

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

RELIGION IN BOARD SCHOOLS.

THERE are three kinds of supporters of Board Schools—1. Those who advocate dogmatic teaching. 2. Those who favor Bible reading without comment. 3. Those who contend that in all schools supported from local rates or out of the national funds secular instruction only should be given. Recognising the true object of education and the very diversified nature and contradictory character of religious views professed in this country, the method employed by the third kind mentioned appears to us to be the most consistent and useful. It is not here a question whether the Christian religion be true or not; but what we wish to indicate is that its claims should not be enforced upon children who are incapable of understanding its perplexing nature. Board schools are institutions intended to be used only for teaching children the duties and requirements of life for the purpose of preparing them to act as good citizens. If it is thought necessary to impart religious instruction to the rising generation, then that can be done at times and places apart from the hours devoted to instruction in Board schools, where lessons in the practical affairs of life should be given.

Recently there has been much discussion in theological circles about the vast importance of introducing what is termed "religious knowledge" into these schools. Not long since the Bishop of Manchester mentioned that he had been "compelled" to seek for knowledge in philosophy and science, but he had found that the greatest of all was "religious knowledge." Now it appears to us that the application of the word "knowledge" to mere speculative theological opinions is a misnomer, inasmuch as the pretensions of orthodox religion belong to the confines of belief and do not reach to the domain of knowledge. Probably the Bishop did discover that philosophy and science were of less value to him than religion, as that has enabled the worthy prelate to secure his present position. But working men who toil in the mines, the factories, or the cotton mills, will derive more advantage from science in their pursuits than from all the religions that have dominated the world. "Religious knowledge" may be of service in the pulpit and in the work of perpetuating clerical ascendancy, but real knowledge of the facts of nature and of art is necessary for the acquirement of excellence in mechanical skill. Our national greatness has been built up by the genius of mundane activity, not by the influence of conflicting faiths, which even their expounders cannot understand, and therefore are incapable of rendering them of any educational service in Board schools.

The Bill which the Bishop of Salisbury lately introduced in the House of Lords is, as the *London Chronicle* pointed out, another sign of the revived effort of the clerical party to use the Board Schools for sectarian purposes. Its ostensible object is to provide for greater freedom of religious teaching in Board schools; its real purpose is to put an end to

the freedom of School Boards. Fortunately there is no fear that the Bill will become law, still it is necessary that the friends of Board school education, and the parents whose children are being taught should rouse themselves to the renewed struggle which is being forced upon them. The battle against clerical ascendancy in the elementary schools, which they fought and won twenty years ago, may now have to be fought and won again. These well-paid "servants of the Lord" have for many years been denouncing what they call "godless education," and picturing the terrible calamities that they say will result to the nation if they and their doctrines are not allowed to rule the public schools. In our parks the flowers and plants are frequently renewed at spring-time by productions from the hothouse; the clerical party are endeavoring to make our Board schools nurseries, from which they hope to gather supplies to replace the constant falling off from their churches. This, perhaps, is not surprising, when we remember that only a nominal percentage of the intelligent portion of these children patronise theological establishments when they arrive at years of maturity.

But the question is, why should the people permit the education of their children to be placed in the hands, or under the control of, clericals. The Bishops of Manchester and of London both speak of "religious knowledge" as being the true source of the "formation of character." What, however, is meant by character? We answer, the ability and the desire to become honest and upright citizens, and to endeavor to perform our duties in life in accordance with the dictates of the highest known morality. The Bishops mean something very different from this. With them no character is complete unless it is associated with beliefs in the inexplicable doctrines and teachings of Christianity. If the only object of schools were to produce a nation of bishops and saints, "religious knowledge" may be a fitting subject for elementary lessons. But this is not the scope and purpose of the education of the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is now found necessary that people should be able to apply the knowledge gained at school for the purpose of advancing their own and the general welfare in everyday conduct. Knowledge that cannot be so applied is not only useless, it is a hindrance to the formation of a true and an elevated character. The special doctrine of the incarnation is one of the figments it is said that should be taught in our schools. Is not this the height of absurdity? Cannot a child become a good member of society and an efficient mechanic or tradesman without being bothered with this mysterious nonsense? What can a child understand by such teachings as the following: The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost is incomprehensible, and yet there are not three incomprehensibles but only one incomprehensible. The fact is the most incomprehensible thing about it is that in the present age persons should be found outside of a lunatic asylum so foolish as even to say they believe such utter absurdity.

The teaching in our public schools must be confined to that which is capable of promoting social progress, fitting its recipient for probable exigencies of human life. The belief in any doctrine apart from the service of man and the duties of existence should be a private matter. If the State furnishes means for teaching the doctrines of the different religious sects, it thereby simply endows contradictions, a folly of which no rational minded legislator should be guilty. Belief in the incredible and contradictory teachings of theology can only influence the formation of characters that are prone to fanaticism. We are all concerned about "formation of character," but we desire that it should be formed wisely and not be impaired by its taking an erroneous view of nature and her operations. We deny that secular education is incapable of influencing the formation of human character for good. Children who are taught the elements of science and of art are in consequence made familiar with the discovered laws of nature, and will therefore necessarily see things with the eye of reason and will take a scientific view of the universe and of life with its many surroundings. The characters we desire to see formed are those that would be in harmony with the best interests of society as it now exists in this world, regardless of any possible future existence. The Bishop of Manchester and others may deem the belief in a future life all important, but that is a question for their own consideration. They have no right to seek to impose such speculations on the young at the expense of the tax-payers, many of whom have no such belief. In the face of the widespread scepticism of our time it cannot be truly urged that this notion about a future life is necessary to enable a person to discharge aright his public duties. We hold that the Secular policy of conducting the education at our Board schools is the best method to be adopted, because it is unjust to make the study of controverted theological questions a part of national instruction sustained by the public purse. That the results of even partially adopting the secular plan of education is beneficial has been proved by the facts that millions of children are now receiving superior education in our schools, compared with only thousands who received an indifferent education when the Church controlled the instruction of the young.

This attempt upon the part of the clergy to monopolise the direction of our Board schools is in keeping with their traditional policy towards progressive movements in general. Such measures were at first opposed by the Church, and when its opposition was found to be unavailing, then the supporters of the Church sought to deprive such movements of part of their advantages. The same course has been adopted in reference to education. When Lord Brougham first pleaded that it should be made a national question, the clergy fought bitterly against such a demand. Now that Board schools have been established, and free secular education is becoming a reality, these very clergy are striving hard to adulterate it with their worn-out theology. But their efforts will be useless, for the genius of the age is in favor of the national education of the young being kept free from all creeds and dogmas of a mind-contracting theology.

CHARLES WATTS.

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INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE GOSPELS.

THAT the Christian gospels are unworthy of credence I think can be shown from evidence accessible to all, viz., from those documents themselves. Of course they must be examined critically. The belief instilled in childhood that they are the revealed word of God, to be received as "gospel truth," hinders, even if it does not preclude, an investigation of their contents. For such an investigation it is by no means necessary to be able to read in the original the manuscripts which have descended to us with their various readings. From the Authorised English Version certain facts are apparent and certain conclusions may safely be drawn. If the student knows Greek, so much the better; but the unlearned reader may cheaply provide himself with a Revised Version and a Tauchnitz New Testament giving the various readings of the three earliest manuscripts, and be in a position to form a very fair judgment of the matter. He will note, I venture to think, distinct traces of literary manufacture. He must be struck by cases of verbal agreement in the first three gospels in the translation of discourses and sayings said to have been uttered by Jesus in another language (e.g., Matt. xxiv. 32-35, Mark xiii. 28-31, and Luke xxi. 29-33). In parables like those of the fig-tree and sower, in some incidents like the cure of the paralytic, and even in Old Testament quotations, taken not from the Hebrew Bible but from the Greek version—quotations sometimes containing rare words or expressions—it is evident one writer copied from another, or that an older form lies behind. Such exact similarity he will find inexplicable on the supposition that they are original, independent reports. If tempted to suppose this agreement may be the work of the Holy Ghost, he will find on the other hand such irreconcilable contradictions between the Synoptics, as these three are called, as well as between each of them and "John," as to make it evident that several minds have been concerned in their concoction. Nay, in each of the gospels he will find such a duplication and disjointure of narratives as to make it plain that in each case we have not to do with an original production by one author, but with a patchwork mosaic, possibly the result of many hands. Further, he will note that parables, discourses, and sayings, said to have been spoken utterances, bear a literary and poetic structure. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, as I have shown,* bears evident traces of coming from the cloister rather than from either mountain or plain. He will find that the writers have evident tendencies to which they subordinate facts. Thus, to show that Jesus was the Messiah, they garble Old Testament prophecies, and even quote as prophecies what are not there, as "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Look at the story of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. In John this is placed at the beginning of his history. The Synoptics more naturally place it at the end. Mark and Luke speak of a colt. But this does not content Matthew. He must make the Messiah fulfil prophecy. Zechariah having written "he is just and having salvation, riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass," the evangelist, mistaking the Hebrew idiom of repetition, ridiculously makes Jesus take both a colt and a foal and ride them. The writer herein displays his dishonesty and his incompetency. He clearly invents or distorts the narrative to fit the prophecy, which, not understanding, he completely bungles. Clearly no Jew would have ever thus misinterpreted Zechariah.

Another slight instance of tendency I will give in the words of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (vol. x. p. 827):

"In the Synoptic account of the betrayal, Matthew and

* *Freethinker*, March 27, 1892; p. 194.

Mark represent Jesus as awaking the sleeping disciples with the words; "Rise, let us be going; Behold, he that betrayeth is at hand" (Mat. xxvi. 41, Mark xiv. 42). Luke alters this; it is too human for him, seeming to imply flight; and therefore he substitutes a command, in the second person, "Rise up and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke xii. 46). But John, while averse to this change of the traditional words, neutralises their questionable effect by taking them completely out of their context. Accordingly, he places them between the discourse on peace in chap. xiv. and the discourse on the vine in chap. xv., just at the point when we may suppose the Master, with his disciples, to be rising from the table, purposing shortly to pass quietly from the lighted upper-room, where he had been celebrating the last supper, down into the streets of Jerusalem, on his way to Gethsemane. Taken in this context, the words are free from all suspicion of haste or trepidation; on the contrary, they betoken authoritativeness and decision."

In John, too, the entry of Christ into Jerusalem is closely connected with the raising of Lazarus. "For this cause the people also met him, for they heard that he had done this miracle." Yet in Matthew (xxi. 11), when the city asks "Who is this?" the crowd reply, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee," making no mention of the astounding miracle of a man raised from the dead, recorded only in the fourth gospel, which makes it the sole cause of the procession.

