Your lecture notices are always inserted if they reach us on Tuesday mornings. Delay on your part does not involve blame on ours. We cannot, however, insert lengthy communications under that heading; but we are always willing to give a paragraph to anything special.

J. HOOPER, secretary of the Nottingham Branch N.S.S., desires all Freethinkers in the locality to meet at the Secular Hall, Beck-street, on Sunday, Aug. 21, at 7.30 p.m., when important business will be brought forward.

J. CLOSE.—See paragraph.

W. T. LEEKEY.—Mr. Guest had already written to us. See "Acid Drops." No doubt the Islington station will be well supported.

W. HARDAKER.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. A. LILL.—See answer to Mr. Roberts. We insert notices that reach us, and cannot be responsible for their non-arrival.

T. E. (Heaton).—We printed the Irish story about two years ago; the Peter and the cock story several years earlier. Like friend Solomon, we begin to feel there is nothing new under the sun.

YOUNG RECRUIT.—Thanks for the second subscription. Your suggestion is a good one.

W. RUDD.—See "Acid Drops."

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention
PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Flying Sword—Hongkong Telegraph—Johannesburg Star—Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette—Cape Times—Natal Observer—Echo—Barnsley Chronicle—Twentieth Century—People's Friend—Sheffield and Rotherham Independent—Liverpool Football—Clarion.

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.

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.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

"Did We Live before We were Born?" is the title of Mr. Foote's lecture at the London Hall of Science this evening (Aug. 21). His investigation of the question should interest Christians, Spiritualists, and Theosophists, as well as Freethinkers. It may also attract our Hindu readers in London.

The Failsworth Secular Sunday-school held its Annual Services on Sunday. Despite the rain, which must have prevented many persons from attending, the large hall was crowded both afternoon and evening, and excellent collections were made on behalf of the School Funds. Hymns and glees were sung very finely by the choir, which is admirably well trained; and the rendering of musical selections by the band was deservedly applauded. Mr. Foote delivered two addresses on "Men, Women, and Children: the Real Trinity" and "The Religion of Humanity." He had to adapt himself to an unusually mixed audience of both sexes and all ages. Whether he quite succeeded is difficult to say; but the ladies looked certainly interested, and the children readily caught up the lighter parts of the lecture. Altogether, the Failsworth friends congratulated themselves on a very successful day. They regretted the wretchedness of the weather, but they are used to rain in that district. It comes, like the American voter, early and often.

We wish some of the Secular Societies in England could take a lesson from the Failsworth Secularists, who devote a great deal of time and energy to their Sunday-school, and are justly proud of the result. It was very pleasant to see those bright young faces on the platform, and to hear those fresh young voices joining in harmony with the deeper notes of their elders.

Mr. Charles Watts had three splendid audiences in Liverpool last Sunday. The frequent outbreak of applause, which

it is reported was repeated again and again at each meeting, was a proof of the appreciation upon the part of the meetings of Mr. Watts' efforts. Discussion followed each lecture. To-day (Aug. 21) Mr. Watts lectures three times in Manchester.

Mr. Watts has written two special articles upon the recent proceedings of the British Association at Edinburgh. The first article will appear in our next issue.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—G. F. Wenborn, £1; W. H. L., 10s.; A. Tripp, 5s.; P. K., £1; T. Foreman, 10s.; W. Riddell, 10s.; J. C., 2s. 6d.; Young Recruit, 2s. 6d.

We do not intend—and we said so at the outset—to go on for ever appealing to the wealthier members of the Secular party to support our Sustentation Fund, so that we may continue to let the poorer members have the paper for a penny. We have laid the case before them, and they must take their own course. Personally, we should lose nothing by raising the price; on the contrary, we should gain; for we are confident that quite seventy-five per cent. of our readers would take the paper at twopence. But we should be extremely sorry to lose the odd twenty-five per cent. of our readers, whose connexion with the party would be to some extent imperilled; and, of course, a loss of circulation—even if the change bring financial profit—is a loss of influence.

We may as well state that a hundred pounds would need to be subscribed within the next few weeks to make us feel that the present arrangement should be continued. Promises of contingent assistance are valuable in their way, but expenses have to be met meanwhile—out of pocket expenses at any rate. Our present stock of paper will last for a month or so, and before we give the order for a fresh lot we should like to be in a position to decide our future course.

