

November 19, 1893

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

Vol. XIII.—No. 47.]

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1893.

[PRICE TWOPENCE.]



REAL MISSIONARY WORK.

DID BRADLAUGH BACKSLIDE?

THE *Freethinker* for October 22 contained a bright article by Mr. George Standing, giving an account of a Sunday service which he attended at the famous Wesley Chapel in the City-road. The preacher on that occasion was the Rev. Allen Rees, and the theme of his discourse was "The Death of the *National Reformer*." Amongst other more or less questionable remarks, there was one made by the reverend gentleman, which the reporter very justly criticised. What was said by Mr. Rees was recorded as follows by Mr. Standing:—

"Indeed, there was reason to believe that Charles Bradlaugh had himself materially modified his views before his death, that his Atheism became weaker as he grew older. Sir Isaac Holden had told him (Mr. Rees) that Mr. Bradlaugh had often spoken to him privately in the House of Commons upon religious matters, and had admitted that the conversion of his brother had profoundly impressed him. Mr. Bradlaugh had often said to Sir Isaac Holden that he often wished he were half as good a man as his brother."

To anyone at all acquainted with the relations that existed between Mr. Bradlaugh and his brother, the last clause of Mr. Rees's statement is sufficient to stamp the whole of it as false and absurd. Without going into details, it is enough to say that Mr. Bradlaugh simply could not speak of his brother in this manner; it is absolutely beyond the bounds of possibility; and,

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as Sir Isaac is the authority throughout, the entire passage about Mr. Bradlaugh would have to be dismissed with contempt.

Mr. Standing sent Mr. Rees a marked copy of the *Freethinker*, and intimated that space would probably be afforded him for a correction or an explanation. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner was also communicated with, and she immediately wrote to Mr. Rees on the subject. The reverend gentleman replied that he had made "no positive statements" as to any change of view on the part of Mr. Bradlaugh. He had "nothing to add" and "nothing to retract." But to prevent a misunderstanding he enclosed a verbatim copy of the passage in his sermon to which she referred. It ran as follows:—

"As a rule, men who profess Atheism do not become stronger in their belief as time goes on. I think I may almost say that this was true of Mr. Bradlaugh. Sir Isaac Holden has told me that he frequently conversed with Mr. Bradlaugh on religious subjects. The conversion of his brother deeply affected him, and on one occasion he said to him: 'I wish I were half as good as my brother.' It was the unreality of much of the Christianity with which in early life Mr. Bradlaugh was associated and the worldliness and uncharitableness of religious professors, which made an Atheist of Mr. Bradlaugh, as it has done of many others."

This is a precious sample of clerical logic, composition, and veracity. Mr. Rees must have been very ignorant of Mr. Bradlaugh's writings and intellectual character, or else he was deliberately inventing or

trusting to mere hearsay, when he stated that Mr. Bradlaugh was made an Atheist by the bigotry or selfishness of certain Christians. "I think I may almost say" is a strange expression. What is it to "almost say" a thing? Is it almost said when you have said it? And what a jumble of "hims" in the fourth sentence! It would really disgrace a schoolboy.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner replied to Mr. Rees, hoping that his "sense of honor" would impel him to acknowledge his mistake. She told him that her father's convictions never wavered on his death-bed; that Mr. W. R. Bradlaugh was never converted, because he was always a professed Christian; that Sir Isaac Holden must be laboring under a misapprehension; and that if Mr. Rees would call upon her she would tell him the facts which made it "utterly impossible" that her father could have spoken of his brother in the way alleged. Mrs. Bonner also wrote to Sir Isaac Holden, asking him whether he "really did tell this to the Rev. Allen Rees." Sir Isaac Holden did not reply. He is a very old man, years older than Mr. Gladstone. This may be an excuse for his manners as well as the infirmity of his memory.

Mr. Rees did reply. He said that "of course" he could not tell an untruth, that he had "made no absolute statement," that he "knew he had no positive evidence," and that his remark was "a bare suggestion." Having crawled away from his clear responsibility, Mr. Rees gratuitously committed another offence. "There was," he wrote, "another remark which your father uttered at the Hall of Science." Now this is a "positive statement." And where is the evidence? "I can give you," Mr. Rees added, "the name of the person who heard him say it." According to Mr. Rees, therefore, it is only "a bare suggestion" when he gives the authority of Sir Isaac Holden, but an anonymous authority is a good basis for a direct, unqualified assertion. And what is the "remark" which Mr. Bradlaugh "uttered" (what etymology!)? It is this—"A man twenty-five years old may be an iconoclast, but I cannot understand a man being one who has passed middle age."

Mrs. Bonner took leave to disbelieve (as she well might) that her father had uttered such nonsense. She told Mr. Rees that her father had lectured and written as "Iconoclast" till he was thirty-five, and only dropped the "fighting name" then because his own name was so well known. She repeated her assurance that he had never wavered in his Atheism, and begged Mr. Rees to take her father's own written words in preference to "other people's versions of his conversation." His *Doubts in Dialogue*, the final paper of which left his hands only three or four days before his last illness, would show what his last views were, and she ventured to send Mr. Rees a copy for persual. Mr. Rees read the volume, and, instead of admitting that he had been mistaken, he had the impertinence to tell Mrs. Bonner that her father's book was full of "sophism" and "the merest puerilities," and ended by expressing his "simple contempt." It was impertinence on Mr. Rees's part, in both senses of the word, for the merit of Mr. Bradlaugh's writing was not the point in consideration. The point was this, Did the writing—the *last* writing—of Mr. Bradlaugh show the slightest change in his Atheism? Mr. Rees could not see this point, or he would not see it; and either alternative is discreditable to a man who sets himself up as a public teacher.

Mr. Rees did one right thing, however: he sent Mrs. Bonner a letter he had received from Sir Isaac Holden, containing the following passage:—

"Your rendering of the story is a little different to what I spoke—Mr. Bradlaugh was affected to tears when I told him that his brother James said to the Rev. Richard Allen that his brother Charles was too good a man to die an Infidel, and he believed that before his death he would become a Christian. Tears started in his (Charles's) eyes, and he simply replied: 'My brother James is a good fellow,' not 'I wish I were half as good as my brother.' There was evidently a very kind feeling in each of the brothers towards each other."

What is clear is this—there is a very bad difference between Sir Isaac Holden and the Rev. Allen Rees. "I wish I were half as good as my brother" is a very definite expression, and not a bit like "My brother

James is a good fellow." Now if Sir Isaac Holden *did* convey this expression to the Rev. Allen Rees, the old gentleman has a treacherous memory; if he *did not*, the expression must be ascribed to the reverend gentleman's invention.

Mrs. Bonner replied sharply with "mixed feelings of surprise and indignation." Her father had no brother named James. The only brother he had was most distinctly not "a good fellow," which there was "documentary evidence" to prove. There was also documentary evidence to show that the feelings of the brothers towards each other was "the reverse of kindly." Mr. Rees had chosen to ignore all this, and, in consequence of his attitude, Mrs. Bonner intended to "give this matter publicity"—which she has done by printing the whole correspondence and sending copies to the press.

Mr. Rees wrote "surprised"—poor man! He thought it was a "private correspondence." He could not understand why he was "personally abused"—in fact, it was "vulgar personal abuse." "I entirely decline," he ended majestically, "to have any further correspondence with you."

What a sorry display of clerical temper! But it is the way of the profession when tackled. They are so used to speaking from the "coward's castle," *not* under correction, that they lose their heads when taken to task.

Mrs. Bonner appends a note to the correspondence, remarking on "the obviously loose reminiscences of Sir Isaac Holden," which Mr. Rees had "materially altered," and denying the possibility of any such conversation between Sir Isaac Holden and her father. As to the private correspondence, surely the conversation (if it occurred) was "of a private nature," yet Mr. Rees had no scruple in retailing it from the pulpit. Mrs. Bonner adds that her demerits are beside the point, which is, "Did Mr. Bradlaugh weaken in his Atheism?" to which she answers emphatically "No." She nursed him in his last illness, and her testimony is authoritative. Respect for her father's memory justifies her in printing this correspondence, and we are glad that she has done so, for it nails down another wretched fiction to the counter of truth.

G. W. FOOTE.

UNVEILING A PORTRAIT OF C. BRADLAUGH.