The student will discover that the writers did not hesitate to add to and exaggerate the accounts that were before them. Thus in Matthew (chap. iv.) and Mark i., there is an account of Jesus calling Peter to follow him, whilst he was fishing. Luke relates the same event, adding a miraculous draught of fishes (ch. v). John adds a miraculous fire of coals to broil the fish, and a prophecy of Peter's death, and makes the whole take place after the resurrection of Jesus (ch. xxi). Matthew says (viii. i. 6): "When the even was come they brought unto him many that were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and cured all that were sick." Mark i. 32 adds, "and suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him." While Luke (iv. 40) improves the story by saying, "And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak; for they knew that he was Christ." Obviously the story, like a snowball, grew with each new turn. In Matthew we find the story of feeding the multitude twice related; once it is 5,000 men who are fed with five loaves and two fishes; and again, in the next chapter, four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes. The disciples have not the slightest remembrance of the first miracle, but ask "whence should we have bread in the wilderness to satisfy so great a multitude?" And Jesus in his answer shows the same unconsciousness of any similar occurrence. But the whole narrative is rendered suspicious when the reader finds that the withering of a fig-tree what one gospeller relates as a parable, another relates as a miraculous fact. The story of the miraculous loaves may have arisen from Christ being called the bread of life.

This manufacture of miracle from parable is instructive. It shows us that the writers aimed rather at "edification" than accurate history. The legends of Christianity depend on its prior rites and doctrines. The story of a man calling bread and wine his body and blood is too absurd to have ever happened. It followed from the doctrine that wine and bread were the blood and body of divinity.

The differences between the four gospels arises from their having different doctrines to inculcate. That of John, with its incarnate Logos (who says all who came before him were thieves and robbers), is altogether different from that of Matthew, with its prophesied Messiah of the Jews sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

When in the first gospel we find such phrases as "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," even if the critical reader does not know that no Hebrew peasant could make a pun on the Greek form of a Jewish fisherman's name, he may shrewdly surmise this passage at least, if not the whole gospel, was written when the Church was already built and claimed Peter as its head. When he goes on to read: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," he may suspect this passage had never been written until the Church claimed this wondrous power. Such phrases as "if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican," at once suggest that the body known as the Church was already in existence, though we are as far as ever from settling when that was.

Take some of the most characteristic parables, as those of the sower and the allied ones of the tares, etc. It is absurd to suppose such parables were uttered to the confusion of the apostles as stated. They refer to a later stage of development of which the germs did not then exist. They assume a period in which attempts had been made at least with partial success to introduce new opinions and practices, when the tares were springing up among the good seed, and the question arose whether they were to be violently eradicated. The answer was one of forbearance necessary to the infant church. "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." But in the near harvest time Christ would separate them, burning the tares and garnering the wheat. Such parables were evidently not the product of any solitary teacher but of the Church itself in the presence of the tares growing amidst its seed.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

THE CHRISTIAN PURIST.

It's surprising how particular some Christian people are;
By them all impropriety is scented from afar:
In league with God and Grundy they're so proper and correct,
In nearly everything they see they wickedness detect,
In every non-religious book, in pictures and in prints,
They discover veiled indecencies and indecorous hints;
At expurgating literature with Shakespeare they'd begin,
And to them all earthly pleasures are synonymous with sin.
With idiotic dignity in judgment they will sit
Alike on prose and poetry, and science, art, and wit,
And will pass the sapient verdict that mankind can ne'er be
blessed

Until the greater part of these is altered or suppressed.
They consider every painter who would represent the nude,
And sculptors who attempt the same indelicate and rude;
And they fly into a passion if you happen to assert
That a book on true morality is anything but dirt.
They read divorce court cases such as Crawford versus Dilke,
And drink in all the details as a baby drinks in milk;
And having studied every word they'll tell you with a frown
They consider it disgraceful such reports are not put down;
And perhaps it is, but 'twould be well if nearer home they'd
look,

And set their minds to purify their so-called Holy Book,
That book that they so freely give to maidens and to youths
To regard its filthy fables as inspired and noble truths.
And when our Christian Purist has so far consistent got,
To think unfit for pure young girls the narrative of Lot,
And no more to spread his Bible till from lewdness it's
exempt,
We'll treat his carrion-hunting game with rather less con-
tempt.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

Messrs. Chatto and Windus announce *Songs and Sonnets*, by Miss Mathilde Blind as nearly ready.

CHRIST AND BROTHERHOOD.

[CONCLUDED.]

FROM the time of Cicero—that is, from the time of Julius Cæsar, and the establishment of the Empire—the sentiment of brotherhood, the idea of a common humanity, spread with certainty and rapidity, and is reflected in the writings of the philosophers. The exclamation of the Roman poet, “As a man, I regard nothing human as alien to me,” which was so heartily applauded by the auditory in the theatre, expressed a growing and almost popular sentiment. The works of Seneca abound in fine humanitarian passages, and it must be remembered that if the Christians were tortured by Nero at Rome, it was by the same hand that Seneca’s life was cut short. “Wherever there is a man,” said this thinker, “there is an opportunity for a deed of kindness.” He believed in the natural equality of all men. Slaves were such through political and social causes, and their masters were bidden to refrain from ill-using them, not only because of the cruelty of such conduct, but because of “the natural law common to all men,” and because “he is of the same nature as thyself.” Seneca denounced the gladiatorial shows as human butcheries. So mild, tolerant, humane, and equitable was his teaching that the Christians of a later age were anxious to appropriate him. Tertullian calls him “Our Seneca,” and the facile scribes of the new faith forged a correspondence between him and their own St. Paul. One of Seneca’s passages is a clear and beautiful statement of rational altruism. “Nor can anyone live happily,” he says, “who has regard to himself alone, and uses everything for his own interests; thou must live for thy neighbor, if thou wouldst live for thyself.” Eighteen hundred years afterwards Auguste Comte sublimated this principle into a motto of his Religion of Humanity—*Vivre pour Autrui*, Live for Others. It is also expressed more didactically by Ingersoll—“The way to be happy is to make others so”—making duty and enjoyment go hand in hand.

Pliny, who corresponded with the emperor Trajan, and whose name is familiar to the student of Christian Evidences, exhorted parents to take a deep interest in the education of their children. He largely endowed an institution in his native town of Como, for the assistance of the children of the poor. His humanity was extended to slaves. He treated his own with great kindness, allowing them to dispose of their own earnings, and even to make wills. Of masters who had no regard for their slaves, he said, “I do not know if they are great and wise; but one thing I do know, they are not men.” Dion Chrysostom, another Stoic, plainly declared that slavery was an infringement of the natural rights of men, who were all born for liberty; a dictum which cannot be paralleled in any part of the New Testament. It must be admitted, indeed, that Paul, in sending the slave Onesimus back to his master Philemon, did bespeak humane and even brotherly treatment for the runaway; but he bespoke it for him as a Christian, not simply as a man, and uttered no single word in rebuke of the institution of slavery.

Plutarch’s humanity was noble and tender. “The proper end of man,” he said, “is to love and to be loved.” He regarded his slaves as inferior members of his own family. How strong, yet how dignified, is his condemnation of masters who sold their slaves when disabled by old age. He protests that the fountain of goodness and humanity should never dry up in a man. “For myself,” he said, “I should never have the heart to sell the ox which had long labored on my ground, and could no longer work on account of old age, still less could I chase a slave from his country, from the place where he has been nourished for so long, and from the way of life to which he has been so long accustomed.” Sentiments like these

were the natural precursors of the abolition of slavery, as far as it could be abolished by moral considerations.

Epictetus, the great Stoic philosopher, who had himself been a slave, taught the loftiest morality. Pascal admits that he was “one of the philosophers of the world who have best understood the duty of man.” He disdained slavery from the point of view of the masters, as he abhorred it from the point of view of the slaves. “As a healthy man,” he said, “does not wish to be waited upon by the infirm, or desire that those who live with him should be invalids, the freeman should not allow himself to be waited upon by slaves, or leave those who live with him in servitude.” It is idle to pretend, as Professor Schmidt of Strasburg does, that the ideas of Epictetus are “colored with a reflection of Christianity.” The philosopher’s one reference to the Galileans, by whom he is thought to have meant the Christians, is somewhat contemptuous. Professor Schmidt says he “misunderstood” the Galileans; but George Long, the translator of Epictetus, is probably truer in saying that he “knew little about the Christians, and only knew some examples of their obstinate adherence to the new faith and the fanatical behavior of some of the converts.” It should be remembered that Epictetus was almost a contemporary of St. Paul, and the accurate students of early Christianity will be able to estimate how far it was likely, at that time, to have influenced the philosophers of Rome.

Marcus Aurelius was one of the wisest and best of men. Emperor of the civilised world, he lived a life of great simplicity, bearing all the burdens of his high office, and drawing philosophy from the depths of his own contemplation. His *Meditations* were only written for his own eyes; they were a kind of philosophical diary; and they have the charm of perfect sincerity. He was born A.D. 121, he became Emperor A.D. 161, and died A.D. 180, after nineteen years of a government which illustrated Plato’s words about the good that would ensue when kings were philosophers and philosophers were kings. Cardinal Barberini, who translated the Emperor’s *Meditations* into Italian, in 1675, dedicated the translation to his own soul, to make it “redder than his purple at the sight of the virtues of this Gentile.”

Marcus Aurelius combines reason with beautiful sentiment. His emotion is always accompanied by thought. Here, for instance, is a noble passage on the social commonwealth—“For we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away.” In a still loftier passage he says—and let us remember he says it to himself, not to an applauding audience, but quietly, and with absolute truth, and no taint of theatricality—“My nature is rational and social; and my city and country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome; but so far as I am a man, it is the world.” In his brief, pregnant way, he states the law of human solidarity—“That which is not good for the swarm, neither is it good for the bee.” And who could fail to appreciate this sentiment, coming as it did from the ruler of a great empire?—“One thing here is worth a great deal, to pass thy life in truth and justice, with a benevolent disposition even to liars and unjust men.”

Here again, it is the fashion in some circles, to pretend that Marcus Aurelius was influenced by the spread of Christian ideas. George Long, however, speaks the language of truth and sobriety in saying, “It is quite certain that Antoninus did not derive any of his Ethical principles from a religion of which he knew nothing.” To say as Dr. Schmidt does that “Christian ideas filled the air” is easy enough, but where is the proof? No doubt the Christian writers made great pretensions as to the spread of their religion, but they were notoriously sanguine and inaccurate, and we know what value to attach to such pretensions in the second century when we reflect that even in the

fourth century, up to the point of Constantine's conversion, Christianity had only succeeded in drawing into its fold about a twentieth of the inhabitants of the empire. Enough has been said in this article to show that the idea of our common humanity is not "a purely Christian conception," that it arose in the natural course of human development, and that in this, as in other cases, the apologists of Christianity have simply appropriated to their own creed the fruits of the political, social, and moral growth of Western civilisation.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE HUMBUG OF CHRISTIANS.

[CONTINUED.]

ANOTHER objection to the Brethren is that they are as bad as the monks they denounce, in withdrawing themselves from active work and getting as smug and contented as Calvinists, who don't know what it is to want a dinner. Evil of lawgivers, rulers, vestrymen, and the like, goes on all round them, but they never join the men who want to make an effort to sweep iniquity away. They are satisfied that their own miserable souls are saved from hell-fire; the hell on earth which bubbles and hisses around them is no business of theirs. They have only to see that they themselves are saved; meanwhile they will drive as keen a bargain as anybody else in their respective trades (sometimes they occasionally condescend to take over the sins of a man like poor Henry Morley for £140,000; and one can give other instances); and if by suppressing a piece of news or information which, if they were buyers, they would not like to be kept from them, they can make another £1 profit, they will do it—though their eyes are on the kingdom of God, and they seek not the treasure which rusts and the meat which perisheth. There is much which is silly talked by other sects, but the palm must be given to the one under dissection for the most nauseating, hypocritical, self-persuading twaddle. There is a section even of this sect styled, with unconscious irony, the "close," who are nothing more than loathsome parasites on society, who wheedle and cajole money out of their dupes; and if they hook a particularly fine catch, the other praise-God whiners of the sect chant choruses of approval, and no doubt look for some of the spoil, which they would say was evidence of God's providing for his anointed.