Mr. W. Heaford is on a lecturing tour. On Saturday (Aug. 13) he addressed a large audience in the Market-place, Huddersfield. On Sunday morning he lectured to another very large open-air meeting in Stephenson-square, Manchester. His afternoon lecture was cut short by the rain. In the evening Mr. Heaford spoke to a good audience (considering the weather) in the Secular Hall. Both in matter and manner he gave great and general satisfaction.

Mr. A. B. Moss has been holidaying and lecturing in the south of England. At Portsmouth he spoke in the Secular Hall, and out of doors at Southampton, where he had a large and orderly audience of well-dressed people who bought a considerable quantity of his pamphlets. At Basingstoke last Sunday he had another large open-air audience and a good reception. Basingstoke is becoming a working centre of the South Western Railway Company, and promises to become also a centre of Freethought activity.

The Battersea Branch goes on an Excursion by brakes to Riddlesdown next Sunday, Aug. 28, starting from the Secular Hall punctually at 10 a.m., returning at 7 p.m. Tickets 2s. 6d. each. Friends wanting tickets must apply at once to Mr. F. Mullins, 4 Pulford-terrace, Pimlico, S.W., or at the Secular Hall and at the outdoor lecture station.

The Manchester Branch's annual picnic takes place next Sunday (Aug. 28). Buses start from the Secular Hall at 10.30. Dinner will be provided at the "Ball's Head," Lymm, at 2. The tickets are 4s.; children half price. Early application should be made to members of the Committee, or to the president, Mr. A. Hemingway, 25 Higher Chatham-street.

A pleasure party of Freethinkers and broad-minded Christians went from Willington to Stanhope on Sunday. At Wolsingham the party was joined by several local "saints." The weather was delightful, and the merry excursionists surprised the orthodox people on the road by singing pieces that were by no means sacred. A good deal of Secular literature was distributed, the *Freethinker* being often eagerly accepted.

Freethinkers of the Finsbury Park Branch and in the neighborhood are requested to attend the meetings in the park on Sunday, as an organised opposition is threatened.

Mr. Wheeler's article on "Shelley as a Freethinker" is reprinted in the *Twentieth Century* for August 4.

Secular Thought notices Mr. Wheeler's *Bible Studies*, and says his acute Bible criticisms have long been a marked feature of the *Freethinker*. It reproduces almost in full Mr. Foote's preface to the volume.

"We are sorry to see," *Secular Thought* says, "that our valued contemporary, the London *Freethinker*, is obliged to make a special appeal for aid in continuing its publication." It also expresses a hope that "the friends of Freethought will rally to the support of such a gallant, vigorous, and able champion." We are obliged to our Canadian contemporary for its cordial good wishes. It is mistaken, however, in supposing that we ask for aid in continuing the *Freethinker*. What we ask for is aid in continuing it at the popular price of one penny. We could sell enough at twopence to pay, but we are loth to cut off a couple of thousand readers.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* is now published, and Colonel Ingersoll makes it the text of a long and eloquent article in the *North American Review*. We have reprinted it in pamphlet form under the title of *Paine the Pioneer*.

The residence at the Polygon, Clarendon-square, Somers Town, where Godwin wrote *Political Justice* and Mary Wollstonecraft her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* is being cleared away for buildings for the accommodation of the employes of the Midland Railway. Both Godwin and his wife were buried in the adjacent graveyard of Old St. Pancras.

The Town Council of Sunderland, on the motion of Mr. Calvert, has decided that the Borough Museum, Art Gallery, and Library shall in future be open on Sundays. There was an animated discussion in which, of course, the bogie of the dreadful Continental Sunday was trotted out, but securely laid by Messrs. Storey, Roche, Turnbull, Harrison and the Mayor. The motion was carried by three, without the vote of the Mayor, and the result was received with loud cheers.

STOCK ARGUMENTS AND OBJECTIONS.

A FREETHINKER who undertakes to demonstrate the irrational character of orthodox Christianity, and to defend against all comers the reasonableness of his own views, takes upon himself a task that requires at once a large degree of patience, tact, good temper, and sound sense.