AN interesting gathering took place at the Lancashire Ward Liberal Club on Saturday night, when Mr. James Ramsbottom unveiled a portrait of Mr. Bradlaugh, which he had presented to the institution. The proceedings commenced in the good old-fashioned way of a spread, provided by the worthy curator, and subsequently Mr. Elias Wild took the chair, being supported by Messrs. Ramsbottom, S. Nield, F. Onley, Mr. I. Leech, Mr. Beeley, Mr. H. Towle, and Messrs. J. Greenwood and Horsfield, two of the oldest members. Mr. James Ramsbottom being called upon, said that he was glad to give them the portrait in acknowledgement of the fact that the club had supported Mr. Bradlaugh as a politician, and had purchased the *Reformer* for the reading-room up to the last number. He briefly alluded to the various political agitations of the past thirty years with which the names of Fergus O'Connor, Ernest Jones, and Bradlaugh were connected, and which had strongly influenced himself. When principles, now accepted and even fashionable, were very unpopular, he had, during all those years, done his best to help them forward by the collection of subscriptions, the posting of bills, and the distribution of literature. In an interesting speech, Mr. Ramsbottom mentioned the principal incidents of Mr. Bradlaugh's life, dwelling particularly on the struggle for his Parliamentary position, the agitation against perpetual pensions, and showing the part taken by Mr. Bradlaugh's supporters in this district. It had once been a difficult matter to get the Stalybridge Town Hall for a political lecture, and a worthy alderman of the town had, at a Council meeting, described Mr. Bradlaugh as "a firebrand," but Mr. Bradlaugh had in the end forced even his enemies to admire him, and he would be remembered in the history of the time as one who had given most powerful help to political progress. Mr. James Greenwood next spoke, and, to the great surprise of the company, produced another portrait for presentation, that of the late Mr. William Bayley, first Mayor of Stalybridge, of whose career he gave some interesting details. Mr. H. Towle, and Mr. J. Horsfield (one of the late William Bayley's employes) also both made appropriate remarks, and a profitable night's proceedings closed with votes of thanks.—*Stalybridge Reporter*.

PAGAN SURVIVALS.

ACCORDING to Church historians, the last European temple in which public worship was paid to the old divinities is said to have been that of Apollo at Monte Cassino, which remained open till destroyed by St. Benedict in 529. Possibly this only means that Paganism was finally destroyed, or rather replaced, by the followers of Benedict. If true, it can only refer to Southern Europe, for it is certain Northern Europe was not Christianised till long after.

According to Christian accounts, the Danes only became Christians in the tenth century, the Norwegians at the beginning of the eleventh, and the Swedes in the second half of the same century. The Livonians were not made Christians till the twelfth century. In 1226 we find the titular Bishop of Prussia inviting the Teutsch Ritters to a crusade to conquer his see for him. Carlyle, in his *Frederick the Great* (bk. ii., c. 6, p. 115), says: "The Prussians were a fierce fighting people, fanatically anti-Christian: the Teutsch Ritters had a perilous, never-resting time of it, especially for the first fifty years." Northern Europe was made Christian much as South Africa has been made Christian in our own days. Lithuania was "not converted even till the fifteenth century."* Mr. Trollope, in his *Britanny* (vol. i., p. 367), says: "It may surprise many persons as much as it did me to learn that within a hundred years there were in the Isle of Ouessant persons still professing Paganism."

On several old churches in Ireland are found Shela-na-gigs.† This evident Pagan emblem, according to a recent letter in *Notes and Queries*, is even represented on a church in Shropshire. In the ancient cathedral of Chartres is the black virgin to which a Druidical legend is still attached. Nôtre Dame itself, ascribed to the thirteenth century, has, as Dupuis and Dulaure have pointed out, Pagan emblems; as, for instance, the Virgin and child in the centre of the twelve signs of the zodiac. Another symbol found on Nôtre Dame, as on many other ancient churches, is the triumph of the Church over the Synagogue, which seems to indicate the recent triumphs over the Jews, as during the Crusades.

Camden, 1551-1623, in his *Britannia* (Holland's translation, p. 426), notes a curious ceremony which took place during his boyhood in St. Paul's Church, London. A stag's head was fixed on a spear, and conveyed about the church with great solemnity and sound of horns. In the belfry of Elsdon Church, Northumberland, were discovered in 1877, the skeletons of three horses heads. They were in a small chamber, evidently formed to receive them, and the spot was the highest part of the church; they were piled in triangular form, the jaws being uppermost.‡

According to Mr. Hartland (*Science of Fairy Tales*, p. 89), the Godiva procession at Coventry represents the goddess of a heathen cult, such as Hertha, whose periodical progress among her subject tribes is described in a well-known passage by Tacitus. Its date, the day after Corpus Christi, perhaps indicates that the latter festival was a substitute for an earlier carrying of the god in procession. At Stirling, on one of the early days of May, boys of ten and twelve divest themselves of clothing, and, in a state of nudity, run round certain natural or artificial circles. The performances are not infrequently repeated at Midsummer and Lammas § Evidently the survival of an earlier cult. Baal fires were lit at Penzance at Midsummer till quite recently, and even yet some remnants of May-day worship may be seen in our streets.

Holy wells into which pins are dropped, or around which rags are placed, and the waters of which are supposed to cure various diseases, remain in various parts of Great Britain, and Mr. Gomme says, "In Ireland well-worship is nearly universal, and the offering

of pieces of rags is the invariable accompaniment."* About fifty years after the Reformation it was noted that the wells of Scotland "were all tapestried about with old rags."† At a well near the church of Kirk-michael, in Banffshire, the guardian of the well was always supposed to be present under the semblance of a fly, whose every movement was regarded by the votaries at the shrine with silent awe, and as he appeared cheerful or dejected the anxious devotees drew their presages. This guardian fly of the well of St. Michael was believed to be exempt from the laws of mortality. "To the eye of ignorance," says the local, "he might sometimes appear dead, but it was only a transmigration into a similar form, which made little alteration to the real identity."‡ Our modern Theosophy, with its mahatmas or gods, and its belief in magic and reincarnation, is but a revival of Paganism, as spiritism is a revival of yet more primitive animism.

The belief in fairycraft was evidently rife in Shakespeare's time, while remnants of witchcraft have descended to our own days. There is much evidence that Paganism lingered among the peasantry of Europe till late in the sixteenth century, and that what are known as the witch persecutions were really the extirpation of the remnants of Pagan worship. The alleged worship of Satan was truly the adoration of Pagan symbols and the practice of Pagan rites. The learned Grimm, in his *Teutonic Mythology* (iii. 1045), strips witchcraft of the accretions due to the action of the Church against heretics, and perceives "in the whole witch business a clear connection with the sacrifices and spirit-world of the ancient Germans."

Archbishop Whately, who had the advantage of living in Ireland, remarked with truth that whoever regarded facts rather than phrases would see that the real beliefs of the peasantry of Europe were still Pagan; that they worshipped the dead though they called them saints, fairies, banshees, or what not; that nature-worship survived in holy wells, and all sorts of Pagan customs and superstitions remained enwoven in their lives.

I have no doubt that when the significance of the custom at Islip, referred to by my friend, Mr. Clifton, § is recognised, it will at once be dropped. For centuries the Church has been laboring to remove the evidences of its own origin, and this the Protestants have pretty well contrived to achieve. Yet not entirely. Our week days preserve the Teutonic mythology, our months the Roman. Of our principal annual festivals Easter celebrates the Saxon goddess Eostre, while all the customs connected with Christmas, from the sacramental plum-pudding to kissing under the mistletoe, are distinctly Pagan. J. M. WHEELER.

IS THERE A GUIDING INTELLIGENCE?

Most signally have those failed who regard the supreme or absolute power as so interwoven with the things of nature as to cause everything that happens to take place by his direct influence on them. The immutability of natural laws is such that in no place and at no time has an exception to them occurred, that under no circumstances do they reveal the working of a controlling hand, and that their interaction constantly takes place quite independent of all rules of a superior intelligence, now building up, now destroying, now apparently according to a design and now again quite blindly and in opposition to all laws of morality or reason. Some of the facts that are as obvious and as plain as daylight, show that no guiding intelligence can be directly at work, either in the organic or inorganic formations that are continually renewing themselves upon the earth. There exists in nature a tendency to form which is the outcome of a definite formula, and is so blind and so dependent upon casual external circumstances, that it often gives birth to the most senseless and aimless forms, that it is often incapable of surmounting or conquering the smallest obstacle it meets in its way, and that it frequently obtains the very opposite of the effect it ought to obtain according to the laws of reason or intelligence.—Büchner.

True religion must be free. Without perfect liberty of the mind there can be no true religion. Without liberty the brain is a dungeon—the mind a convict. The slave may bow and cringe and crawl, but he cannot adore—he cannot love.—Ingersoll.

* *Ethnology in Folklore*, p. 91.

† *The Book of Bon Accord*, p. 268.

‡ *Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland*, xii. 463

§ *Freethinker*, p. 694.

* See Introduction to *Teutonic Mythology*, by Jacob Grimm, vol. i., p. 3.

† A nude female figure exposing her person, like the *Baubo* of the Eleusinian mysteries. A deal of nonsense has been written about ancient Irish Christianity and civilisation by persons who would find it difficult to explain the *shela-na-gig*, or why the Irish ambassadors to Queen Elizabeth wore kilts.

‡ *Berwickshire Naturalists Field Club*, ix. 510.

§ *Rogers, Social Life in Scotland*, iii. 240.

THE BIBLE UP TO DATE.