The Christians, whose Bible tells them to come out from the ungodly and to be not yoked with unbelievers, will tell us that Christianity means toleration. Perhaps it does among some, but only because the secular arm has wrenched from it the sword and torch it wielded once. It gives us just as much toleration as it is obliged to; for in Europe it is still the dominant dogma; it props up crumbling thrones and throws veils of fair words over the immoral and brutal actions of canting potentates, who would all believe in liberty if the people would only do what they wish.

Some of the hucksters in spiritual terrors say that God will punish us for not worshipping as they do, yet show their doubt of their God's power or memory by trying to punish us on earth, to forestall God's vengeance—as if he were not strong enough to deal with us if he be all that is claimed. They dare not prosecute us for blasphemy, but try to injure us by quiet and cowardly slander, advising people not to associate with us. If they believed there were no hell, there are many holders of the creed that God is love who would like one specially made to burn us for daring to differ from them, and so leading what, with refreshing candor, they call sinful and godless lives. Persecution from such people is more blameable than from priests, who have to earn their living somehow, and will use all the evil resources they can avail themselves of in the defence of the doctrines by which they gain their bread and comfort. You can get for cash payment any number of men to invent any number of excuses for God's vagaries.

Christians tell us to look at the conquests of the Cross. When such were particularly brutal, the blame is thrown on poor human nature, thus tacitly admitting that it is stronger than the faith. When men are gathered into a sect they war more for the supremacy of that sect than for the ethics of Christ. When the late Bishop of Chester doffed the theologian's robes and took up the pen of the

historian, he wrote: "No truth is more certain than this, that the real motives of religious action do not work on men in masses; and that the enthusiasm which creates Crusaders, Inquisitors, Hussites, is not the result of conviction, but of passion provoked by oppression or resistance, maintained by self-will, or stimulated by the mere desire of victory." Then, say the Christians, look at the charitable agencies we are now starting, the political and social schemes we are all joining in. But this is only the decay of Christian otherworldliness and the rise of humanity, and the enactment of the ideas for the inculcation of which they have persecuted as blasphemers the men who, without any thought of Jesus, have stood at street corners, in humble halls, and preached the emancipation of man. Where is God that he makes all this necessary? you ask; and the reply is, we cannot criticise God unfavorably from our poor human standpoint; to which we can answer that, neither can we judge him favorably from the same poor human standpoint. "Look at our Mullers and Barnardos." Whenever a man is naturally good, Christianity always claims the credit, forgetting that goodness existed before Jesus, and can exist without belief in a prescribed God. Still, it is very easy to be philanthropic when somebody else guarantees expenses and you can pay yourself a good salary out of them, and deny yourself no luxury. You can make a lot of capital out of the generosity of others if their generosity filters through the channel of yours. We are told to look at the donation from so and so; but such charity to a church gives the rich man a spurious receipt in full for the neglect of other social duties. It is in God's name, they add. It is curious that when good men want to do some good they sometimes invoke the name of God. Bad men also invoke the same God. He is a very convenient institution. *Dei Gratia*—the special grace of God has been claimed by the worst scoundrels and evil-doers who have disgraced Christendom, and has been generally accorded them, as long as they were rich and powerful, by Christian prelates. Reverting to the Christian charity and sympathy for the fallen, it must be a miserable and base kind of pity if it can—as often as it does—remain blind and deaf to the tears and sighs of misery, and can only be raised into activity by the desire to follow the fashionable guidance of a debauched prince or duke. Christianity humbles the mighty, we learn, but if by humbling themselves the mighty shall be greater than all men, it simply shows them another way of gratifying their pride. To humble oneself before Christian ministers is an abasement unjustified by the reward of contemplating a humanly promised hereafter. God gives such strength; we can lean on him, is another Christian plea. Throughout the human race there is a desire to rely upon someone else. That desire makes possible greater fools and rascals in the shape of slaves, kings and priests. Theologians take advantage of men's weakness and yearnings to rest upon something, and so invent something to suit their desires. G. W. Foote has well said that, "Men are comforted by what they are taught to look to for comfort." The Buddhist, the Confucian, the Mohammedan, fancy themselves comforted in the same way. The savage is comforted by his idol and symbols, but is derided by the very Christian who is cheered by another idol—a crucifix. It is useless to say the latter embodies an idea. So to the savage or idol-worshipper does his image in stone, wood, metal, or a living animal.

C. E. BACON.

(To be concluded).

Little Dick got into trouble with a school-fellow the other day, and agreed with him to "have it out" before school next morning. That evening, when Dick knelt by his mother's side to say his prayers before going to bed, he delivered himself as follows, after the usual "Now I lay me": "And, O God, please make me strong as lions an' things, 'cause I got to lick a boy in the morning. Amen!"

On a bright and beautiful morning of eternal springtime, a weary spirit knocked at the gates of Paradise. The golden portals swung upon their hinges, and St. Peter, standing upon the threshold, gazed upon the anxious face before him, and inquired: "What were you in the flesh?" "I was a book agent," was the reply. "I am very sorry," said St. Peter, but this is my busy day."

SEMPER EADEM?

THIS, the proud boast of the Roman Catholic Church, is a claim which looks somewhat ridiculous in face of certain recent events. In one sense, Rome is indeed unchanging. In its lust for absolute dominion and power it is for ever the same. Its aim is always to crush every other authority and to become itself the only power on earth. Its ideal is a universal Theocracy in which all men shall be the slaves of the Church. And to attain this end it holds that all means are justifiable.

But whilst its object was, is, and always will be the same, it were absurd to suppose that it is unchanging in matters of doctrine and discipline. For at one time it condemns certain teaching as contradictory and subversive of faith and scripture, while later it holds the same doctrine perfectly compatible with Catholic belief. In 1600 it burnt Bruno for teaching the Copernican theory of the universe. Now-a-days it teaches that doctrine in its schools. And it would fain have the world believe either that she did not burn Bruno, or that the offence for which he suffered was other than that just mentioned.

That, with the spread of education, Rome will have to give way in another direction, also seems clear. Hitherto, she has strictly forbidden the laity to interpret scripture. She has held that an infallible book requires an infallible interpreter, and has, accordingly, placed the Bible in her Index Expurgatorius. At the present moment we have the pleasing spectacle of a layman stoutly contradicting the priest, both as to the correct interpretation of scripture, and the Church's teaching. In the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. St. George Mivart tells Father Clarke S. J., and the Bishop of Nottingham, that their interpretation of the New Testament is absurd, and that Christ and the Church never taught that hell is a place of unhappiness. Into the merits of the dispute I have no wish to enter, except to express the opinion that the priest takes up the more tenable position. But that such a controversy should have been possible, and that a layman should be allowed to write as he does, is a curious comment on the proud boast of Holy Mother Church which forms the subject of these remarks. Mr. Mivart shows a spirit of rebellion, and claims the right of private judgment. This bold layman, while professing great regard for the priest's office, declares that "every man is compelled to ground his belief on his individual ethical intuitions. Let him be ever so disposed to accept authority, he must, if he is conscientious, accept it only because, in his individual judgment, it is right to do so, and to submit himself to it!" And Mr. Mivart writes thus without any apparent fear of excommunication!

Verily, the world moves. And Rome finds it that it must needs change accordingly. No longer able to stifle thought and criticism as it silenced Galileo, it has, *nolens volens*, to yield, however grudgingly, before the growing demand for intellectual freedom.

A. LIDDLE.

ACID DROPS.

Archdeacon Farrar writes in high laudation of Mr. Horton's two books, declaring them to "form a sort of landmark in the history of a great controversy." Dr. Farrar rejoices over the fact that the Bible is ceasing to be a fetish, and that its "infallibility" is disappearing. But he forgets to say that this is the result of Freethought criticism. The clergy are only admitting what they are compelled to. Fifty years ago, still more a hundred years ago, they had men put in prison for saying what they themselves now utter as their own discoveries.

Dr. Farrar fondly believes that the "New Criticism" within the Church is an unmixed blessing. He thinks it disposes for ever of ninety-nine hundredths of "infidel" assaults on the Christian faith. But this is very cheap congratulation. The "infidels" do not mean to rest satisfied. Having carried one orthodox position, they will proceed to carry others. No doubt, when the clergy are beaten

at every point, they will still rub their hands and declare they never won such a brilliant victory.

Occultism is on a level with astrology and fortune telling, but it is "catching on" even outside the ranks of Theosophy. "J. B.," a regular writer in the *Christian World*, thinks there is something in it; in fact, he believes in second sight, and says the Hindu *yogis* have "mysterious powers, completely baffling our Western science"—though, by the way, they don't baffle Maskelyne and Cooke. "A fresh window," says this writer, "let into the wall of our consciousness might make our knowledge of the spiritual world as certain as that of the planetary system, and cause Agnosticism, Pessimism, and Materialism to be tenable only in Bedlam." No doubt. Meanwhile we wait for the window to be "let in," though perhaps something "let in" to "J. B.'s" head would cure him of waiting very anxiously.

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, which is now visited by many of his admirers. But somehow the natives are awful backsliders. At any rate the local Free Church minister excuses himself from sending in a report on "religion and morals" to his presbytery, on the ground that there is neither religion nor morals in his district. It must be a queer place, however, to have *neither*. We can quite understand its not having *both*.

Delivering the Merchants' Lecture, the Rev. G. Cousins proved that Christianity was not played out by telling what it has done for Madagascar. Once they were all heathen, and now they are mostly Christians. At present they read the Bible, while formerly they believed in demons and witches. Mr. Cousins said this solemnly. There was not the suspicion of a smile upon his face. Probably he would have been still further from smiling if a sceptic had been allowed to tell him that demons and witches are Bible articles. Very likely the Madagascar folk have been weaned from their belief in such nonsense, but to do it by means of the Bible is like curing a fever with brandy.

At a Particular Baptist Chapel in South London, on Easter Sunday, the congregation showed itself not so very particular after all. It appears that the pastor had undertaken to provide the bread and wine for the communion, but he had neglected to do so, and the consequence was that a loaf was fetched from a deacon's house and a bottle of port from a *public-house*. Fancy a common publican supplying the blood of Christ! It puts a new aspect on the Direct Veto Bill.

"Tom" Spurgeon lost no time in accepting a twelve months' engagement at his father's Tabernacle. He wired from New Zealand that he accepted it "cheerfully and gladly." "Cheerfully" is good, in view of the internal dissension at Newington. Nero was just as cheerful when Rome was burning.

The *Christian World* has just printed two poorish hymns by Lewis Morris, and thinks it necessary to inform its readers that he is not "William" Morris. It does not appear to know that it is "William" Morris who suffers by the confusion. He is a poet, while Lewis Morris is only a versifier.