Public advocates of an unpopular cause need very different qualities from those who are merely called upon from time to time to defend their belief in private conversations with friends.

The public advocate has to think of the impression he is likely to make, and whilst adhering strictly to what he believes to be true, should always endeavor to present that aspect of the case which is likely to impress his audience favorably, and to carry with it evidence of the earnestness and sincerity of the speaker.

The Freethinker, in private, may adopt any course he may think wise in defending his principles, for he is then speaking for himself alone and not as the representative of an organised body of thinkers. And if he fails to make a good impression he alone has to suffer.

Now there are certain stock arguments and objections that we find used both publicly and privately by Christians when the questions in dispute between believers and unbelievers come up for discussion. When the Freethinker begins his attack upon Christianity and points out its numerous contradictions and absurdities, the Christian invariably retorts by saying that it seems to him highly presumptuous on the part of an obscure Freethinker to call in question the accuracy of a faith that has been and is accepted by all the greatest scholars in the world. "Look," for instance, they will exclaim, "at a great scholar like Mr. Gladstone; the Freethinker cannot say that he is a fool; he understands Greek, and can translate Homer, and yet he believes in Christianity. And look at all the great scholars in the Church—they all believe. Surely you do not charge them with hypocrisy? Answer that if you can!"

Then the Freethinker makes essay. He points out, in the first place, that scholarship has nothing to do with the question; and secondly, that there are plenty of *learned fools* in the world. He illustrates this by pointing to the fact that many learned men profess to believe that three times one make one; and that there are hundreds of uncultured persons who have too much good sense to believe in such nonsense. He further points out that the truth or falsity of a proposition is rarely determined by scholarship, but almost invariably by logic or common sense.

Then turning to the question of Mr. Gladstone's belief he asks, "Does Mr. Gladstone believe in a personal Devil? Does he believe in hell fire? Does he believe in and practise all the teachings of Jesus?" It then becomes an easy matter to show that Mr. Gladstone only believes in such portions of the Old and New Testaments as he regards as reasonable and rejects all the rest; in other words, that he is a Freethinker up to a certain point, and, if orthodox Christianity be true, is as much liable to everlasting incarceration in hell-fire as any Freethinker in existence. Moreover, Mr. Gladstone is decidedly un-Christian in practice. To suit the exigencies of a political situation he is prepared to disregard any or all of the doctrines of his blessed Lord and Master; and often he acts as though the "Almighty God," of whom he so glibly and frequently talks, had no existence outside the imaginations of men. For was it not Mr. Gladstone who put the English army in the field to exterminate poor Egyptians, who, as he himself subsequently said, "were rightly struggling to be free"? How could a Christian who believed in the doctrine of "resist not evil" do this? Besides, how could he believe in an almighty and all-good God who would allow him to destroy an inoffensive and defenceless people by all the insidious modes of modern warfare? The fact is, all Mr. Gladstone's beliefs are subject to certain mental reservations; in other words, to certain alterations consequent upon the constantly changing circumstances and conditions of life. In one sense, Mr. Gladstone is like the American politician who exclaimed, at the end of a brief address, "Them's my principles, gentlemen; but if you don't like 'em they can be altered." And, as a matter of fact, Mr. Gladstone's views are modified and altered from time to time to bring them in harmony with altered conditions of life.

"Anyhow," the Christian will exclaim, "if Christianity possesses defects—which nobody can deny—it is a good religion nevertheless; for it has led many a man and woman to live noble lives, ever devoted to human well-being. It was good enough for my father and mother, and it is good enough for me." To this the Freethinker may retort, that false religions have often found noble and unselfish devotees; and that a high ideal of human duty and character may often exist in the mind side by side with the grossest superstitions. Besides, it does not follow that, because one form of belief was suitable to our forefathers, therefore it is suitable to us to-day. The stage-coach as a mode of conveyance was suitable to the requirements of our fathers, but the railway-train is scarcely rapid enough to satisfy the desires of the busy enterprising man of to-day. And an ancient belief, which is not susceptible of growth, must gradually but inevitably decay.