THE history of the Bible, and the claims urged on its behalf, present some curious features for consideration. The book is said to be the word of God, written under his direct guidance, and protected by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and yet its history has been one of continual change, abridged in one age, and as freely added to in another. Dr. Tischendorf admits that soon after the New Testament was written, "many arbitrary alterations and additions were made" in its various books. The Christian Father, Origen, also complained of the "great diversity" found in the copies of scripture that existed in the second century. This diversity, he alleged, arose "either from the negligence of some transcribers, or from others who added or took away, as they saw fit in making their corrections." This certainly affords no evidence of the infallibility of "God's word." If, when the Christian writings first appeared they were subjected to alterations and improvements by men, their god-like character, supposing they ever possessed it, must soon have disappeared. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that Roger Bacon, in his epistle to Clement IV., in referring to the corrections which were then made in the text, wrote: "Every reader in the lower order of the clergy corrects as he pleases; each one changes what he does not understand. But the preachers, especially, and now for twenty years and more, have presumed to make their own corrections and insert them in the scripture, but afterwards they make new alterations to contradict the old, and now others vacillate still more from their predecessors, not knowing where they are. From this cause their correction is the worst of corruptions, and God's text is destroyed."

It is, indeed, marvellous to us that any intelligent person should regard the Bible as being aught but a human production, when it is well-known that century after century it has undergone innumerable alterations and improvements. From its primitive days, down to the present time, translations and revisions have constantly succeeded each other. Let us take a few instances. In the year 706, Adelm, who was the first Bishop of Sherborne, translated the Psalter into the Saxon tongue. This was followed by the whole Bible being rendered into Anglo-Saxon by order of King Alfred. Then Wickliffe made a complete translation of the Bible from the Latin, which appeared between 1360 and 1380. In 1535, "Cranmer's Bible" was published, followed by other "improved translations." The "Bishops' Bible" was published in 1568, when it was expected that accuracy would be attained, inasmuch as there were eight bishops among the translators. But no, the Holy Spirit again failed to secure infallibility, for the Puritans complained of the numerous errors in this Bible, "errors too glaring to be longer tolerated." Consequently a conference was convened at Hampton Court, in 1603, for the purpose of effecting "a new translation, free from all the errors and defects which had damaged all preceding versions." Fifty-four "learned and eminent men" were appointed to render the Scriptures truly infallible; yet even that translation known as King James', "appointed to be read in churches," was soon found to contain thousands of errors; and as the Rev. Dr. Giles observes, "Contradictions that cannot be reconciled, imperfections that would greatly detract from even admitted human compositions, and erroneous principles of morality that would have hardly found a place in the most incomplete systems of the philosophers of Greece and Rome." After a while it was discovered that the "authorised" translation of "God's Word" was faulty and misleading, therefore another "revision" has recently been made to bring the meaning of its contents nearer to date. The "higher criticism" of modern times has played sad havoc with what was once supposed to be an infallible record of an unerring God.

It is about thirty years since it was legally decided, and that very reluctantly, that clergymen might discuss the authorship of the Bible. And it is only a few years ago, at a Church Congress in Manchester, when the suggestion was made that the people should be

told all that was known about the Bible, that the idea to do so was repudiated without discussion. The clergy then assembled seemed determined to verify Professor Huxley's statement that, "In this nineteenth century, as at the dawn of modern physical science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher, and the opprobrium of the orthodox. Orthodoxy is the Bourbon of the world of thought. It learns not, neither can it forget, and though at present bewildered and afraid to move, it is as willing as ever to insist that the first chapter of Genesis contains the beginning and the end of sound science; and to visit, with such petty thunderbolts as its half-paralysed hands can hurl, those who refuse to degrade nature to the level of primitive Judaism."

But the Church is impotent now to prevent the facts in connection with the Bible from becoming known. In the truest sense, "the schoolmaster is abroad," and the masses are learning that the orthodox claims for the book cannot be maintained. The slavish adherents to the ignorance and fanaticism of the past are becoming fewer and fewer in every decade as secular knowledge advances. It is interesting to note how Bible idolaters have had to yield their claims to the requirements of modern thought. Astronomy and geology demanded more space and time for existence than the Bible permitted. No sooner were these two requirements granted by various verbal juggling of words than the question of the origin, mode, and date of plants and animal life demanded a more direct concession than had hitherto been made. The tendency of advanced thought is to interpret events in the terms of evolution. The excuse given by theologians now is that "the beginning," when God "created the heavens and the earth," is not dated wrongly, but that it has no date at all; despite the fact that it was once the general belief in the Church that creation took place about 6,000 years ago. Thus, in order for the Bible to retain a dignified position to-day in the field of the world's literature, its meaning and authority have to be construed very differently from what they were in former times.

In bringing the Bible up to date, many of the views that it enunciated are reversed. For instance, in a book entitled *Conversations on Evolution*, reprinted from the *Sunday-school Chronicle*, it is frankly conceded that Moses was only a medium for conveying to us accounts of events that took place earlier than his time. Dr. Gladstone, lecturer to the Christian Evidence Society, in his *Faith and Freethought*, puts it that the Mosaic documents are not accounts of the generation "of individuals, but of nations, one nation being said to have begotten other nations," and he further says "we need not consider ourselves bound by chronology deduced" from the Bible. Now, it appears to us that if Moses did not write the history of Adam, and that if the chronology of the Bible is not that of individuals, the orthodox faith loses its foundation. Is it not manifest that Abraham, as the successor of Adam, and the children of Abraham as fathers of the tribe to which Joseph is said to have belonged, are all essential to the Christian story? Without these we should have no Jesus and no Christianity. We are aware that the chronology of the Bible is not trustworthy, a fact that is granted by the *Sunday-school Teachers' Bible Manual* for June of the present year. Therein it is stated: "There is no question that the dates and other indications of time in the Bible have to a certain limited extent suffered from copyists' errors. In the chronology of the antediluvian period there are discrepancies, however, between the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, so systematic that they cannot be accounted for in this way. The author of the Vatican manuscripts of the Septuagint, or some of his predecessors, thought that the long-lived antediluvians were not likely to beget or sow while they were less than 150 years old; and when it was said that they had done so, took the liberty of adding a century to the Hebrew date. This he did in the case of Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalee, Enoch, and Methusaleh. The author of the Samaritan Pentateuch, on the contrary, or some one of the copyists, took the opposite view, and cut the figures down."

Testing the Bible from the standpoint of thought as

developed up to date, the old idea of inspiration must be given up. Of course in one sense all books are inspired, containing, as they do, a record of active thought. Hence, as Secularists, we believe in inspiration, but it is that of human genius, mental glory, and intellectual fertility; such inspiration is confined to no one class of men, to no one age, and to no one nation. It is manifested in the writings of Horace, Aristotle, Virgil, Shelley, Shakespeare; in fact, its influence has illuminated the works of all men and of all women, whose transcendent genius adorned their age and bequeathed to us a legacy of thought whose richness and grandeur exalt our lives and ennoble our conduct.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded).

A POET'S RELIGION.

[CONCLUDED.]

MR. PATMORE is not in the least frightened, or even affected, by the late discussions as to the failure of Christianity. It has always seemed to be in its decay, he says, but it is "yet in its infancy." And one of the chief agents in its development is the poet, of whose faculty and function Mr. Patmore takes a lofty estimate. Unlike the theologian, the poet does not talk about the immeasurable and the infinite (which, by the way, is a strange assertion), but treats the spiritual as concrete. The scientist is all-thought and no vision; the poet is all vision and no thought. He sings realities. Yet the great saints, of whom, as a good Catholic, Mr. Patmore is a reverer, beat the poets hollow. "The amount of substantial poetry," he says, "of imaginative insight into the noblest and loveliest reality to be found in their writings, is ten times greater than is to be found in all the poets of the past two thousand years put together." But this is after all a question of definition. If "substantial poetry" means thoughts about God, and "imaginative insight" the perception (real or fancied) of the intercourse between God and man, Mr. Patmore is right; but wrong, if these phrases are to be taken in their ordinary significance. Was it not William Blake who said that the poets were so far superior to the divines, that Swedenborg was to Shakespeare as a candle to the daylight?

Poets may even be blackguards, in Mr. Patmore's opinion, but *as poets* they write by the grace of God. Homer and Milton invoked a *real* Muse. Shelley himself, with all his abhorrence of "men who pray," was "under the influence of divine grace" in the best and most enduring part of his writings. But in maintaining this Mr. Patmore is bordering on unconscious humor. Julius Hare said that Shelley only wanted the grace of God to round him off; and Shelley, having heard of this, humorously inquired of Ollier how this grace of God was to be obtained, and how a man was to get it inside him.