Principal Edwards, of Bala College, is being pursued as a heretic. One of the charges against him is that he "speaks of the Fall as an allegory." This shows that Dr. Edwards is not such a fool as his pursuers. He has a mind above the old Rib-Story.

The *Independent* states that Messrs. Moody and Sankey have netted over £200,000 for their "Sacred Hymns and Solos." The Savior is indeed precious to his elect.

Desmond B. O'Brien, the book reviewer of *Truth*, is much struck by the fact that North American Indians and Hindus hold the same doctrine as to the acquisition of magical powers by asceticism. He seems to think there is something mysterious in it. But there is not, as a perusal of Dr. E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* would soon convince him. Abstinence from food leads to a disordered brain, fasting induces dreams and visions which superstition takes for communication with spirits. The physical facts being the same in India and America, they led to similar superstitions.

Fasting has a lot to answer for in shaping religion. The disease begins with the disordered crank who fancies he has information from unseen intelligences. When he gets believers, the disease soon passes to the financial stage, and the sorcerer develops into the priest.

Can there be a bigger fraud in the world than a priest? Can there be a greater fraud than a human being who pretends to speak and act for a divine being? We cannot imagine how there can be. Here is a person, who has not a particle of knowledge about God—and he knows it too—yet who dares tell men and women what God wants done, what they must do in order to please God and escape his anger, and who presumes to pronounce God's judgment upon human actions. If such a person is not a fraud, then no one is or can be.—*Boston Investigator.*

Gautama Buddha is reported to have said that his doctrine was not secret, but open to all. Yet Blavatsky invented, and Sinnett promulgated an Esoteric Buddhism for him over two thousand years after his death. No wonder Frederika Macdonald says in relation to the modern Theosophists putting forward some of the Buddhist doctrines, for instance, that of Karma, as their own property while repudiating its leading principles: "The relation of Theosophy to Buddhism is that of a dishonest stranger, who, calling at a noble house, carries off family treasures and curiosities, and henceforth flaunts them as his own."

Helena Fetter, of New York city, has been crazed by religion—a stimulant always dangerous when undiluted with Secularism.

William Kay Clarke, the Brixton Wesleyan class leader, has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for corrupting boys.

The Rev. Charles Flaherty, of St. Patrick's Church, Mount Morris, Rochester, New York, has been found guilty of rape on a girl under sixteen years of age.

A religious crank, who said his home was in heaven, was charged with riotous behavior in the Strand. He went into a shop, began to preach, and in his excitement knocked over silk hats, umbrellas, and bags. At the court the prisoner said he wanted to save the Lord Mayor, and then go to the Palace as soon as he could. Evidently he had a strong dose of a very general complaint.

The Dowager Duchess of Sutherland, who has been committed to prison for six weeks and to pay a fine of £250 for contempt of court in destroying some documents that were in dispute between herself and the present duke, is a very pious Presbyterian lady, and was a constant attendant at the Scottish Church in the time of Dr. Cumming. Yet the Duke instructs Sir Henry James, his counsel, that her statements are quite unreliable.

A meeting of the Bristol clergy was held last week in the chapter room of the cathedral to discuss the subject of "The Church in Wales." The meeting was called at the special desire of the bishop of the diocese, and there was a large attendance. Various speeches made against the Welsh Suspensory Bill were received with applause; but one speech made by the Rev. H. J. Wilkins received great interruption and dissent, as his auditors could not stomach the home truths he fearlessly asserted. "We are told," said Mr. Wilkins, "that if the Suspensory Bill be passed, the Church must starve—that men will not be found to do the work. A good thing if they do starve! Why should they be allowed to exist, in luxury very often, and hold positions of dignity just because they happen to be ordained ministers, when they are failures—manifest failures?"

The Abbot of Neaurtzu cloister in Roumania, Dr. Joseph Moschénai, has caused quite a sensation in Bucharest by a letter of his published in one of the daily papers, in which he states that he had to leave the cloister on account of the life led by the monks, which was in the highest degree beastly. The abbot can find the same state of affairs all over the Catholic world.

A free fight took place in the Methodist Church, Laneville, Ohio, between Deacon Pemberton and Brother Lowery,

one of the pillars of the Church. It was all owing to the deacon having taken the brother's seat.

The State of Ohio has enacted a law that astrologers, fortune tellers, clairvoyants, palmists and seers, shall pay a licence of two hundred dollars per annum. The State seems less desirous of preventing fraud than of sharing in the "boodle."

Here at home we read frequently of some gipsy or other vagabond charged with unlawfully pretending and professing to tell fortunes, while "Cheiro," in Bond-street, is coining an immense fortune by reading the palms of the nobility and gentry. It is true "Cheiro" might be prosecuted under old laws, which are a remnant of the statutes against witchcraft, but if he only got ordained by a bishop, and instead of telling fools their fortunes in this world told them their fortunes in kingdom come, he might be regarded as a saint.

James Hamilton, a negro, at one time a preacher, was executed by electricity at Sing Sing, N.Y., on April 3 for wife murder. He had always been a devout Methodist, but several days before death embraced Catholicism, and devoted his remaining days to praying, reading the Bible, and conferring with his priest. He would pray aloud continuously, in a muttering tone, anon raising his voice to that of a preacher's exhortation. His last hour was spent with two priests. He advanced with them to the electric chair, carrying aloft a small crucifix, all three repeating a prayer. When he was seated, Father Creeden leaned over his shoulder chanting "Save me, Jesus!" When the priest was given the signal to withdraw, Hamilton repeated "Save me, Jesus!" till silenced just as the "e" had left his lips and before he could sound "J." The crucifix in his right hand was clenched so tightly that it nearly broke.

The Rev. J. W. Blackwell, vicar of Mattingley, Hants, has been deprived of his living for immoral acts and misconduct. It would be interesting to have a return of all similar cases of criminous conduct by our established clergy.

The New York *Mail and Express* intends in future to spell Sunday Sunday, the usual method being too evident a sign of heathenism. It also suggests Twosday and Weddingsday "as likely to encourage legitimate Christian marriage and God's institution of the family." Saturday is, of course, to be altered to Sabbath's-day to please the chosen people of Jehovah.

Archbishop Ireland is a Catholic who means to hold on to the good old dogmas: He says, with truth, "The existence of hell is the clearest of the teachings of the Christian religion." But of course Christians have disputed about this clearest of all dogmas as well as about everything else.

"Wanted, a companion—a Christian, but cheerful," is the somewhat ambiguous wording of an advertisement. We should interpret this to mean a Christian who does not credit Christianity. One who really believes in a heavenly father who needed the sacrifice of his son and who made an eternal hell for his creatures is likely to be the reverse of a cheerful companion.

The longevity of a lie is well illustrated in the persistency of the blood accusation against the Jews. A telegram from Vienna says that the body of a servant of a Jewess, Marie Paulik, was found in the river Elbe, and appearances justified the conclusion that it was a case of suicide, but the Christian population declared that the girl had been murdered in conformity with some Jewish rites. A large crowd proceeded to the Jewish synagogue, which was partially wrecked, when they attacked the shops and dwelling-houses. The troops were called out, and some fierce fighting ensued. The ring-leaders were arrested.

It is rather curious that the alleged Syriac gospel connected with the name of Dr. Rendel Harris should have been discovered in the same convent where Tischendorf discovered the Sinaitic Greek MS. Surely he made a good inspection of the convent's treasures! Possibly the high price paid for such productions is the cause of supply.

In Scotland we still find the worthy old pietist who regards all forms of diversion as devices of the Devil. One

of the members of the Cadder School Board, for instance, objected to a dance that took place at Gartcosh school. He declared that "dancing led to infidelity and heathenism." It would be useless to remind this worthy that David danced before the ark. He would rejoin that David only executed a *pas seul*; he did not dance with the girls. Considering his lack of attire, we should hope not.

The Scottish synods and presbyteries are again lamenting the desecration of the Lord's Day. The people are wicked enough to seek their own pleasure and improvement on their one day of leisure instead of seeking the ministrations of the self-styled ministers of God.

The Council and the Keys in the Isle of Man are at loggerheads on the question of Sunday trading. The bigots, who seem in the majority, want to prevent travellers from getting any refreshment—even, as one opponent said, a glass of milk or a strawberry. By and bye the Isle of Man birds will have to stop singing on Sunday, the grass will have to stop growing, and the tide from ebbing and flowing. Of course this is "a large order," but the bigots are active and enterprising, and will doubtless beg the assistance of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Sabaoth.

The Town Clerk of Birmingham is credited with a joke on the occasion of opening Baskerville's coffin. Somebody asked him if he knew why the chief of the fire brigade was invited to the opening of the coffin. The Town Clerk replied that he did not know what brought Captain Tozer there unless the fact that Baskerville died an Atheist led the vicar and churchwardens to suppose that when the coffin was opened it would be found in a state of spontaneous combustion. Baskerville, however, was a Deist. Atheism was rare in his day.

The *Protestant Echo*, under the head of "Publications," reviews "*Bible Blunders*, by G. W. Foote." Mr. Foote has no pamphlet bearing that title, which belongs to one of our "*Freethinker Tracts*" that has been in circulation for many years. Our pious contemporary is hardly up to date.

The Reading Congregationalists have been feasting and flattering Dr. Joseph Parker to the top of his bent. According to the local *Observer*, while the great actor was keeping his audience "spellbound" with his eloquence many ladies were relieved of their purses. The thieves apparently were not "spellbound."

Satan Junior is appearing at one of the London music-halls! So his Satanic Majesty has a son! Well, why shouldn't he follow the example of his Creator? He has been two thousand years thinking about it, but better late than never. Let us hope that Satan junior will make a better fist at reforming the world than Jehovah junior has done.

The Bishop of Chester, who two years ago calumniated Secularists as guilty of cruelty to children, has a nice instance of Christian treatment in his own diocese and town. At Chester Constance Phelan, wife of a man of independent means, was charged with shocking cruelty to her child, seventeen months old. The prisoner, it was alleged by her servants, systematically punched and hit the child with a carpet brush during its morning bath. On one occasion, when the child was crying in the bed-room, she kicked it twice in the side, and another time she strapped its legs up against its body and left it in the dark. She told a servant that the child wanted a thundering good whacking every day, because the Devil was in it, as it had not been baptised. Among other acts of cruelty the prisoner was stated to have banged the child's head against a bedstead, put her finger down its throat to stop its crying, and strapped it to the foot of the bed. No fewer than thirty-two bruises were counted on the child's body. This Christian mother has possibly heard her bishop read from the text "Obasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. xix. 18).

Lord Compton, in opening a Christian Institute at Hoxton Market, alluded to the differences which existed in Christian sects, and said "he was convinced that there was more unChristianity going on amongst Christians, than amongst all the Atheists throughout the land." Lord Compton seems in a fair way of learning that Christianity is a word of little meaning that only tends to divide people.

The Christian papers, with their usual recklessness when Freethinkers are concerned, and especially this class of journal out in Australia, are calling Colonel Ingersoll all sorts of names because it is stated that he was paid £1,000 by the Panama Canal Company. They omit to include that part of the statement which says he was paid that sum for legal services to the Company in the United States. Colonel Ingersoll has a very large and remunerative practice, and £1,000 is less to him than it would be to Sir Charles Russell. One would think that every person, in any part of the world, who was paid by the Company for legitimate work, was implicated in the swindles perpetrated to float the last issue of shares in Paris. Such reasoning is beneath contempt.