"Well, but religion must be true; things could not come by themselves," the Christian will exclaim almost in despair. "There must be a first cause." A first cause to what? you ask. "To this world—the earth on which we live." Certainly, says the Freethinker, the present form of the earth is not eternal; there is evidence enough to show that this earth was once a molten mass of matter, which was thrown off from the sun; and that through loss of heat it became solid on the outside, and thus the crust of the earth was formed. But if the form of the earth has changed, the substance of it remains the same, for the elements are indestructible and therefore eternal.

"Ah! but God gave the elements that quality when he created them." And who or what gave God his qualities? If you must have a first cause you must have a cause for God, and a cause for the causer of God, and so on *ad infinitum*; and see where that would land you.

"Oh," exclaims the Christians, as a final shot; "suppose Christianity be false, even then I am as well off as you, for death will end all; on the other hand, if Christianity turns out to be true, I am the gainer. But how will you stand?" To which the Freethinker will at once reply, that

in the presence of a good, wise, and just Deity, who estimates men according to their actions, he will not fear the judgment; on the other hand, if God be not just or good he is just as likely to send the Christian to hell as he is any unbeliever. Therefore the Freethinker is on the safe side after all; for he takes the responsibility of his actions upon himself and does not shift the burden on to other shoulders; he neither expects nor desires the innocent to suffer for the guilty; and in the presence of a good, wise, and just God, the earnest, honest Freethinker as much deserves to hear the words "Well done, good and faithful servant" as the best Christian the world is likely to produce.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

G O D .

AN infinite God is a wonderful thing!
He plans, and creates, and maintains;
He causes the buds to be born in the spring,
And poisonous gas in the drains.

He makes all the smiles that hypocrisy wreathes,
The tears that a crocodile sheds,
And each distant nebulous system that seethes,
Whilst counting the hairs of our heads.

This God, simultaneously, ev'rywhere is,
He's up, down, and sideways as well:
In brandy-balls, bacon and bottles of "fizz";
In Talmage, and tapeworms, and holl.

All order would vanish if God ceased to be:
No sparrow could fall to the ground;
Exploiters and parsons would all be at sea,
And stars would be "fooling around."

But, God is in all things, and order supreme
Keeps ev'rything right in its place:
The slave in his bondage, the fly in the cream,
And honesty last in the race.

This God he is good, and he never will change;
He sends—that the world might be blest—
The cholera, parsons, kings, glanders and mange,
Yea, all that he knows to be best.

O cancers, and microbes, and parasites all!
Blest servants of God and of man!
With you all we cripples in gratitude fall,
And praise his beneficent plan.

If humbly, with childlike devotion, we try
To praise him by night and by day,
From God we'll receive, in the "sweet by-and-bye,
Ta-ra-ra, if not Bom-de-ay!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

NOT COMPLIMENTARY.

Mr. L—, a clergyman, had accepted an invitation to talk to the patients of an insane asylum. In his address he said he tried to talk on subjects they could grasp readily, using language that was simple. One of these subjects treated was that of the mothers who threw their children into the Ganges, thinking they were appeasing the wrath of the gods. During his talk about this, Mr. L— noticed one of his congregation, a man who had his eyes riveted upon him. The man's face was a study. His attitude was so direct and so fiendish that it annoyed the speaker. After the discourse Mr. L— went among the patients. He met the man with the glaring eyes and took his hand. The minister told him he had noticed his close attention to some portion of the sermon. "I noticed," said Mr. L—, "that you were particularly interested when I spoke about the mothers throwing their babes into the Ganges, I would like to know, my good fellow, what was passing through your mind while I was talking on this subject." The maniac glared again at the preacher and replied: "I was wondering why your mother didn't throw you in."—*Snohomish Eye*.

Some time ago a parish minister met an old man of ninety-two. "Dear me, John, I scarcely expected you to have come last Sunday two miles when the snow was so deep, and when few even in the village attended." "Deed, sir," was the reply, "ye see I wadna been there mysel' if I hadna been needin' snuff."

TOBACCO AND RELIGION.

ALL devotees of St. Nicotine are not aware that their burnt offerings are of the nature of a religious rite. That this is so will not surprise those who have studied the religions of early man, and know how these faiths entwined themselves with every action of daily life. Among the American Indians, with whom the habit of tobacco smoking originated, there is much evidence that it partook of a religious character.