It will not surprise any judicious reader to find Mr. Patmore, as a faithful son of the Catholic Church, standing by the old landmarks in government and social life. He cordially detests Democracy, and laughs at "the virtuous Democrat" who is "always a little Atlas who goes stumbling along with his eye-balls bursting from his head under his self-assumed burden"—a picture in which there is enough truth to enable a not too sensitive Democrat to join in the laughter. Mr. Patmore believes that America is going to the devil, and that "our own Democracy, being entirely without bridle, can scarcely fail to come to an early, and probably a violent end." He derides the new ideas of social regeneration. "Men can advance the world's improvement," he says, "only by attending to their own"—which is again a partial truth exaggerated into a patent falsehood, unless we are to believe that Mr. Patmore was only attending to his own improvement in writing and publishing these interesting and, in some respects, stimulating essays. Even the "purity" of some of our over-zealous reformers comes under Mr. Patmore's lash. He calls it a product of the Protestant spirit. The ancient, and Catholic, idea of purity was that of "a sacred fire which consumes and turns into its own substance all that is adverse to it,"

while the modern, and Protestant, idea of purity is that of "stored snow, which must be kept artificially dark and cool, lest it disappear for ever." Indeed, in his essay on "A 'Pessimist' Outlook," Mr. Patmore foresees the "paltry and prying" despotism of these purists in the near future, under the pretence of "good government." He thinks it will be a frightful tyranny of busybodies, to be mitigated only by "tips" and "occasional assassination." Communion port will give way to sacramental ginger-ale. We shall have a regulation of our labor, our households, and our very victuals, and be obliged to "smoke our pipes secretly with a sense of sin." Evidently there is a lot of the Old Adam in this Catholic poet, who describes "wine and tobacco" as "those natural stimulants to good impulses and fruitful meditation." He may be mistaken, but his courage is refreshing in an age like this, in which a false asceticism is so mixed up with the spirit of reformation that it is often thought to be the first duty of a reformer to deny himself everything agreeable.

Mr. Patmore is of course old-fashioned in his ideal of woman. She is to him "the weaker vessel," and he rejoices that the "higher education" of woman is only "the rendering of her weakness more and more daintily conspicuous." Her nature cannot be altered "so long as she abstains from absolute outrages against nature—such as divided skirts, freethinking, tricycles, and Radicalism." Mr. Patmore adores her "sweet unreasonableness." His view is that woman likes knuckling under, and to take her compensation in attention and caresses, which she values from a man far above his "greatest merits of self-sacrifice." The doctrine of the natural equality of man and woman is to him a "damnable heresy." She only begins to "scream and chatter about her rights" when the man holds the reins slackly. "No right-minded woman," Mr. Patmore holds, "would care a straw for her lover's adoration if she did not know that he knew that after all he was the true divinity." Thus the aged poet goes on with his outpourings of male egotism; pretty enough to read, taking his two essays on the subject in their entirety, but only as representing a system which, with all its casual graces and high-flown sentimentalities, is happily perishing. Of course it contains a certain imperishable element, for woman's maternal function and muscular inferiority will always secure her a pleasant kind of attention from the robuster sex, altogether apart from man's inherited instinct of courtship. But all this is allowed for in Mr. Meredith's sexual philosophy, as it is in the less noble foreshadowings of Tennyson's *Princess*. It is quite compatible with a high and conscious companionship between husband and wife, far removed from the sexual philosophy of Mr. Patmore, which is a direct legacy from Catholic Feudalism.

The most stoutly, not to say truculently, written essay in Mr. Patmore's new volume is the one entitled "A 'Pessimist' Outlook." Here the author goes "the whole hog," to borrow an idiom from those "detestable" Americans. Despotism, he tells us, is the death of all nationalities. It may be an emperor's or it may be a multitude's; it comes to the same thing in either case. Fool's begin to talk about their "aspirations," while the more cunning follow covetousness and vice, and the whole nation becomes a "shameful swarm" of stinking and stinging units. And the worst of it is there is no help from outside, for "no soil has ever yet been found to bear two crops of national life." Nations are always protected by "two guardian angels." And what are they? Religion and War! So that unless we worship ghosts and cut each other's throats we must die out as a nation of Englishmen, and sink into the "infernal millennium" of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Such is Mr. Patmore's "outlook." He is a thoroughgoing social pessimist; in fact he derides "Optimists" as persons who hope all things from "local option." But as this witticism is the last word of the jeremiad, it will not do to take Mr. Patmore too seriously. He has blown off steam *à la* Carlyle, and we hope he is better for the operation. "The best part of the best play of Shakespeare"—says Mr. Patmore in another essay—"is Shakespeare himself, the vast, wholesome, serene and unique individuality which

stands above and breathes through tragedy and comedy alike." Mr. Patmore himself is not a Shakespeare, but he has a distinct individuality which smiles through the diatribes of his "Pessimism." And he can write sweetly and gracefully of Love, which stands more for the generality of poets than religion. "Love, if it be worthy of the name," Mr. Patmore says, "is the highest of virtues as well as the sweetest of emotions. Nay, it is the sweetest of emotions because it is the highest of virtues, ordering the whole being of man 'strongly and sweetly'; being in the brain confession of good; in the heart, love of, and desire to sacrifice everything for the good of its object; in the senses, peace, purity, and ardor." Excellent! It is in this vein that we prefer Mr. Patmore. Here is insight, truth, and the sure touch of an artist. When he speaks thus he will always command an audience.

G. W. FOOTE.

SLENDER THREADS.

Great God! on what a slender thread
Hang all eternal things.

—Dr. Isaac Watts.

YOU may well say that, Doctor. Why, according to your doctrine, the whole scheme of salvation depended on a woman eating forbidden fruit, and Pilate crucifying an innocent man. Our very faith in the Incarnation depends on Joseph's dreams. Another dream caused him to fly and save his wife's son's life, and yet another dream induced him to return.

And on what slender threads do human salvation and damnation depend. One child is baptised, and becomes the inheritor of eternal glory. Another dies before the parson arrives, and is condemned to eternal fire. Just fancy roasting for ever because the parson happened to have a pair of tight boots. And then how many converted sinners would never have had their blessed assurance of heaven but for the fact of their committing great crimes, which ensured them opportunities of repentance. The population of heaven would be much scantier but for our providing goal-chaplains to assure convicted murderers that they are about to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Their eternal salvation depended on their committing the murders, while their victims, cut off in the midst of their sins, go to the everlasting bonfire.

Great God! on what a slender thread
You've hung eternal things.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

METHUSELAH TO HIS WIFE.

CANST thou recall the fond days of yore,
Our travels o'er land and sea,
When I was 194,
And you were 103?

Ah, then how our love did supremely thrive;
How we dwelt in a mutual heaven,
When you were turning 305,
While I was 407.

But we are now nearing 1000, my dear;
Grey hairs are beginning to throng;
Few centuries left to us now, I fear,
And we cannot linger long.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (5) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forster will send them on application.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

ACID DROPS.

That ridiculous body, the Lord's Day Observance Society, is trying to frighten the Sunday Societies in England. The Sunday Lecture Society at Leeds was recently waited upon by some of these busybodies, who threatened legal proceedings under that old Act of George III. Fortunately the Lecture Society went on with its program. The matter was referred to by Dr. R. S. Watson at a meeting of the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society in the Tyne Theatre. Dr. Watson rightly held that the Sunday Society was "absolutely outside the Act of Parliament." But that is only because it does not allow discussion after the lectures. Where discussion is allowed, however, it would be easy to defeat a prosecution. We have studied the law on this subject very carefully, and we are confident that the prosecutors would finally lose their money even if they obtained a conviction in a magistrate's court. How they would lose it is our own secret. We do not intend to show them the ace of trumps. But we may observe that the bigots do not like to tackle us squarely. They ran away when we defied them at Portsmouth and Hull in the early part of this year, and they now resort to the unspeakably paltry tactic of privately frightening the lessees of halls by throwing out dark hints as to the loss of their license.

From the *Weekly Notes* published by the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society we see that the use of the Coliseum at Leeds was continued on condition of a guarantee of £200 being given to cover possible penalties. The Leeds Society had not the funds, but the Tyneside Society came to the rescue with a guarantee of £300 and a promise of more if required. We guess that settles the matter. The Lord's Day Observance Society, if legally advised, as we presume it is, will never fight money. It would only lose its own, and the last thing bigots do is to drop their own cash. They like to drop other people's.

The *Weekly Times*, in a good article on this Leeds affair, says that "it sounds preposterous to put Parliament to the trouble of formally repealing a dead law." We beg to assure our contemporary that the law is not dead. Three times this very year, at Portsmouth, Hull, and Nottingham, the police have used it to frighten the lessees of halls against letting them for Freethought lectures on Sunday. We hope the law is not to be considered "dead" if only Freethinkers suffer.

Sports and Pastimes announces "Grand work for Christ" by a Wandsworth evangelist. We are pleased to see this evangelist, at any rate, takes a proper view of his profession.

The Rev. Charles Voysey has been expounding Theism—that is, his Theism—in the *Weekly Times*. Most of it is solemn fudge, but one sentence is certainly sensible. "The best preparation for another life," Mr. Voysey says, "is to have made the best of this one." Freethinkers have always said this. They said it before Mr. Voysey was born.