The Lord has been raising fresh earthquakes in the Greek Archipelago. Zante, an island which contained 16,000 people, is again devastated, and with several people killed and eighty injured. The Church of St. Dionysius was toppled over, and it will be long ere the island recovers from the damage.

The Primitive Methodists are usually counted among the insignificant of the many sects in England. Yet the value of their chapels is estimated at not less than four millions sterling. If all sects alike paid taxes on their buildings, a very large sum would be at the disposal of the Government.

Something will have to be done by and bye with the railway bookstall monopoly. W. H. Smith and Son are too fond of trying to regulate the religion, politics, and morals of travellers. Ask for a Radical paper, and they search for it behind the counter; and if they cannot find it, as is often the case, they offer you the stupidest Tory paper instead. If you were to ask for a copy of the *Freethinker*, the attendant would probably fall down in a fit, if he did not actually die upon the spot.

Smith and Sons have been selling the *Weekly Bulletin*, but they are now boycotting it on account of its general attitude towards Christianity, but more especially on account of Professor Johnson's articles, which have been referred to in our columns. We hope the *Bulletin* will survive this paltry censorship, and that the British public—slow and patient as it is—will some day or other revolt against the odious tyranny of a clique of ignorant and bigoted monopolists.

Some time ago the Rev. John Urquhart spoke at Chatham about modern scepticism, and expressed his willingness to meet its representatives in discussion. Being communicated with, however, by the secretary of the Chatham Branch of the National Secular Society, the reverend gentleman replies that he would rather discuss with the Rev. Steward Headlam or "some reputable member of his school of thought." Well, there isn't much valor in one minister discussing with another. We fancy, too, that Mr. Headlam will smile at being taken for a representative of modern scepticism.

The Nonconformists who have been chortling so loudly over their Elizabethan "martyrs" are reminded by a clergyman in the *Daily Chronicle* of their own transgression. Half a century after the martyrdom of the Independents in England, the Independents in America were cutting out the tongues of Quakers, amputating their ears, and occasionally hanging them. Nearly every Christian sect has cried over its own "martyrs," and tried to make martyrs of other sects when it had the power.

The Archdeacon of London, preaching on Sunday at St. Bride's, Fleet-street, made the true and candid admission that Romanists and Protestants used to persecute each other impartially. He was also good enough to plead for "tolerance on behalf of those who could not agree with the Christian creed." Of course this is all right, and very nice though it doesn't involve any special courage at this time of day. Still, we don't want to be churlish, and we congratulate the Archdeacon on his good sense in this respect. But what does he mean by saying that the true spirit of Christianity is at last being understood? Will he kindly tell us the real use of a religion which takes two thousand years to be understood? While he is about it, he might also tell us how it was that persecution only diminished with the spread of Science and Freethought.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, April 23, Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road, Bradford:—11, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; 3, "Happiness in Hell"; 7, "The Doom of the Gods."

Wednesday, April 26, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.:—at 8, "Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: its Poetry, Philosophy, and Lessons." Admission free.

April 30, Barnsley. May 7, 14, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHAS. WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—April 16, Hall of Science; 30, Bolton. May 7, Manchester; 14, Birmingham; 28, Hall of Science, London. June 4, Hall of Science; 11, Birmingham; 23, Sheffield; July 25 and 26, debate at Jarrow-on-Tyne; 27 and 28, debate at Newcastle-on-Tyne; 30, South Shields.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him (with stamped envelope for reply) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Williamson (extra penny April to June), 1s. 1d. This correspondent says, "Your last Special Number cannot be surpassed." Can't it though? He'll see presently.

A. B. MOSS.—Hope to find room in our next. Have a lot of copy in hand at present.

NOAH LOT.—Is it original?

LOVER OF TRUTH.—We don't print verses in praise of Christianity. Some Christian paper may be in want of a cheap post-laureate. Anyhow you had better look round for yourself.

T. BARNETT.—(1) The figures were taken from the London *Echo*. (2) We intend to publish the cartoons and the portraits in two albums, when there are enough of them. (3) Thanks for cuttings.

J. D.—Your essay is vitiated by the assumption that Solomon wrote *Ecclesiastes*. The book is allowed by all competent scholars to be very much—in fact, many centuries—later than his age. It is the work of a Jewish Epicurean, and the orthodox ending is held to be a still later addition by an editor who was anxious about "correct" views on theology.

S. STANDING.—Pleased to hear you had excellent audiences at Hull.

J. M. WALKER.—See "Sugar Plums." Mr. Sturt is very welcome.

INQUIRER.—Read Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, Giles's *Christian Records*, and *Supernatural Religion*. Unfortunately they are all rather expensive.

HALL OF SCIENCE REBUILDING FUND.—Collected at Mr. Foote's evening lecture at Liverpool, £1 5s.

C. G. DOEG.—Mr. Foote has many places to visit. He will give Liverpool another date as soon as possible.

J. KEAST.—The way for the Bristol Branch to vote for Mr. Foote's re-election as President will be to do so at the Conference. Mr. Foote will stand for re-election, though, if there were anyone able and willing to occupy the post for a bit, he would be glad of a little rest, and leisure to deal with the arrears of his literary work. The post is an onerous one—more so than many imagine.

W. H. MORRISH.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." The Congress committee, which investigated the matter, found no traces of corruption in America in relation to the Panama Company. To charge Colonel Ingersoll with dishonesty, because the Company employed him to do certain legal business in the United States, is as absurd as to charge with dishonesty a maker who supplied the company with tools or engines. What had those at a distance of thousands of miles to do with the swindling in Paris? We are astonished that a man of your shrewdness did not see through the nonsense.

D. COLVILLE.—Regret we have no room this week. Shall appear in our next.

C. LEWIS.—Glad to hear the Cheshire Branch is making good progress, and will be represented at the Conference. It is a pity the Rev. Mr. Keeble could not muster courage for a set debate with Mr. Watts.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—Your rebuke of the sky-pilot who declared that Charles Bradlaugh "repented at the last and was fully pardoned," was none too severe. We are glad to hear that the bystanders, though professed Christians themselves, laughed at the man of god's impudence.

ORRIS KAYE.—Thanks for the cutting. It certainly illustrates our statement as to the clergy trying to boss the labor movement. Archdeacon Wilson can afford his present pastime. He begins with a good living, which he has no more right to than we have. The state does not pay us to preach Free-thought, and it should not pay him to preach Christianity.

CEPHAS.—(1) Your first and second questions show you have not read the *Freethinker* with much attention. We cannot be always repeating things. (2) Isocrates in Greece, and Confucius in China, both taught the so-called Golden Rule long before the birth of Christ. In some form or other it has been taught by every great moralist in the world.

H. MARLES.—Mr. Foote will be happy to see the Leeds friends at Bradford, or any friends from the places within reasonable distance.

C. W. HECKTHORN.—Copy in printer's hands for insertion. The book, etc. was duly received.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.—Correction made.

W. SIMONS.—The demonstration at Charles Bradlaugh's grave need not interfere with the London Secular Federation's excursion.

A. SIMSON.—See "Sugar Plums." Better to inquire first as to charging for admission. Surely there can be no objection, especially on a week-night.

A. M. J. (Aberdeen).—Will see next week.

OMEGA.—Beasley on Stammering is published by Simpkin and Marshall, London. Order of any bookseller.

YOUNG RECRUIT.—Such letters in the local press are very serviceable to our cause. You are right in supposing that "anti-infidel" agitations are good for Freethought.

INQUIRER.—The Beecher-Ingersoll yarn printed in the Rev. J. H. French's *Woodgrange Magazine* is sheer invention. It was contradicted by both parties, but it goes on sailing the seas of credulity. Ingersoll may have had this in his mind when he said that nothing is so hard to kill as a good, sound, healthy, religious lie.

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.

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—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Echo—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—La Raison—Lucifer—Secular Thought—Printer's Ink—Natural Food—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dagraad—Fur Unsere Jugend—Française de la Libre Pensée—Post—Protestant Echo—Birmingham Daily Argus—Birmingham Weekly Post—Puck—Reynolds' Newspaper—Birmingham Daily Mail—Birmingham Weekly Mail—Morning Leader—Manchester Guardian—Reading Observer—Colombo Sirilaka Sitamina—Weekly Bulletin—Inquirer—Merthyr Times—Kansas Lucifer—Freedom—Religio-Philosophical Journal.

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. 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.

The *Freethinker* (including the twopenny special number for the first week in each month) will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 7s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 9d.; Three Months, 1s. 10½d.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote being announced to deliver three lectures at Liverpool on Sunday, the local Christian Evidence Society said, "Go to, we will have a field day in Hope Hall, and put forth our Wise man and our noble Howard, and draw all Liverpool unto us, and spoil the infidel's meetings." And they did so. That is, they had their field day, but they did not spoil the infidel's meetings. Mr. Foote had the largest audiences he has spoken to at Liverpool since the first visit after his imprisonment. The evening meeting was crowded, and particularly enthusiastic. We congratulate the Liverpool Christian Evidence Society.

There was plenty of discussion after each lecture. Mr. Powell turned up to champion Christianity in the morning. Mr. Foote recognised him as the rowdy person who tried to break up his morning meeting at Bristol. Mr. Powell conducted himself as he usually does, and had to be reprimanded sharply by the chairman. After that he tried to be decent, but it was more than he could accomplish. Mr. Foote read to the audience a letter he had received from Mr. George Wise, disclaiming all responsibility for this "person." This letter seemed to pain the worthy Powell, who had been figuring at Hope Hall as an "infidel slayer."

The afternoon and evening discussion was more gentlemanly, but most of the Christian advocates were very young men, whose stock in trade was the droppings from a more notorious advocate's table. Still, poor discussion does some good, if it only clears up a point or two, and sets people thinking afresh. On the whole Mr. Foote's visit to Liverpool was a great success, and we hope it will give the Branch a good fillip for its summer work, which should include (if possible) some open-air propaganda.

Several members of the Leeds Branch, who are also cyclists, have arranged to run over to Bradford to-day (April 23) and attend Mr. Foote's lectures. They are to meet on Wellington Bridge at 9.30 a.m., and will be glad to be joined by any other cyclists who may read this paragraph.

On Wednesday next (April 26) Mr. Foote will give a special lecture on "Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: its Poetry, Philosophy, and Lessons." Unless the weather proves too fine for indoor meetings, this lecture will be followed by one or two more Shakespearian lectures. The large audience that heard Mr. Foote's discourse on *Hamlet* will probably like to hear the others also.

Mr. Charles Watts's audience at the Hall of Science, London, last Sunday, were exceedingly enthusiastic. Two ladies travelled several miles to be present in the morning to hear "The Revolt of Woman" discussed. One of them expressed her great satisfaction at "the liberal and just manner in which Mr. Watts treated his subject. She would like to see the discourse in print." In the evening the arguments urged to prove that Jesus was an ascetic and that Christ was no God, were received with great applause, and when Mr. Watts sat down he received quite an ovation. Mr. Watts again lectures at the Hall of Science to-day, Sunday, April 23, morning and evening.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Watts's second visit to Chester last week was even more successful than his first appearance in the cathedral city. On the last night a Wesleyan minister opposed, but although he has had much to say about Secularism when no one was present to answer him, he was very modest and meek in his opposition to our colleague. The reverend gentleman, who described the lecture as an "intellectual treat," in reply to an invitation to publicly discuss Secularism and Christianity, admitted his inability to debate with a "trained Freethought lecturer": but, said he, "the pulpit is my place," a remark which the audience estimated at its true value. Our Chester friends are highly pleased with Mr. Watts's visit.