Longfellow, in *The Song of Hiawatha*, has told the Indian legend how Gitchi Manito, the creator of the nations, at the great Red Pipe-stone Quarry, made a pipe and smoked it as a signal assembling the tribes, whom he told to henceforth smoke their pipes in peace together.

And in silence all the warriors
Broke the redstone of the quarry,
Smoothed and formed it into Peace-pipes,
Broke the long reeds by the river,
Decked them with their brightest feathers,
And departed each one homeward.

While the Master of Life, ascending,
Through the opening of cloud-curtains,
Through the door-ways of the heaven,
Vanished from before their faces,
In the smoke that rolled around him,
The Pukwana of the Peace-pipe.

The Red Pipe-stone Quarry was held to be neutral ground between the ever-warring tribes of Indians. The Sioux thus tell how the peace-pipe was instituted. "Many ages after making the red man, when all the tribes were at war, the Great Spirit called them together at the Red Rocks. He stood on the top of the rocks, and the red nations were assembled on the plain below. He took out of the rock a piece of the red stone and made a large pipe. He smoked it over them all; told them that it was a part of their flesh; that though they were at war, they must meet at this place as friends; that it belonged to them all; that they must make their calumets from it, and smoke them to him whenever they wished to appease him or get his good will." The pipe was thus associated with all that was most elevated in the lives of these savage races.

Captain John G. Bourke, in his "Notes upon the Religion of the Apache Indians" (*Folk Lore*, Dec. 1891, p. 427), says: "Smoking is at all times an act of praise, or prayer, or a thank-offering, and this whether among the Indians of the great plains of the Missouri or the fierce denizens of the mountains of Arizona and Sonora. When an Apache smokes he blows first to the sky, then to the earth, then in a horizontal plane to the four winds, making a sucking, grunting noise with each motion; then he prays as follows: 'Be good, O sun; keep me from death. Be good, O ghosts of my fathers; keep me from death. Let me not sicken. Be good, O great mother earth; keep me from harm. Be good, O ye winds; keep me from chills and fevers.'"

Dr. Wilson says (*Prehistoric Man*, vol. i., p. 387): "An offering of tobacco is the usual gift to the spirits, and it appears to have been employed in similar acts of worship from the earliest period of intercourse with Europeans." In the narrative of the voyage of Drake in 1572, it is stated that the natives brought a little basket made of rushes, and filled with an herb which they called *tobak*. This was regarded as a propitiary offering; and the writer subsequently notes, they "came now the second time to us, bringing with them, as before had been done, feathers and bags of *tobak* for presents, or, rather, indeed, for sacrifices, upon the persuasion that we were gods."

Picart, speaking of the people of Hudson's Bay, says: "Les Sauvages dont nous parlous semblent reconnoître le Soleil pour le Souverain Maître de l'Univers. Ils l'encensent avec du tabac, et cela s'appelle chez eux *fumer le Soleil*."

Thomas Hariot, who accompanied Sir Walter Raleigh, in his narrative of the discovery of Virginia in 1584, describes the use of tobacco, called by the natives *uppowoc*, and enlarges on its virtues. He says: "This *uppowoc* is of so precious estimation amongst them that they think their gods are marvellously delighted therewith; whereupon, sometimes they make hallowed fires and cast some of the powder therein for a sacrifice." Dr. Andrew Wilson, citing this, says: "The discovery of unmistakable evidence

that one of the sacred altars of 'Mound City' was specially devoted to nicotian rites and offerings, renders such allusions peculiarly significant. In the belief of the ancient worshippers, the Great Spirit smelled a sweet savor in the smoke of the sacred plant; and the homely implements of modern luxury became in their hands a sacred censer, from which the vapor rose with as fitting propitiatory odors as that which perfumes the awful precincts of the cathedral altar, amid the mysteries of the Church's high and holy days."†

Jahveh, we know, delighted to smell a sweet savor (Gen. viii. 21). But he never knew the whiff of Golden Cloud, and neither Jesus Christ nor Julius Cæsar ever tasted the fragrance of a fine cigar. Both the word spirit and the idea which it conveys is derived from the *breath*, and from its association with breath the vapor of tobacco took a spiritual signification. The smoke of sacrifice represented a mode of spiritual communion from the breath below to the breath above. The Jews were commanded to burn a perpetual incense before the Lord (Exodus xxx. 7-8; Lev. xvi. 13) Its ingredients were calculated to destroy the smell of the sacrifices of blood. Had they known tobacco they would probably have used it, though the Lord killed Nadab and Abihu for offering him "strange fire" (Lev. x. 1).