According to Captain Robert O. Adams, the miners out in British Columbia are rather particular about their religion. While a parson was reading from the Church Service in camp, at the prayer for the Prince of Wales, a miner called out, "Hold on there, partner, don't you pray for that chap. The Queen's all right, but we don't want no mention of that——!" He went up to the parson, asked for his prayer-book and pencil, and drew a line through the prayer for the Prince of Wales. "Now," said he, "go ahead and pray for the rest. Them's all right."

The Open-Air Mission, 11 Adam-street, Adelphi, London, issues an "important" tract, which contains a pious yarn, or a religious lie, whichever you like to call it, about a Freethought meeting in the East-end. The "foul-tongued speaker" tried to prove there was no God, or that, if there was, he was neither wise nor benevolent. Fifteen minutes was allowed for discussion, but there was none. A Jew, however, rose and asked whether, if God were not kind, he would not have struck the lecturer dead. Whereupon the "whole audience" got up and "slunk out of the hall." Such is the ridiculous rubbish which is thought fit for Christian readers.

We referred last week to the language used by some of the speakers at the inaugural meeting of a certain Christian

Evidence Society, of which it was stated that the Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, had consented to become a vice-president. The leading spirits of that Society are nearly always occupied in reading extracts from a book on the Population question, which, of course, has nothing whatever to do with Secularism. They also make much of the Malthusian views of the late Charles Bradlaugh. Now we see by the *Christian World* that Mr. Horton has himself, in a Sunday evening sermon on Labor and Capital, been dealing with this very subject. "Dr. Horton," the report says, "boldly dealt with the population question, denouncing as gross selfishness the bringing into the world of families by those who cannot maintain them, and introducing children to disease and dirt, and still worse, to possibly moral and spiritual ruin. He showed how the increase of the colliery population had greatly intensified the struggle for existence in the coal trade." We quote from the *Christian World* of November 9, p. 876, column 4; and we advise all Freethinkers who are brought into contact with the baser sort of Christian Evidencers to keep this paragraph constantly by them.

The Moslems of Liverpool have again been the victims of a Christian disturbance. Last Sunday Mr. Quilliam lectured on "The Prophecies of Mohammed." The audience were listening to a description of the prophet's death-bed when an excited Christian exclaimed: "There is none who can give pardon but Jesus Christ. By whose mediation do you Moslems expect to be saved?" Mr. Quilliam, continuing, said, "And we who are his followers trust, as Mohammed said, to the mercy of God." The stranger shouted, "You consider Christ a prophet, yet he said, 'By no other name than mine can ye be saved.'" The chairman (Mr. H. H. Oates) said they were in a registered place of worship, and such interruptions were unseemly. If the person would give his name a discussion might be arranged for on another occasion. Some women then called out, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin."

Fortified with this feminine reinforcement, the man again shrieked out at the top of his voice, "I have a commission from the Lord Almighty to come here to-night to bear witness in this heathen temple that the blood of Jesus Christ his only son and our Savior can save you from eternal fire." The females then rose, and one of them screamed: "This is a den of devils; this is the gateway of hell, and all those present are devils and the sons of devils, and are going to hell!" Another woman exclaimed, "Yes, ye must be born again; ye must be washed in the blood of Christ." One female, pointing at Mr. Quilliam, shrieked out, "This man is sent by the Devil to deceive you and lead you into eternal fire, where the worm dieth not." Meanwhile some boys kicked and yelled, making as much noise as possible. When they went out they waited for the Moslems to emerge and greeted them with similar texts and cries. We have over fifty millions of Mohammedans in our Indian Empire, who are not likely to be much attracted towards Christianity by such an exhibition. Our missionaries are fond of accusing the Moslems of fanaticism, but they will be able to retort by pointing to Christian conduct at Liverpool.

The Bishop of Equatorial Africa, addressing the Y.M.C.A. at Exeter Hall on his mission work, alluded incidentally to the difficulty of preventing "the earnest inquirer of Lagos" from filling two or three pews with his wives, inasmuch as there was "no distinct prohibition of polygamy in the Bible." He might have added there was distinct sanction" (see Deut. xxi. 15).

We have before us the verbatim report of a three nights' discussion held at Utah in 1870, between the Rev. Orson Pratt, Mormon, and the Rev. Dr. J. Newman, on the question whether the Bible sanctions polygamy. The Mormon left the orthodox Christian without a leg to stand upon. Yet polygamy has been suppressed among the Mormons, simply because the divine institution is behind the age.

Hymers' College, Hull, is built out of funds left to the town, and is managed by the Corporation. Of course the clergy have their fingers well in the pie, and the Congregational Board, whose men of God also hanker after the flesh-pots, has passed a resolution that they deeply regret that their ministers were not invited with the clergy of the town to the opening of Hymers' College, or the reception and banquet

given in the Town Hall in honor of the visit of the Lord Chancellor.

A collection of drawings, plans and photos, is exhibited at Burlington House, illustrating early Egyptian life. The *Daily News* noticing it, says, "One of the photographic inscriptions (date perhaps the 15th or 16th dynasty) is of some interest to Biblical students, since it speaks of a time when famine was sore in the land, and indicates also a period of excessive drought. This was probably much later than the time of Joseph, but it is the only inscription in which any such statement is made." This will probably be cited by the men of God as one of the wonderful confirmations of the Bible, while no mention is made of the fact that the alleged bondage for over four hundred years, and the exodus of two millions of people from Egypt, finds no corroboration whatever.

The Theosophists are offered £100 to produce a Mahatma. They haven't earned it yet. Mrs. Besant will perhaps find one in India. A hundred pounds is worth picking up. Besides, the Mahatma would make a lot of money "for the cause" in England, especially if he performed some of those wonders—a sort of thing you read about but very seldom see.

Mr. Labouchere, in his speech in the House of Commons on the Matabele business, made good use of the letters of a certain Christian missionary, who called for the extermination of the heathen. The House laughed at the missionary, but the poor Matabele are laughing on the other side of their faces.

The *Countryman*, of Leicester, sarcastically opines that, if Jesus were here to-day, he would be busy with repeating rifles and Gatling guns, assisting Mr. Cecil Rhodes and other eminent Christians in propagating Christianity, civilisation, and commerce among the Matabele.

The *Greenock Telegraph* (Nov. 4), in an interesting paper on "Greenock two hundred years ago," gives an account of the intolerable dominance of the kirk in those days. The elders were veritable Paul Prys, poking their noses into all private affairs, hunting for scent of scandal, none daring to say them nay. "The more evil they search out, the more are they counted zealous for religion. Every man is so indoctrinated into belief in the evil nature of all the world, and so tutored into looking for evil on all occasions, that whatever seems evil, or is peculiar in any way, or is unknown and mysterious, is thought to hide a scandal. And none may hide faults except at their own peril. If people visit one another on the Sabbath day, ground of scandal is said to be ministered. Newly-married people for nearly a year are treated as criminals under police surveillance, prisoners out on ticket-of-leave; a pledge of ten shillings being exacted from them to be forfeited if anything falls out unhappily."

There is an organisation with the somewhat pretentious title "The International Christian Police Association," which takes for its scope the Christianising of constables all the world over. Its declared object is "to extend a knowledge of the principles of Christianity among the police"—who are evidently presumed to be a heathen population. Does the I.C.P.A. inculcate upon the custodians of law and order that they must resist not evil; that if a law breaker strikes them on the cheek they must turn the other also; and that thieves who have stolen coats must be presented with cloaks also?

What the deuce do men of God mean by the Devil? This question was by the Rev. W. Smith at Dundee, because his fellow minister and fellow member of the Parochial Board, the Rev. H. Williamson, declared that a woman who applied for relief was told to go to the Devil. Mr. Williamson explained that when he used the word "devil" he did not mean a person with a long tail and horns; he meant evil influences. It is now wanted to know if, when he uses the word God, he means a personal being, such as described in the Bible, or only good influences.

St. James' Church, Heywood, has been having a bazaar "in aid," and as buying and selling is dry work a drink license was applied for, and the application was granted. Some people would object to this as a very bad sort of license, but the magistrates thought otherwise, and then it was "all for Jesus."

One of our Christian contemporaries is naturally anxious to improve its circulation. It therefore offers prizes to its readers who do the best service in pushing it. These prizes range from five guineas to one guinea. But they are not to be given in cash. Our economical contemporary will give the value in books published at its own office! It also offers prizes to ministers who send in the best supply of readable paragraphs. Ten shillings' worth of books will be given every month, but only seven-and-sixpence' worth if the lucky minister makes his own selection. Evidently our pious contemporary has some bad stock it wants to work off.

As a sequel to the strike of the organist and choir of the Grove-street Chapel, Boston, Lincolnshire, the widow of the organist brought an action against the Rev. Samuel Cutts for detaining certain music books. All the principal parties in the chapel appear to be at loggerheads.