The Finsbury Park Branch holds a special general meeting on Friday next (April 28) at 11 Blackstock-road, Finsbury Park, N. A full attendance of members is particularly requested.

The *Western Daily Press* (Bristol) finds room for a correspondence on the Sunday opening of Libraries and Museums, to which an able and useful letter is contributed by Mr. J. Keast, the zealous secretary of the N.S.S. Branch.

The new Brighton Branch will continue its Sunday meetings on the Level. If any N.S.S. lecturers want to visit London-on-Sea, the Branch will be happy to arrange with them as to railway fare, provided they will treat the natives to a Freethought lecture. The secretary is Mr. A. Simson, 8 Kemp's-terrace, Lorna-road, Hove.

Mr. H. Snell pays his first visit to Birmingham on Sunday. His subjects are interesting and give scope for his elocutionary powers. We hope our friends will try a taste of his quality. Mr. Snell lectures at Wolverhampton in the afternoon.

Mr. J. M. Gimson has a letter on Local Option in the Unitarian *Inquirer*. He contends that the same principle might be applied to suppress Unitarian chapels, since fatal heresy must be as much worse than drunkenness as eternity is longer than time. It would be as easy to find clergymen testify to the benefit of having no dissent as to the advantage of having no publichouses.

A portrait of Charles Bradlaugh by Mr. Walter Sickert is now in the exhibition of the New English Art Club. It was painted to the order of the Birmingham Corporation, and is a full-length portrait. The one by Mr. Sickert in the National Liberal Club is only half length. The bearing of our late leader's figure fully carries out the sentiment engraved on the frame, "The grave alone shall make me yield."

We are glad to hear that our friend and colleague, Mr. Touzeau Parris, gave great satisfaction by his recent lectures for the Bristol Branch. His replies to opponents were highly relished. N.S.S. Branches should avail themselves more frequently of Mr. Parris's services.

Mr. Viktor E. Lennstrand, editor the Swedish *Fritänkaren*, who, it will be remembered suffered imprisonment for his attacks on Christianity, is going to visit the United States, where he will deliver a series of lectures. Possibly Mr. Foote may meet him at the International Conference at Chicago.

Mr. S. P. Putnam begins in the *Truthseeker* (New York, April 8), a series of articles with the pronounced title "Religion a Curse, Religion a Disease, Religion a Lie." They will afterwards be published in pamphlet form.

Sir Robert Stout, who, in a social sense, is the leader of the Freethought party in New Zealand, is an example of the force of industry, and independence. He was born in Terniches, Shetland Isles, in 1844, and was educated at the parish school, where he became a pupil teacher. In 1863 he emigrated to New Zealand and set up as a schoolmaster in Dunedin. Finding an opening in the law, he studied jurisprudence and passed as barrister and solicitor in 1871. Since then he was mounted to the highest offices, having been Attorney-General, Minister of Education, and Premier. He has now, it is reported, definitely retired from public life, but will still devote attention to questions of education and social welfare.

Christians who are always boasting of their hospitals should have their attention directed to a letter from Dr. Keser in the *Medical Magazine*, who points out that the Greek votive tablets in the British Museum show that there existed in every Greek city a public physician whose duty it was to attend gratuitously both citizens and strangers—though practically his gratuitous ministrations were confined to the poor.

Mr. A. Dawson, on Sunday last, gave his farewell lecture to the Newcastle Branch before leaving for America. Subsequently he was presented with a testimonial subscribed for by the members, consisting of Darwin's *Descent of Man*, Bradlaugh's *Labor and Law*, and a purse of silver. The rest of the evening was spent socially.

The *Freethinker's Magazine* for April has a portrait of Charles Darwin and an elaborate article by T. B. Wakeman on "What the World Owes to Darwin." Among the other contents is Mr. J. E. Bemburg's call for an International Congress of Freethinkers at Chicago.

John Baskerville, the famous Birmingham printer, was a Freethinker of so pronounced a type that John Wilkes is said to have been shocked at his blasphemy. He directed by will that no religious service should be held over his corpse, but that it should be buried in his own garden. He died in 1775, and it is said the last act of his life was to avow total disbelief in revealed religion. On his monument was placed the following inscription: "Stranger, beneath this stone, in unconsecrated ground, a friend to the liberties of mankind directed his body to be inurned. May the example contribute to emancipate thy mind from the idle fears of superstition and the wicked arts of priesthood." Nevertheless in 1829, when the garden in Easy-row was cleared, the body eventually found its way to Christ Church catacombs, where it has recently been identified by his name being soldered in printer's types upon the leaden coffin. It is to be hoped Birmingham has sufficient pride in its great printer to re-erect his monument, and sufficient honesty to replace the original inscription.

Mr. Frederic Harrison lectured to the London Positivists on Sunday evening on "Natural Theology." He said that Mr. Herbert Spencer had transferred to the unknowable something which he postulated, to the unknown force or forces behind phenomena, the language of theology, and so had his follower, Mr. Fiske, who had written a book to prove that the unknown force was God. When he (Mr. Harrison) heard the statement that the universe had been created by a divine, eternal, absolute, self-existing, almighty Person, he very honestly abstained from denying the statement or disputing any one of its propositions. He did not pretend to say that he even doubted it. All he said was that, trained as he had been in the canons of positive thought, he could not understand those terms. Why had we so many schemes of natural theology poured upon us, and what did they come to? He thought they came to about

nothing. Man without his limitations was man without his manhood, and man without manhood was a mere empty, inconceivable abstraction. With revelation the knowledge of God was possible, but without revelation he did not see how such knowledge was possible. Work, truth, knowledge, hope, love, reverence—these were the things we needed, and not answers to problems we could not understand, made in terms which themselves constituted but a fresh conundrum to solve.

A Rambling Club is being formed in connection with the Manchester Branch, also a Natural History class as auxiliary to the same, though those who join the one are not necessarily bound to belong to the other. Membership will not be confined to the Branch. Any friends of the cause will be welcome. Names can be given in to Mr. Hunter at any of the Branch lectures.

Branches of the National Secular Society should be making preparations for the approaching Conference at Hanley. Every Branch should endeavor to be represented. We hope the Conference will inaugurate a real Forward Movement. One thing is a matter of congratulation: the Hanley Branch has secured the use of the handsome Town Hall for the whole of Whit-Sunday.

PROVING THE UNPROVABLE.

THERE is one singular and glaring inconsistency in the attitude of the Christian defenders that frequently strikes us. On the one hand it is pretended that the existence of a God is so plain that no one but an imbecile can doubt it. It is sun-clear, we are told. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" is quoted times without number, the inference of course being that the Atheist is a fool, notwithstanding the fact that no intelligent Atheist enunciates his creed in such form, and that in another part of the "holy volume" we are informed that he who calls his brother a fool is in danger of hell fire. To read Christian Evidence publications, so-called, one would fancy that an eminent scientific Atheist never lived; that the only Atheists existing are fools, rogues, or hypocrites. Yet, strange to say, volumes on volumes are written, tons of useful paper spoiled, gallons of good ink spilled, to establish this sun-plain truth, which, forsooth, only idiots question. The proceeding is somewhat extraordinary. Let us take a parallel. No one in his senses would think of sitting down to write a book proving that two and two make four, that the whole was greater than its part, that things which are equal to the same are equal to one another. These propositions are so clear that absolutely no one outside a lunatic asylum questions them, and no one outside a lunatic asylum wastes his time in establishing them. But when we turn to the God question, we find scores of people striving to establish the existence of a God—and tripping one another up in the striving. Now we venture to emphasise, for all rational people, that this very fact—that a proof or apology is considered necessary—destroys altogether the assumption that the idea of the existence of a God is innate or self-evident. We even go further; we say that the fact of a proof being thought necessary at all is a strong argument against the existence of such a God—at any rate, as Christian people seek to establish. If an all-powerful being desired mankind to know him, he could have made his existence as self-evident to the mind of man as any of the axioms we have mentioned above. That such an existence is not self-evident is explainable on one of two hypotheses—either that such a being does not exist, or, existing, does not think it necessary that man should be acquainted of the fact.

These remarks are elicited by the perusal of an article by the Rev. J. Reid Howatt on "God" in the April number of the *Young Man*—one of those cheap, sentimental, Review-of-Reviewing style of things,

which are as plentiful nowadays as blackberries in September. We gather from this article that the Rev. Howatt is the author of *Agnostic Fallacies*. We confess we have never met this interesting work; but if the *Young Man* article is a sample of its style, we hardly think we have lost very much.

In the beginning of the article Mr. Howatt says: "Can we prove there is a God? We cannot. Let us state that frankly at the start, so that we may be perfectly clear as to our whereabouts. We cannot prove there is a God." Now, having set out with this dictum, Mr. Howatt immediately proceeds to stultify himself, for he attempts to prove in some fashion or other—what fashion it matters not—the very existence he has told us is unprovable. There is nothing, it is true, in the article which you might not hear on any summer Sunday in any of the parks; nothing which Mr. Engstrom or his deputy-deputy-secretary would not be prepared to supply *ad lib.* at so much per yard. Why, therefore, we should be asked to pay threepence to read in the *Young Man* what we can hear under the blue canopy of heaven for nothing, it is somewhat difficult to understand. But such are the ways of young men.

The first point Mr. Howatt sets himself to establish is that we believe in existences we cannot prove. This is a sample of the style of thing: "There is life, for example. Did you ever see life, ever handle it, ever photograph it, or weigh it? . . . You can prove a great deal about what it can do; but can you prove what it is in itself? You can't, and yet you believe in life." Now here we have a fair specimen of the confusion of thought which theologians cause, and, in many cases, cause deliberately. Life, Mr. Howatt knows well enough, is *not* an entity, no more than sweetness, brightness, beauty, strength. Those are abstract terms, not concrete ones, as every schoolboy is taught. They are only qualities or properties of objects, not objects themselves. We cannot conceive of them existing except as associated with material objects. They are simply abstractions, which are treated for grammatical purposes as substantives. But mark the craftiness of Mr. Howatt! He is evidently a past-master at the art of word-juggling. He doesn't mean to imply at all that his God is an abstraction—not at all; but he brings forward abstract substantives and says in effect: "You can't handle or weigh these things, yet you believe in them. Then believe in my bogie-man, because you can't see, weigh, or test him." How beautiful! Verily, Mr. Howatt is a worthy authority on fallacies.