Gerald Massey says:—

"The smokers and fumigators with tobacco were inhaling spirit and in-breathing an inspiring life, a delirium of delight. Intoxication by tobacco was held by the North American Indians to be a supernatural ecstasy in which they saw spirits, as did the Brazilian sorcerers by the same means. Breath, breathing, vapor, were synonyms of the Spirit, and the North American Indian yet adores the Great Spirit, the master of breath, by breathing the smoke of his tobacco pipe towards the sun."‡

Smoking is a luxury; some think a vice; but in any case, it is one which can claim "the sanctity of religion."

J. M. W.

THE ELDER'S SERMON.

By S. W. FOSS.

Our elder told us yesterday we had not learned to live
Until we learned how blessed 'tis to pardon and forgive;
The dear, sweet, precious words he spake like heavenly manna
fell;
The perfect peace they brought our hearts no human words
can tell.

"Love brings millennial peace," he said; and, though my
lips were dumb,
I still kept shouting in my soul, "Amen, and let it come!"
"When men forgive all other men, the year of jubilee
Will dawn upon the world," he said. I said, "So let it be."

"So, love your neighbor as yourself," he then began again;
And Silas Fitz, across the aisle, he shouted out "Amen!"
What right had he to yell "Amen," the low-toned, measly
hound!
Who took my cow, my new milch cow, and locked her
in the pound?

The low-down, raw-boned, homely crank, a lunk-head, and
a lout,
Whose love, and grace, and heart and soul have all been
rusted out—
To sit there in the sanctuary and holler out "Amen!"
If I could choke the rascal once, he'd never shout again!

One day his dog came by my house, I called the brute inside.
Gave him a chunk of meat to eat, and he crawled off
and died.
He just crawled off and died right then. Says I, "I'll
let him see,
No long-legged simpleton like him can get the best of me."

But, oh, that sermon—I would love to hear it preached again,
About forgiveness, charity, and love of fellow-men.
I should have felt as if I basked in heaven's especial smile,
If that blamed villain, Silas Fitz, hadn't sat across the aisle.
—Yankee Blade.

* *Ceremonies et Coutumes Religieuses de tous les Peuples du Monde*, tom. vi., p. 78.

† *Pre-historic Man*, vol. i., p. 301.

‡ *Natural Genesis*, vol. i., p. 157.

BOOK CHAT.

Dr. R. Bithell publishes through Watts and Co., London, a *Handbook of Scientific Agnosticism* (2s.) He informs us that his previous writings have expressed his personal opinions, but this volume has been "subjected to the revision of a Committee." He does not say who the committee are: so that, although they are "responsible to a large extent for the opinions herein recorded," it does not by any means follow that the book is representative of the general body of persons who favor the term of Agnostic.

The first part of Dr. Bithell's volume is only a summary statement of the experiential philosophy. We hardly think there was a need for it, and we do not see its special connection with Agnosticism. When the author comes to "Relativity" he is confused, uncertain, or timid. He says that all dogmas about the Unconditioned, the Absolute, etc., must be "received with the greatest caution." But it follows from all he has written up to this point that all dogmas are unphilosophical; and he goes on to declare that we have "no means of verifying" dogmas about the Absolute, nay, that "nothing can be known" respecting it. Clearly, therefore, on his own showing these dogmas should not be "received" at all, even with the "greatest caution," but peremptorily rejected.

Mr. Oscar Wilde, in one of his early poems, said that he was neither on God's side nor against him; he stood aloof and watched. Dr. Bithell, who is much older, assumes the same attitude; only he has a sneaking fondness for the Almighty, which breaks out in all sorts of curious ways. Agnosticism is not "antagonistic" to theology, but "critical." There are some persons "calling themselves Agnostics" who "at the mere name of God or Christ will bristle up and flash their eyes as though a rattlesnake had been turned loose upon them." Dr. Bithell does not bristle or flash, so with "such persons" he has "no sympathy"—and they must bear the misfortune as they can.