The Holy Coat at Treves having received certificates of genuineness it of course behoved the proprietors of the one at Argenteuil to go and do likewise. It is accordingly certified to be a very old coat indeed, and to have spots of human blood. What other conclusion can be drawn than that it formed part of the extensive wardrobe of J. C., whose dozen or so of other holy coats have, we presume, equal proofs of authenticity.

The superfine villa folk who worship at St. James's, Croydon, are said to have been shocked into leaving the church because their vicar, denouncing the horrors of religious persecution in the "good old days," exclaimed in a burst of simple eloquence, "I say, damn those days!" Apparently these poor Church people have such a horror (possibly with good reason) of being damned in the future that they cannot bear the sound of the word, even as applied to the past. It is related of Bishop Philpotts, of Exeter, that he was once present at a church where a mild-mannered cleric was reading the exhortation which warns unworthy communicants that they eat and drink their own damnation. The cleric toned the word down to "condemnation." The bishop rose from his seat, and in stentorian tones ejaculated "Damnation!" and then sat down again. What would they have said to him at Croydon?—*Truth*.

The Chinese, called to make reparation for the murder of Swedish missionaries, point to the fact that several Chinese have recently been killed in the vineyards of San Joach, California. The *Hongkong Times* says: "But looked at broadly we have the simple fact that Chinamen go to America, where they are not wanted, and get killed, while on the other hand European missionaries come to China, where they are not wanted, and they too get killed occasionally, only not in such large numbers as Chinamen in America."

Wheat is selling at seven and eight times its normal price in Armenia, and the suffering of the poor from famine is intense. A notice is published in the local papers that instructions have been sent to all the provinces that in the title deeds of property a clause is in future to be inserted, declaring that such property shall not be employed for religious or school purposes. Such a clause would strike at Christian mission schools, and especially at Protestant mission work. These institutions, like religious corporations, everywhere are found to thrive at the expense of the general welfare.

Manchester subscribes largely to send the blessed gospel to the heathen to give them a fair chance of eternal Sheol, but at their own Winter Assizes Mr. Justice Grantham commented on the fact that a girl of seven, upon whom an assault had been committed, had never heard of Jesus Christ.

Cardinal Vaughan said of the Guild of our Lady of Ransom, that they were doing a great work, and he had plenty more for them to do. The other Sunday they broke their sticks over the head of one Protestant lecturer in Victoria-park, and crippled for life an old man of seventy.

The Manx clergy complain of poverty, though they would doubtless be sorry to change lots with the average lay islander. They have there "Mrs. Quilliam's trust for the poorest of the Manx clergy who have the largest families to maintain," which possibly serves as a premium on impro-

vidence. The Malthusians should disseminate their literature among the clergy.

The men of God used to rule in family matters pretty much as they pleased. The Rev. Benjamin Gibbons, vicar of Lower Mitton, Stourport, would have suited the good old times. He put up the bans of a marriage of a young couple without the consent either of themselves or their parents. He simply thought they ought to be married, and that his action would either precipitate the desired event or a scandal.

William Arthur Kew, a Salvation Army "captain," continued singing outside the house of a Mr. Pearce at Chiswick, and refused to withdraw although told he was ill. The magistrate said it was a gross case, and inflicted the full penalty of 40s. with 25s. costs or one month's imprisonment.

Jerome K. Jerome's new paper *To-Day* has a smart paragraph on the decision of the Court of Queen's Bench that General Booth is not responsible if his bands frighten omnibus horses in the public streets. *To-Day* hopes that the London General Omnibus Company will find out who is responsible, and make him pay damages; at any rate, it says, the L.G.O.C. has "done more for the service and convenience of man than the London General Booth Company"; and it hints that even horses can hardly be expected to stand what the "General" calls "music."

Bishop Byle has no faith in Christianity being able to run alone, for he has declared that, rather than see the State cease to recognise God, he would transfer State support from the Church of England to the Nonconformist Churches. Perhaps this is only meant as a bit of taffy for the Dissenters.

It transpired recently that medical men were given shares in a medicated wine company to induce them to recommend the article. In America the same method is adapted to ministers, and you may hear in the pulpit that Abraham had to kill a kid fresh because he had no patent refrigerator, or Blank's famous washing powder is brought in connection with our sins being made whiter than snow.

George Scott, manager and secretary of the Newbottle and District Co-operative Society, has decamped. A married lady of Newbottle has gone off at the same time. George Scott's accounts are said to be in an unsatisfactory state. He was a local preacher, filling at intervals both Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan pulpits.

After the awful explosion at Santander the Bishop and several priests went about administering "the last rites of the Church" to the dying. Perhaps they meant well, but it was a ghastly mockery. It would have been more to the purpose if Providence had intervened to save life by preventing the explosion; say by whispering in the Bishop's ear that dynamite was concealed on board that burning steamer.

Disestablishment is gaining friends even inside the Church of England. The Rev. P. Foster (for instance), vicar of Poulton, Gloucestershire, sends a subscription of two guineas to the Liberation Society. In a letter which accompanies it, he writes: "The Bishops and Dignitaries fatten on what they are pleased to call 'God's heritage,' while the majority of the working clergy have to live upon a starvation pittance; only by servile begging can they obtain any assistance; while any of them who show any independence in exposing abuses are boycotted by their 'Fathers in God.'"

The *Christian Commonwealth* doesn't like what it calls the miners' strike, which is really a lockout. It feels for all the people—including itself, we guess—who have to pay a high price for fuel; though, by the way, they might console themselves by reflecting that they will some day be in a place where fuel is cheap enough. Our pious contemporary advocates a compromise, and makes the fine, original suggestion that "if the miners wish to fight for more" wages they should do so "at the beginning of the summer." That is, let the miners strike for higher wages in a falling market, and take lower wages when the market is rising. Such is the wisdom of editors suckled on the Bible!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 19, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :
7, "The Churches and the Miners; or, What is the Practical Value of Christianity?" (Free; reserved seats, 6d. and 3d.)

November: 26, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 27, Jarrow; 28 and 29, South Shields; 30, Ryhope.

December 1, Pelton Fell; 3, Leicester; 10, Liverpool; 11, Wolverhampton; 17 and 24, Hall of Science.

January 7 and 14, Hall of Science; 21, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Nov. 19, Manchester; 26, Birmingham. Dec. 3 and 10, Hall of Science, London; 17, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required a stamped and addressed envelope must be closed) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Always glad to receive cuttings, but we noticed this one several weeks ago.

T. BARNETT.—We have addressed it for you. Thanks for cuttings. Your suggestion *re* the Bradlaugh portrait shall be borne in mind.

J. ROUTH.—Your letter was delayed with some others. This explains the non-insertion of your notice of Mr. Cohen's lecture at Haves, which we regret but could not help.

MATER.—Apply to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

C. E. SMITH.—You ask us what is our opinion of Professor Johnson's theory. Well, we have not yet come to any definite opinion. He has certainly raised strong objections to the current theory of Christian literature, but his own theory is not without grave difficulties. In any case, the discussion will do good. Thanks for enclosures.

J. D. G.—See paragraph.

T. TURNER.—It was too late for last week, but is now inserted. In such cases as yours it is always best, if at all in doubt, to communicate to London direct.

H. THATCHER.—Your last week's Lecture Notice was delayed in the post.

S. H. E.—Pleased to hear that you and your friends were "delighted" with Mr. Foote's lectures at Nottingham. You will find all your questions answered in his new pamphlet, *Will Christ Save Us?*

W. O. RAVENING.—We do not know the address of any other Freethinker at Wallingford. Perhaps, if this meets the eye of one, he will communicate with us.

X. Y. Z.—Thanks. See paragraph.

G. ASPDEN (San Francisco).—Fraser's *Golden Bough*, 21s.; Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*, 6s.; Taylor's *Diagnosis*, 4s. 6d.

MARTIN WEATHERBURN, one of the sturdiest of Freethinkers, dating from Hartford Colliery, Northumberland, informs us that he recently appeared as a witness before Coroner Lynn, of Blyth, who allowed him to affirm without any hesitation or sign of displeasure. Mr. Weatherburn applied to affirm in the exact words drawn up by Mr. Bradlaugh and printed in the N.S.S. Almanack. "So far as I was able to judge," he says, "my evidence was received both by the coroner and the jury with as much respect as it could possibly have been if I had gone on conventional lines." Perhaps more.

T. BIRTLEY.—Thanks. See paragraph.

E. D. H. DALY.—Always glad to receive cuttings. See "Acid Drops."

W. HOLLAND.—The *Pall Mall* exposure of "the Harness swindle" ran through several numbers about three weeks ago. Our "correspondents" column shows that you are frequently answered.

CAUSTIC SODA.—Thanks. The affair at the Mosque had already been dealt with.

D. GLOAK.—You do not give your *place* of meeting at Dundee, so we cannot put it in the Lecture Notices. Kindly send your future announcements according to the printed model.