This kind of stuff is so absurd that really exposing it is like getting a sledge-hammer to kill a fly. But let us see where this "argument" leads one. Apparently put barefacedly, it comes to this—We ought to believe without evidence. But manifestly Mr. Howatt cannot claim a monopoly for the idea. It is as good in the mouth of a Theosophist, a Mohammedan, a Brahmin, or anyone else as in Mr. Howatt's. The Theosophist, say, taking a leaf out of Mr. Howatt's book, might argue thus: "You believe in whiteness; you cannot smell it, taste it, weigh it, photograph it, dissect it. Yet you believe in it. Then what is the difficulty in believing there are gentlemen in Thibet who can swallow ninepins as easily as you swallow bread." In short, this argument, if it meant anything, would simply mean that we ought to place ourselves unreservedly at the mercy of every mystery-monger who chose to pour his tale into our ears.

Mr. Howatt says "there are four great forces that rule the world—life, love, heat and electricity"—which is an extraordinary, we might almost say idiotic, statement. Heat and electricity are but modes of energy, and why name two of the modes without naming the others—light, sound, magnetism, gravitation, chemical force, and so on? The fact would appear to be that Mr. Howatt was smitten

with the Parkeresque desire of saying something calculated to dazzle—a dangerous desire to overtake a little man. He has said it—and made himself ridiculous.

Having, as a kind of preamble, argued that we ought to believe without proof, as if to discount beforehand the feebleness of his own logic, Mr. Howatt proceeds: "There is the argument from existence, for example. Since there is something existing now, there must have been something existing from all eternity." Well there is nothing extraordinary in that, but when he proceeds to tell us that "you cannot think of anything existing without thinking of something having called it into existence," we demur. We fail to see the necessity in thought at all that Mr. Howatt pretends to see. We have no experience of "something" calling something else into existence, nor can we conceive of the process. The fact is, this necessity in thought is invented by theologians to cover their absurd reasoning. And watch how Mr. Howatt works the thing out: "Seeing, however, here and there, and all around us, there is *something*, that something must have been produced by something else, that in its turn by something, that from something before it again. So you go back and back"—for ever, you fancy he is going to say. Not at all—"to the First—a First somewhere, a First sometime. But it is very clear that the First must be self-existent, or it could not be the First, for then these would need to have been another before it. If self-existent, then it must be eternal. So far the rock-bed for the existence of a First Cause stands impregnable." Really if that be so, we can only, to use Mr. Howatt's own words, go to school again and take that word "impregnable" to pieces. But was ever more tortuous nonsense penned than the passage we have quoted? Having told us that "we cannot think of anything existing without thinking of something having called it into existence," he instantly proceeds after a winding-staircase of "somethings" to reach a "self-existent" something, not called into existence by anything else. This is the kind of stuff before which Mr. Howatt says "Agnosticism stands limp and flaccid." Well all we can say is it must be Agnosticism of the Howatt-make. If that is the kind of Agnosticism whose fallacies Mr. Howatt took to exposing, he had an easy task indeed.

There is a good deal more in the same vein. There is, for instance, the venerable argument that life, thought, intelligence, will, feeling, being found here, therefore they "must be attributes of the First Cause from which they originated." Mr. Howatt forgot to mention other things—or rather, it did not suit his case to do so. We also find "here and there, and all around us" such things as lunatic asylums, pocket-books, arm-chairs, and railway-engines, to say nothing of man-eating tigers, crocodiles and whelks. If, therefore, everything we find here must also be found in the "Primal Essence" from which it originated, the said Primal Essence must be a kind of cross between an infinite Whiteley's and a Zoo. But we had understood that the world was governed by life, love, heat, and electricity; in which case, manifestly, the great First Cause would partake of the nature of an amorous galvanic battery.

We fancy, after the samples given, our readers will hardly relish more of Howatt. In one part of his lucubration—which, by the way, even from a literary point of view, is extremely careless, the writer apparently rambling on without any very precise plan, and frequently repeating himself—he refers to Renan's *Vie de Jesus* as a "sad, poor book." Well, of course, Renan is no more above criticism than anyone else, and every man is entitled to form his own opinion. But as Mr. Howatt is so free in his criticism, he can hardly object to a similar freedom on our part; and we can find no better phrase to

describe his article than he applies to Renan's work—it is verily a sad, poor effusion.

FREDERICK RYAN.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There is in your journal of the 9th inst., a friendly reference to my writings on the subject of the Origin of Christian Literature on the part of Mr. Wheeler. I see that I am not understood by him and by others; and if the fault be my own, I trust that in a matter of so transcendent importance to all serious thinkers, you will give me the opportunity of rectifying it.

Mr. Wheeler refers to what he calls my "bold thesis." Now I have reason to know that some will understand this phrase as equivalent to my "rash or audacious thesis." Permit me, then, to say on my own behalf that I am as bold as another, provided only that I feel myself to be in a safe and unassailable position; but not otherwise. I do not know that I can boast of being a Freethinker, though it has been my life-long aspiration to attain that quality, and though my late friend, Ernest Havet, author of a well-known work on *The Origins of Christendom*, wrote me not long before his death that I was "without prejudices—a thing very rare in England." But this was pleasant flattery.

Well, sir, as a mere aspirant for freedom of thought and impartiality of judgment, I write to you, and hope I shall not give offence by the remark that perfect freedom of thought in this matter of Biblical criticism has not yet been attained by some of my Freethinking friends, if I may venture so to designate them.

How is it, otherwise, that they continue to quote "Papias, and Irenæus and Eusebius, and Mark and Peter and Luke" on this question as if I had not shown them to be shadows, *imaginarium* (as the monks say), fantastic names and masks behind which no real personalities individually corresponding to them ever existed? Have they looked up the evidences to which I pointed in *The Rise of Christendom*? I am now busy in amending the results there arrived at; but not a solitary amendment can I make in the *conservative*, or what is confusedly called the "orthodox" direction.

Frankly, this is a mere question of literary science; and let me beg, both on my own interests and that of science, that I may not be misunderstood. Why do my friends hang such an enormous weight upon "Papias," or any weight at all? "Papias" is a mere hoax of the monasteries. You say I have to prove this? It is proved to any one who has understood the books where this curious name figures. The idea of a man moving in the old Roman world and saluted simply as "Papias" (bishop or no bishop) is simply ridiculous. Every scholar should know as much. I believe I can guess why the name was coined; but will not put forward mere conjectures. But with regard to the name "Irenæus," there is no manner of doubt that it is purely allegorical, meaning "Peaceful" or "Peaceable." It again provokes a smile to think of a person being so identified and addressed, without fore or after-name.

Moreover, the place where this name was coined can be detected. It was the Benedictine Monastery at Lyons, whence Beza obtained that famous Codex of the New Testament (the most important, probably, of all the show copies), which has been at Cambridge a little more than 300 years. They chose to set up an ideal "Saint Irenæus" as patron of their cloister and their literary fictions. The like was done at other places; but sometimes the places are also fictitious. Until these things are understood, nothing can be understood of the scheme and execution of Church literature; when they are understood, all is essentially known. Chronological and other details only remain to be cleared up.

Take, again, the name of "Eusebius"; you might render it "Pietist." The monks are very fond of their *Eusebii*; there is quite a list of them; but the most important of these Ficts are "Eusebius Pam-

phili" and "Eusebius Hieronymus," which last word is corrupted into "Jerome." Fancy a man bearing such a name as "Mr. Pietist-Sacred-named," living in any part of the world, in any age whatever! It is as if we were discussing the personality of "Mr. Interpreter" in the *Pilgrim's Progress*!

Yet see what has been built upon this name by the credulity or inattention of the whole world of so-called critics. There is one little Latin book which reveals the whole system of Church literature. It is the list of so-called *Illustrious Men*, the first of whom is "Simon Peter" and the last is "Hieronymus the son of Eusebius," as here he calls himself. The book is put forward with a most cynically impudent and audaciously mendacious preface that can be conceived; which is simply an oblique confession that at the time the list was drawn up, there were educated men who knew, and openly said, that the Church had no learned men and was the affair of ignorant people.

After long plodding, I have discovered, as I believe, the epoch when this was said. It could not have been before the Revival of Letters in Europe, not before what we have been taught to call the early "sixteenth century." You will read in Lives of Luther that there were men in Rome who said that Church history was a contrivance of saintly trickery, and had no true testimonies to rest upon. Since then, owing to the overwhelming influence of organisation, and the stupefaction induced by an education in credulity, the truth has been buried from the un-Latin-reading public.

It is no time for the affectation of modesty and hesitation on my part. The first man who discovered that the earth was a sphere, and that the Christian geography—without the belief in which, the monks said, we could not be saved—was false, *knew* that he was in the right. Galileo found no room for modesty when he said "The earth moves, and the Christian astronomy is false." Nor have I, when I assert the law that theocratic corporations must of necessity build on theological and chronological fiction; that they must mean one thing in their own minds, and tell another thing to the vulgar; and when I further assert that the problem of the critic is to ascertain their secret mind, and the epoch at which they devised and executed their schemes. It is a long task, but by no means one of insuperable difficulty.

I may have to ask for your indulgence again. But I hope I have pointed to the core of this great historical question. Let me close for the present by asking, Who is the bold or rash man in these inquiries? Is it he who, like myself, invites you to consider carefully what was being written in the Latin language by the partly critical clergy about 200 years ago, and who invites you to move very cautiously upward from that point till you plunge into the total intellectual darkness that prevailed in Europe 400 years ago; or is it he who, by the aid of shallow and confused chronological tables, thinks he can bound over any number of "centuries" and "Dark Ages" as easily as if he were passing over so many squares of pavement? Our chronology is a fiction and a convention; and nothing, I believe, tends more to prolong an enormous illusion about our past than the habit of copying down dates A.D. or B.C., especially in the Arabic numerals—which splendid invention was only creeping into use among us less than 400 years ago.

I may resume my meaning in a very few words. Early Church literature is theological romance; it was schemed and executed in the monasteries of the Order of St. Benedict at places which can be pointed out on the map of Europe; it was gradually brought to light after the introduction of printing in a form which shows it to have been of quite recent origin. These propositions need only to be understood; they will then be recognised as irrefutable.—Yours, faithfully,
EDWIN JOHNSON.

[Since Mr. Johnson's thesis overturns the whole of Christian history, I think myself justified in calling it a "bold" one, without either demonstrating or disputing its validity. To do either might be no easy task. There are several ways of meeting the alleged Christian evidences. One may challenge the date and genuineness of every alleged witness produced. This I think a

bold course. Or one may, as I did, state that they are accepted provisionally as genuine individuals living at the dates assigned them, and then proceed to cross-examine their evidence. This, I fancy, is the safer plan for an unlearned person. As I expressly stated that this admission was "for the nonce" and that it was "a position which, in regard to several at least, I should strenuously contest," Mr. Johnson need not suppose I believe with an unquestioning faith in the real existence of Papias, Irenæus, Eusebius, *et hoc genus omne*. But I do think an argument as to non-existence founded on names may be carried too far.—J. M. W.]

SAINT PETER AND THE WIDOW.