The Agnosticism of Dr. Bithell is a misnomer. It is simply a form of Theism. He believes in God, though he regards the Deity "as in his nature and essence unknowable." He is "that Power" which "for lack of a better name we mostly agree in calling God." It also appears that Dr. Bithell endorses the Rev. J. W. Dawson's view that "the true attitude" towards such Christian dogmas as the Incarnation and Resurrection is "the attitude of a reverent Agnosticism." But what this is he does not explain; and when the epithet "reverent" gets into the place of "scientific" the Agnosticism it qualifies is a species of sentimentalism.

Mr. Rendel Harris announces the discovery of a new text of the old Syriac Version of the Gospels. The Syriac Version ought to be older than the Greek, but is not. Still, valuable sidelights may be expected from the new discovery. One of the curious things in the old Syriac Version, the Peshito, is that we find no Peter in the Gospels or Paul's epistles, but only Shemeum, or Simon, and Kepha, or Cephas. It is unlikely, if Jesus spoke Aramaic, he would make a pun on Peter's name in Greek; a consideration which suggests that the whole passage concerning giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter is a later interpolation.

The author of *Revelations of Antichrist*, thus puts the case about Peter: "A Galilean Messiah makes a proselyte of a fisherman named Shemeun and rechristens him Kepha, saying that he wants to build a church on that kepha. So starts the story, which by degrees grows into a Gospel. By-and-by the Greek and Roman converts to the Messianic faith become acquainted with the Syrian legend, and wanting a Rock of their own on which to erect their church, they translate the Syriac Gospels into Greek, changing Kepha to Petros, and making Jesus talk Greek to his humble disciples ere they are endowed with the miraculous gift of tongues."

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.

PROFANE JOKES.

Revivalist—"Don't you ever feel a yearning for something higher than the mere things of this earth?" Jaggs—"Not much. I have lived on the top floor of a twelve-story flat, and the elevator stops running at ten o'clock."

He—"Do you know, after hearing Tom Jones preach, I've a mind to abandon the study of law and become an evangelist." She—"Why don't you? That's the only profession where a bad past record becomes a feather in one's cap."

A schoolboy, asked what Bible knowledge he had acquired, summed it up thusly—"Once on a time God made Adam of nothing, and woman from his rib. Then he sent a flood and drowned everybody 'cept those in Noah's ark, and Noah got drunk and cursed Ham in his tent."

A three year old girl accompanied her mother to witness a baptism; the next day, arranging her dolls along the edge of the bath-tub, she prepared one of them for immersion. Her mother advanced within listening distance, and heard the following address to the candidate: "I now baptise you in the name of the father, and the son, and into the hole you go."

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.]
Secretaries may send in a month's list of lectures in advance.

LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): Sunday and Tuesday at 8.15, social gatherings. Wednesday at 8, dramatic class (members wanted). Thursday at 8, committee.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 8, C. J. Steinberg will lecture. Monday at 8.30, C. Cohen's science class (physical geography). Saturday at 7.30, dancing.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 5.30, debating class; 7.30, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Miracles and Modern Science."

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.O.: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Did we Live before we were Born?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, A. Johnson, "Pagan and Christian Gods"; 7, C. J. Hunt, "The Bible God."

Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, H. Snell, "Christianity at the Bar of Science."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Bible Stories; are they True?"

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, H. Courtney, "Peace on Earth."

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen will lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): J. Fagan, 11.30, "Recantation"; 3.30, "What is Sin?"

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8, C. J. Hunt, "After Death."

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Jesus and the Devil."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, J. Rowney, "The Life of Christ."

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 6.30, debate between Messrs. Doe and Fagan on "Is there any Efficacy in Prayer?"

Kingsland Green (near Ball's Pond-road): 11.30, J. B. Coppock, "Scientific Materialism."

Lambeth—New Cut (corner of Short-street): 11.30, R. Rosetti, "The Bible and Science"

Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, a lecture, "Lux Mundi: a Criticism."

Midland Arches (near Battle Bridge-road): 11.30, G. Standing, "An Hour with the Bible."