A. J. H.—Thanks. See paragraph.

F. D.—We are obliged for the reference to Kingsley's *Roman and Teuton*. We remember reading it some twenty years ago. Gibbon gives a lively picture of Justinian and Theodora, especially Theodora.

T. BIRTLEY.—See our comment.

H. JONES.—Date is booked.

QUIP.—Good; but it's interest is too partial.

H. YOUNG.—Too long, and hardly up to our mark.

A. J. H.—See "Acid Drops."

E. ORESHIRE.—A similar joke has already appeared.

J. G. DOBSON.—Mr. Foote is President of the National Secular Society. He cannot consent to meet any Christian in debate unless he is put forward as a representative. When that point is settled the rest should be easy.

R. J. ROBINSON.—No room this week. In our next.

J. MAGNESS.—Sorry to hear of your trouble with your news-agent. There seems to be an organised attempt to boycott the *Freethinker*. We hope your friends will do all they can to frustrate it.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: H. F. S., 10s.; and clothing from two anonymous friends.

A. B. MOSS.—Regret to hear you have been clawed by the influenza fiend. Enclosure shall be inserted next week.

E. GWINNELL says that a Christian Evidence lecturer named Tarry declared on Sunday last in Finsbury Park, that when the Anarchists were being conducted from Broad-street station, he asked Mr. Foote whether all this was not the result of Mr. Bradlaugh's teaching, and that Mr. Foote answered "Yes." Our correspondent asks "Is this true?" It is not true; it does not contain a single grain of truth; it is a sheer brazen lie. Mr. Foote has not had occasion to go to Broad-street for years, it is still longer since he has exchanged a word with Tarry, and he never saw Anarchists "conducted" in his life.

GLASGOW.—Deferred till next week.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC., should be written on postcards or the envelopes marked outside, and be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C.

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—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—Secular Thought—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Globe—Bacup Times—To-Day—Tyneside Weekly Notes—Hull Daily News—Newsagent and Bookseller—Isle of Man Times—Dundee Advertiser—Manchester Guardian—Liver—Singapore Advertiser—Boston Guardian—Bradford Daily Telegraph—Liverpool Mercury—Freedom—Bristol Mercury—Crescent—Countryman.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

There was a fine audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Pillars of Priestcraft," and the applause was very marked and enthusiastic. Mr. Foote lectures there again this evening (Nov. 19) after which he will be lecturing in the country for a month. London Freethinkers should remember that the gallery is open free, and induce as many as possible of their Christian friends to come and hear the Gospel of Freethought "without money and without price." If they are pleased, and desirous of contributing anything, they can drop it into the collecting-box as they leave the hall.

"Earth, Heaven, and Hell" was to have been the subject of Mr. Foote's lecture at the Hall of Science this evening. He has decided to take instead "The Churches and the Miners; or, What is the Practical Value of Christianity?" This is a "live topic," and Freethinkers should take the opportunity of bringing their Christian friends to hear what Mr. Foote has to say about it.

Mr. Foote travels north next Saturday. On the Sunday (Nov. 26) he delivers two lectures in the Circus, Newcastle-on-Tyne—not three as usual, the Circus being engaged in the afternoon by the Sunday Music Society. A considerable portion of the Circus will be thrown open free, the remainder being "reserved" at the usual prices of admission. As the building is a very large one, and will be much more comfortable if well filled, Mr. Foote appeals to his Newcastle friends to do their best to advertise the lectures. On the Monday he will lecture at Jarrow, on Tuesday and Wednesday at South Shields, on Thursday at Ryhope, and on Friday at Pelton Fell; after which he returns to London, taking Leicester (Dec. 3) on his way home. This will make nine lectures and over six hundred miles travelling in nine days, in addition to writing for the *Freethinker* and a lot of unavoidable correspondence.

Sunderland was to have been visited by Mr. Foote, and, with the assistance of a generous local Freethinker, a fine hall was to have been taken with plenty of room for free admission. But religious bigotry intervened, and after a good deal of negotiation the hall was finally refused. It is the hall in which Mr. Foote had three splendid Sunday meetings some years ago, and the local bigots were so annoyed at his success that they led to its being refused for any more Sunday lectures. It is now refused even for week night lectures. No doubt the bigots who thus stifle Free-thought propaganda in Sunderland will talk loudly about the "decay of Secularism."

Our readers will probably recollect that the members of the Miners' Institute at Pelton Fell voted by a splendid majority that the *Freethinker* should not be excluded from the Reading Room, despite all the bigoted efforts of Parson Birley and Curate Stack. Will it be believed that the Committee of the Institute has held a meeting and decided on its own authority that this journal *shall* be excluded? The Institute is supported by a penny per week deducted from each man's wages, but it *belongs* to the colliery owners, and it is whispered that the two clerical bigots have induced them to interfere. However, there is one consolation; the *Freethinker* has profited by the fine advertisement, and two local newsgents report that their sale has more than trebled.

Mr. Charles Watts had an excellent audience at the Town Hall, Birmingham, last Sunday evening, over two thousand persons being present. We are glad to hear that one-third of the audience was composed of ladies. Mr. Watts, who was in good form, received a capital reception. Mr. Daniel Baker presided, and made a really good and appropriate speech in introducing the lecturer. Mr. Walter Knight played the violin with such an effect that he received an encore amidst enthusiastic applause.

Mr. Watts writes us that his Birmingham Town Hall lecture was a great success, which was largely due to the effective arrangements made and carried out by the local Branch of the N.S.S., the members of which worked hard to produce this gratifying result. There was a good sale of general literature, and ten dozen of *Freethinkers* were disposed of. To-day (Sunday, Nov. 19) Mr. Watts lectures three times in Manchester.

The *Liverpool Daily Post* had a good notice of Mr. Holyoake's recent lectures, though marred by an absurd misprint of "immorality" for "immortality." At the close of the evening lecture a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Holyoake for his life-long devotion to and work for humanity. We hear that several persons likely to be valuable workers have since joined the Liverpool Branch.

Mr. Cohen has been giving a successful course of lectures in South Shields and district. At all the meetings free seats have been offered, and a large number have taken this opportunity of hearing the gospel of Freethought. A social complimentary to Mr. Cohen was held last Monday. There was a good attendance, and a pleasant evening was spent. A six months' course of lectures by Mr. Cohen next year has been arranged for.

A two nights' debate takes place in the Hall of the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S., Rusholme-road, All Saints, on Thursday and Friday, Nov. 23 and 24, between the Rev. Dr. Duffy, of the Christian Homes Mission, clergyman, and Mr. Wm. Heaford, of London, certificated Secular lecturer; subject, "Is the Bible or Secularism the Better Guide for Mankind?" The Rev. Mr. Duffy has discussed with Mr. C. Watts, and the Manchester friends may look forward to an interesting debate.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures in the Secular Hall, Leicester, to-day (Nov. 19) We hope to hear that he had good meetings and a warm reception.

The *Bristol Mercury* has a leader on the correspondence between Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner and the Rev. Allen Bees, and says it is "sorry to see how badly the gentleman comes out of the controversy." "Mrs. Bonner," the *Mercury* says, "has conclusively demonstrated that Charles Bradlaugh died an Atheist as he lived," and adds that it "is unfair to

endeavor to misstate the opinions of a man after he is dead and unable to reply."

The National Secular Society's *Almanack* for 1894 is in the press, and will soon be published. The price, as before, will be sixpence. A change has been made in the title. It will be "The Secular Almanack." The more general title will be a better introduction to the outside public.

Members of the N.S.S. Executive will please note that the November meeting is called for next Thursday (Nov. 23), instead of the last Thursday in the month, owing to the President's having to be away from London at the latter date. Every member of the Executive should, if possible, attend this meeting.

Freethinkers in Nelson and the district are invited to attend a meeting in Page's shop, 36 Leeds-road, on Tuesday, 21st at 7.30, to take steps towards forming a Branch of the N.S.S., and arranging for lectures. Mr. E. C. Johnson will address the meeting.

Field-road Chapel, Forest-gate, is open this afternoon (Nov. 19th) at 3, to a public and open debate on "Agnosticism, the Religion of Despair!" Freethinkers in the district should turn up and show there are two sides to this, as to other questions.

The Dundee Society reports that it is getting on splendidly. It has started Sunday afternoon concerts, which have turned out a great success.

The Emperor-King of Hungary has given his consent to the introduction of Dr. Weherle's popular Civil Marriage Bill, which will make civil marriages compulsory on all creeds, because it is said it was shown to him that in the protocols of the Council of Trent the idea of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in marriages was repudiated. The Church is fighting against the measure to the uttermost.

The *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, issues a number devoted to selections from exchanges. One of the articles reproduced is that on "A Funny Faith: Christianity as Viewed by a Japanese," taken from our columns.