At Bezdon (Hungary) died recently a husbandman, leaving 800 florins in the savings bank. The town being small, all the inhabitants knew of this little cash left for the widow, who drew half of it for the purpose of shedding 400 tears, at the rate of one florin each, on the tomb of her husband. At night she made the money tight in her handkerchief, which she hid under her pillow for safety, her house being in a lonely place in the suburbs. She went to bed, said her prayers with more emphasis than usual, and shut her eyes to a sound sleep. All at once a loud knock at the door woke her up. "Who is there?" she asked. "I am St. Peter; open the door for your husband's sake," answered a solemn voice. The poor woman (who most likely had just been dreaming about her husband on the way to heaven) got out of bed and opened the door, immediately falling on her knees as St. Peter gravely entered the room. The gatekeeper of Paradise and prince of apostles, with his long beard and ample white robes, first asked her to kiss his divine hand, then declared how her beloved husband was still outside the gate, because of a debt of 800 florins he had vowed to pay in this world in expiation of an old sin had never been paid as promised. The poor woman, all trembling in her nightgown both from fear and cold and weeping heartily, answered that she would pay every farthing of it herself, for she would sooner go begging all her life than deprive her husband's soul of a single joy of the heavens; but she had only 400 florins at home, the other 400 would be ready on the morrow. "Granted," replied our shrewd St. Peter, who took the 400 florins on account, leaving the poor woman on her knees all the time. According to the *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, St. Peter made the mistake of calling again for the remainder of the account, and, while in the act of removing the balance, was suddenly pounced on by two police officers. With the query, "Do they really want money in heaven?" the mask was torn from the apostle's face. The rascal was discovered to be the landlord of the widow.

THE MANUFACTURE OF LIARS.

HAS it not struck you that by the time a child has reached that degree of assurance which enables him (or her) to state that he (or she) understands the doctrine of Trinity ("that three's one and one's three outfit" of the German-Yankee miner) that child is in the way to become an accomplished liar? Seeing that the doctrine is so absurd that it cannot even be formulated without self-stultification, and that no grown man knows or can know in the least what it means, or whether it means anything, or is any more or less than a drunken joke, how can any child be taught to understand it? He can at most only be made to say that he understands it, but to be made to say this is to be made to lie, and willy-nilly the child is made or becomes a liar—and most likely not for that particular occasion only. The ignorance of Mr. Riley, who is attempting to produce this degrading result wholesale in the London Board Schools, unfits him to sit on any governing body, unless he is a religious maniac and really thinks the Trinitarian doctrine is capable of demonstration either in fact or thought—a one-sided triangle, a blue odor, a three-legged green, are easily thinkable or provable as that insane and unstatable doctrine of a triune-monotheism.
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LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[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): 7.45, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "A Glimpse through the Corridors of Space," with lantern illustrations (2d. and 4d.); 9.15, social gathering. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic class (members wanted).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, public tea (6d.); 7.30, free entertainment.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, C. Cohen, "Religion and Freethought." Friday at 7.30, free science classes (hygiene and astronomy).

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "The Political Past, Present, and Future of England" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?" (3d., 6d., and 1s.) Wednesday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: its Poetry, Philosophy, and Lessons" (free).

Islington—Milner Lodge, 18 Waterloo-terrace, Upper-street: 2.15, general meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. J. Hunt, "The Book of Common Prayer."

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, G. Standring, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Finsbury Park (near the band stand): 11.30, C. Cohen will lecture; 3.30, A. B. Moss, "The Gospel of Evolution."

Hammersmith—The Grove: Thursday at 8.30, a lecture.

Hammersmith Bridge: 6.30, A. B. Moss, "The Bible and Evolution."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, S. H. Alison, "His Satanic Majesty"; 3.30, J. Rowney, "Christ's Teaching—I."

Islington—Highbury Fields (southern corner, near Highbury Station): 3.15, W. Heaford, "Why did Christ Die?"

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Revolt of Reason against Faith."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Why Christianity has Failed."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "Christ's Teachings—I."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, Mr St John, "This World and the Next"; 3.15, C. Cohen, "Religion and Freethought."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

The "Queensberry" R. and A. Club: 10.30, at Reader's Boat-house, Lea-bridge, rowing. Monday and Friday at 8, at the "Central" Baths, Clerkenwell, swimming. Wednesday at 8, at the hall, gymnastics.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: H. Snell, 11.15, "Lay it all on Jesus"; 7, "Tennyson and Modern Thought," preceded by dramatic recital.

Brighton—Eagle Hotel, Glo'ster-road: 7.30, G. J. Holyoake, "Secularism" (free).

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: G. W. Foote, 11, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; 3, "Happiness in Hell"; 7, "The Doom of the Gods"; tea at Laycock's Temperance Hotel.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, reading and debating circle; 2.45, Sunday-school for children; 7, A. E. Rowcroft, "Old Wine in New Bottles."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, G. M. Wright, "The Philosophy of Aristotle"; 6.30, J. P. Gilmour, "Pain: what is it, and has it a Final Cause?"

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, A Friend, dramatic recital.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, G. E. C. Naewiger, "And great was the fall thereof."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, Harry Smith, "Christ the Prince of Peace and War."

Manchester N.E.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 6.30, "Bardell v. Pickwick," by the dramatic society. Tuesday at 8, debating circle, Mr. Kelly, "Malthusianism Not a Cure for Poverty."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, R. Mitchell, "Evolution and Design."

Nottingham—Shortland's Café (bottom of Derby-road): 7.15, Mr. Jackson will read a paper.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, debate on "Monarchy v. other Forms of Government."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, Mr. Laver, "The Exodus."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, R. Drury, "Christian Socialism."

South Shields—Thornton's Variety Hall: Stanley Jones, 11, "Nature, Life, and Man"; 3, "Is Christianity Played Out?"; 7, "Our Girls: a Study in Morals."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, R. Weightman, "Who Made the Devil?" April 24 and 25 at 7.30, at Centre House, Silksworth-row, debate between S. Jones and R. Grice on "Atheism or Theism: which is the more Reasonable?"

Wolverhampton—Atheism Assembly Room, Queen-street: 3, H. Snell, "Is there a Moral Governor of the Universe?" preceded by a dramatic recital.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Blackburn—Market-square: Sam Standring, 11, "The Cost and Evil of Royalty"; 3, "King David's Dilemma"; 6.30, "Does God Answer Prayer?"

Brighton (on the Level): 3, A. Heun, "The Gospel of Humanity"

Rochdale—Town Hall-square: Thursday at 7, Sam Standring, "God's Gift of Freewill."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Vassall-road, Brixton, S.W.—April 23, m., Hyde Park. May 7, m., Wood Green; e, Lambeth; 14, m., Battersea; a, Islington; 21, m., Camberwell; 28, m., Midland Arches; e, Lambeth.

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—April 23, a., Victoria Park; e., Camberwell; 30, Ipswich.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—April 23, m., Battersea; 30, m., Hyde Park; a., Finsbury Park; e., Hammersmith. May 7, m., Bethnal Green; a., Victoria Park; e., Walthamstow; 14 to 21, annual tour; 28 m., Islington; e., Kilburn.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—April 23, South Shields; 24 and 25, Sunderland; 29, Arbroath; 30, Aberdeen. May 7, Edinburgh; 14, m., Mile End Waste; e., Swaby's Coffee House; 21, m., Finsbury Park; 28, Ipswich.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—April 23, Hammersmith; 30, Wood Green. May 7, m., Camberwell; 14, e., Camberwell; 21, m., Westminster; a., Finsbury; 28, m., Wood Green; e., Hammersmith.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—April 30, Hall of Science. May 7, Camberwell.

J. ROWNEY, 7 Park Villas, Newington Turning, N.—April 26 to June 25, m., Regent's Park; a., Hyde Park.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—April 23, Birmingham; 30, m., Westminster; a., Victoria Park. May 7, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Woolwich; 14, m., Camberwell; 28, m., Hyde Park; a., Regent's Park.

SAM STANDRING, 2 Morton-street, C-on-M, Manchester.—April 23, Blackburn; 30, Sheffield.

ST. JOHN, 8 Norland-road North, Notting Hill, W.—April 23, m., Victoria Park. May 14, m., Hyde Park; 21, m., Victoria Park; e., Hammersmith; 28, m., Bethnal Green.

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"Great Cæsar!"

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SOON.

Soon the summer's gone,
Soon the flowers die,
Soon the night succeeds the dawn—
So quick the moments fly.

Soon all love will die,
Soon all hearts must break;
Soon this fleeting life will fly,
And room for others make.

Soon the dream is o'er,
Soon our life is past—
Soon we're gone for ever more,
In death to sleep at last.

C. W. MAK.

.....

Flossie is a little girl whose ideas of creation are yet crude, but she is very curious.

"Is all of us made out of dust, mamma?" she asked, the other day.

"Yes, Flossie."

"Little babies, too?"

"Yes."

The child was silent for a moment.

"Mamma," she said, "heaven must be a drefful dusty place."

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"A past participle," promptly replied little Tommy.

"How do you make that out?" asked the pants punisher, reaching out his hand for his Jerusalem blade.

"Why, t'other evening the parson came to dinner at our house, and pa threw the water jug at the cat and begged pardon, and said it was all that past participle gout."

He escaped the birch.

.....

The other Sunday I overheard one of those neat, *a la militaire*, ecru spring jackets say to another ditto, outside one of the fashionable churches, "Why, Belle, I thought you were a Unitarian?"

"Yes, we were," was the reply, "but ma and I have joined the Episcopalians. We like their forms better."

"Their forms?"

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Patients visited in London for a fee of 10s. 6d. Patients visited in the country. Fee according to distance and the time occupied in going and returning. Advice Given by post.

5 TWEED DRESS LENGTHS FOR 25s. ARE NOW SOLD OUT.

If any one of the 266 purchasers of the same are in any way dissatisfied, we shall be pleased to take the goods back or return a part of the money paid.

THIS IS THE PRINCIPLE UPON WHICH WE DO ALL OUR BUSINESS.

SOME MORE SPECIAL ODD LOTS

WHICH YOU WILL DO WELL TO TRY. ALL AT ABOUT HALF THE ORDINARY PRICE.

- Pure Wool Scotch Tweed Remnants, for Suits and Trousers, 2s. 9d. per yd., 28in. wide.
- Pure Wool Corkscrew Worsted Coating, Black, for Coat and Vest or Full Suit, 6s. per yd., 56in. wide.
- Three Trousers Lengths, one Scotch Tweed, one West of England, and one Worsted, for 20s.
- Four Tweed Trousers Lengths, either light or dark colors, for 20s.
- A Thoroughly Waterproof Scarboro Mackintosh, good in quality, light in weight, for 20s.
- A Splendid All-Wool Black or Indigo Serge Suit Length for 18s.
- A Pure Wool Scotch Tweed Suit Length for 18s.

A LARGE QUANTITY OF ODD DRESS LENGTHS,

Which include Stripes, Spots, Checks, Shots, and Mixtures, in all the Best Makes and Most Fashionable Colorings. Cashmeres, Serges, Bajes, Amazons, Granites, Whipcords, Diagonals, Folios and Tweeds, in all colors. We are making these up into parcels, each containing three Dress Lengths, and will send them, carriage paid, to any address for 21s. Name the colors you prefer, and you will be delighted with the goods.

WE WILL RETURN 24s. IF YOU ARE NOT PERFECTLY SATISFIED WITH THE VALUE.

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, we have just purchased about 300 yards of Plain Botany Wool Black Serge, and offer the same at 12s. 6d. per Dress Length. To show the confidence we have in this lot, we offer to return money in full and allow the purchaser to keep the Serge if it does not give PERFECT SATISFACTION.

J. W. GOTT, 2 UNION STREET, BRADFORD.