Mill End Waste: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Missionaries."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Bible and Modern Thought."

Plaistow Green: 6.30, R. Rosetti, "The Bible and Science."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, C. Cohen will lecture.

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, S. H. Alison will lecture; 3.15, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, Mr. St. John, "The Bible and Science." Thursday at 7.45, C. Cohen will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, B. Hyatt, "The Devil a Liar from the Beginning."

COUNTRY.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 7, Mr. Verney, "The Rise of Science."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 7, J. J. Taylor, "The History of the Christian Devil."

Halstead (Essex)—Co-operative Assembly Room: 6.30, Stanley Jones, "The Fall of Man."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Harry Smith, "The Stone which the Builders Rejected" (Matt. xxi. 42-44).

Manchester N. B. 8., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Charles Watts, 11, "The Throne and the Church"; 3, "The Blight of Superstition"; 6.30, "Man: his Origin, Nature, and Destiny."

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

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: W. Heaford, 3, "The Consolations of Religion"; 7, "The Gospel of Free-thought."
 South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street; 7, business meeting.
OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.
 Bingley—Main-street; 3, John Grange, "Does Man Survive Death?"
 Blackburn—Market-square: Sam Standing, 11, "The Bible and Labor"; 3, "Jesus as a Savior"; 7, "Can we Manage Without Christianity?"
 Bradford—Upper Godwin-street: 6.30, O. Trumper will lecture.
 Chatham—New-road (near Waghorn Memorial): 11, F. J. Boorman, "Moses Refuted by Darwin."
 Halstead (Essex)—Market-hill: 2.45, Stanley Jones, "Priests and Progress."
 Huddersfield—Market Cross: Saturday, Aug. 20, at 7.30, W. Heaford, "Secularism and Christianity Compared."
 Nottingham—Sneinton Market: 11, debate between J. Hooper and Mr. Jones on "Have the Scriptures Morally Benefitted Mankind?"
 Sheffield (near the Monolith): 10.45, W. Heaford, "The Fallacies of Christianity"; if wet weather in the Hall of Science.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Sept. 4, Birmingham; 11, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Aug. 21, m., Camberwell; 28, e., Camberwell. Sept. 4, m., Mile End Waste; a., Victoria Park; 11, m., Bethnal Green; a., Regent's Park; 18, m., Wood Green; 25, m. and e., Camberwell.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—All mornings booked to September.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Aug. 21, Westminster. Sept. 4, Camberwell; 11, Clerkenwell; 18, Westminster; 25, Manchester. Oct. 2, Camberwell; 9, Westminster.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Aug. 18, Walthamstow; 21, m., Mile End; a., Regent's Park; e., Edmonton; 25, Walthamstow; 28 m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; e., Walthamstow.

SAM STANDRING, 106 Oxford-road, All Saints' Manchester.—Aug. 21, Blackburn; 28, Manchester. Sept. 4, Barnsley; 11, Grimsby; 18, Leicester; 25, Rochdale.

C. J. STEINBERG, 103 Mile End-road, E.—Aug. 28, m., Bethnal Green.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Chant-street, Stratford, E.—Aug. 21, m., Victoria Park; 28, m., Wood Green. Sept. 4, m., Columbia-road; 11, m., Lambeth; e., Swaby's; 18, m., Battersea; a., Finsbury Park; 25, m., Bethnal Green. October, all mornings booked.

T. THURLOW, 34 Wetherell-road, South Hackney.—Sept. 11, m., Kingsland Green.

JAMES HOOPER, 11 Upper Eldon-street, Sneinton, Nottingham.—Aug. 21, Nottingham; 23, Barnsley. Sept. 4, Nottingham.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Aug. 21, Halstead; 28, m., Lambeth. Aug. 29 to Sept. 5, North Eastern Secular Federation; Sept. 11, Edinburgh; 18, Aberdeen; 25, Glasgow. Oct. 1, Bradford; 2, Grimsby; 9, Hull; 16, Sheffield; 18, Cheltenham; 23, Bristol; 30, Cardiff. Nov. 3, Swansea; 6, Liverpool; 13, Manchester; 14, Pendlebury.

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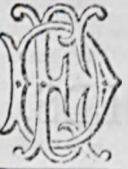
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