Our last week's Cartoon was much appreciated. This week's is reasonable and pertinent, and we have allowed for an increased demand. Our usual practice is to give a Cartoon and a Portrait alternately, but of course this is not like the laws of the Medes and Persians. We do not intend to miss any good opportunity of hitting off a foible, an hypocrisy, or a crime of "the enemy." Artistic satire has a definite place in an effective propaganda.

HALL OF SCIENCE CHILDRENS' PARTY, 1894.

Miss Vance, and a committee of ladies and gentlemen, are making arrangements for the annual treat of the little ones, which will take place on Wednesday, January 31, next. Subscriptions, both in money, goods or toys, will be most thankfully received. Collecting cards can be had from Miss Vance on application. An entertainment by the children, such as gave so much satisfaction last year, will be repeated.

R. FORDER, Treasurer.

PRAYER.

Did ever prayer, without the credulous bonds
Of the old legend days of miracle,
Arrest one hour the sure approach of death,
Bring nigher by one league a distant love,
Lighten one pang of human agony,
Or better howsoever his fate who prays
Than his who bears and waits?—*Percy Greg.*

FREETHINKERS' DOXOLOGY.

Praise man from whom all blessings flow,
Praise science, superstition's foe;
Come, let us free these earthly hosts
From tyrants, devils, gods and ghosts.

THAT WICKED WORLD.

A FAVORITE theme for the orthodox preacher is the alleged enmity that exists between the "world" and the "spirit"; and the loquacious pulpiter enlarges in fine and glowing style on the impossibility of leading a "spiritual" life, while thought is taken of the base things of "earth." Such a one—with some variations—is Canon F. F. Carmichael, of Dublin, who preached a sermon recently on "Overcoming the World," that is lengthily reported in one of the Christian journals.

Canon Carmichael would appear, after all, to be a not very rigid stickler for orthodoxy, as we shall presently show; and altogether he seems in mildness of tone and some little breadth of view to be above the average run of pulpit lights. Those who make any profession of religion at all, the Canon says, "have some sort of a vague idea that they are in the hands of God; some kind of wandering notion that God is good and merciful, and that there is some great far-reaching purpose working itself out in the history of mankind, whereby what they call salvation is attained. There is also an idea, the result of very ancient traditions—and sustained too, by the Holy Scriptures—that we are exposed to the enmity of subtle foes to our peace and security of the spiritual order, and that, from some cause or other, hidden to us, the world in which we live is, in certain of its aspects, our enemy." Now that is a very trite and true description of the average religionist. The man who is observant enough to see that such is the popular idea, cannot be very straight-laced himself, for when you come to recognise how vague and hazy, how uncertain and indefinite popular religion is, you have gone a long way towards seeing that it is strongly connected with popular ignorance, and you must ultimately see, too, that so uncertain and unfixing a thing cannot well be the revelation of a certain and fixed authority. As a matter of fact, the man in the street to-day knows no more and cares no more about the details and subtleties of the Christian religion, or about the wrangling of doctors and fathers, than he does of the sanitary condition of the South Sea Islands. If you asked the average working man what was "transubstantiation," or the view he held on "apostolic succession," he would probably give you that look which is generally bestowed on an eccentric individual. Such a state of things may be an evil. Hazy and indefiniteness in belief, however unavoidable in a transition stage, are not in themselves admirable. A healthy man ought to have sufficient mental energy and sufficient interest in the problems by which he is surrounded, to think out a coherent belief which, however incomplete, and however ready to be modified as fresh evidence appears, will yet serve as, at least, a working philosophy of life. But the fact remains, ordinary people will not, and cannot be made to take a real interest in unreal questions, or bestow that attention on the fancies of theology that they do on the positive facts of life. It is nature's law, and if there is some being who is the author of nature, it is singular that he should have constituted human beings so that they pay so little heed to him, and so much to other, and, in the circumstances, less important things.

But now comes a delicious turning of the tables by the Canon on his orthodox friends. Hitherto we understood that the chief way in which a surrender to the "world" manifested itself was in a decay of religiosity. We used to be told by the old school that "infidelity" was the child of the world, and that, in proportion as the "world" conquered, the fire and the brimstone became less terrible. But Canon Carmichael neatly and nicely works the thing round, and brings out an exactly opposite lesson from that of the old order of pulpiters. He has recounted the ideas that go to make the average man's religion. And then he says that on some these ideas exercise no real or appreciable influence, but "there are not a few whose lives are made terrified and anxious by such beliefs, to whom religion is a terror rather than a help." And then the Canon tells us: "Now when a man has got into such a state of mind as that, the world has overcome him. Faith has quailed before the appearance of

things, and is dead." Verily this is something new. Here we have it that it is the hell-fire people who have been overcome by the world; and so those who are so loud in denouncing others for the surrender have the charge flung back at themselves. But listen to the Canon again: "People whose minds are haunted by such fears follow, in accordance with the bent of their natures, one of two courses. They either become morose devotees absorbed in selfish soul-saving, or they indulge in sin to draw their minds from doleful images." One can, of course, easily read between the lines. The Canon probably has given up hell, and this is the admirable way he takes of delivering a blow to the "morose devotees." In passing, we may mention that it is interesting how religion lends itself to this kind of thing. The style of argument that used to be indulged in by squabbling religionists ran something like this: "You are going to hell." "Thanks, my friend; you are mistaken. It is you who are going there." So damnation against damnation, and one side was as good as the other. The Pope might send Luther to hell, but then Luther had the privilege of returning the compliment. The hell-fire people would probably say that Canon Carmichael has been "overcome by the world," but then the Canon can retort the charge with fine effect. Both sides, of course, claim for their respective views the sanction of the Lord; but that personage still preserves an attitude of masterly inactivity.

But it is difficult to thoroughly understand what Canon Carmichael precisely means. He divides religionists into two classes, roughly speaking: the careless who do not trouble about the matter, and the terror-stricken, who really take religion to heart. But the latter class, we are told, are overcome by the world; consequently, we are left to infer that the Canon's ideal religionist is one on whom religion has no practical effect. Possibly the worthy Canon is a disciple of the late Archbishop of York, who, after preaching the gospel, told people that society would go to wreck if they put it in practice.

Now, however, the preacher produces his medicine which is to cure the terrified believer. A man must have a sound, practical motive for his actions, and this is the motive the Canon provides: "God is the Lord of our life. All the issues of it are with him, the hairs of our head are all numbered, the keys of death and of Hades are in his hands, he shuts and no man opens, he opens and no man shuts." Now, if this means anything, behind its bumptious phraseology, it would seem to mean a belief in destiny. Whether such a belief is conducive to the healthiest life we may leave the observant reader to judge. The believer in destiny always believes himself predestined to salvation—the damnation is predestined for somebody else. But we know that, under the inspiration of this belief, the most terrible persecutions have been enacted; and we know, further, that if the title "morose devotee" can be applied to one set of Christians over another, it is precisely to that set which has proclaimed predestination as one of the cardinal points in its creed.

There is a very funny thing in one part of this sermon, and that is the Canon's definition of faith. Here it is—and let the gods themselves look down in amazement: "Faith is humility, it is a confession of ignorance as to certain things. It is a suspension of judgment on the ground of insufficiency of evidence." Now this is not sermonising; this is what we would call reconstructing the dictionary. For a youngster just left school there might be amusement in going through a dictionary and taking the definitions of certain words, cutting them out, and pasting them in afresh opposite different words. That might be an amusement for an idle schoolboy. But when it is done by a canon in a pulpit, it savors of the impudent—and yet it is done repeatedly. What the preacher has done in the above instance is, to take what might pass muster as a definition of scepticism, and call it a definition of faith. We would suggest that perhaps the Canon would preach next Sunday from the text, "Thou shalt not steal."

And now, finally, for this question of the influence of the "world." It is of course difficult to know what exact meaning religionists in general, or Canon Car-

michael in particular, attaches to the phrase. If it is meant that we ought not to absorb ourselves in the foibles and frivolities of life, that we ought to cultivate our thought even if it cost a little passing pleasure—a good deal may be said for the lesson. But if, as was probably originally intended, it is meant to inculcate asceticism, then we challenge it. Asceticism, no matter how high the preacher, is a base and ignoble creed. Even the genius and the sincerity of a Tolstoi cannot make his creed acceptable to really healthy minds; and the preaching of the ascetic philosophy has usually been accompanied—as a writer in last month's *Westminster Review* remarked—by a far more terrible reaction and a far grosser sensualism than that against which even the higher asceticism was possibly, to some extent, a protest. In this connection it is a grim commentary on the purity of asceticism, that a very large percentage of the English readers of the *Kreutzer Sonata* was drawn from the customers of Holywell-street. No; let us be human—let us cultivate humanity, do our best to lift it higher, raise its ideals and its aims—but let us be human still. Let us recognise in each man a brother, whose nature is our nature, whose difficulties are our difficulties, whose triumphs are our triumphs too. but let us not be guilty of the supreme egotism which asceticism implies. Above all, let us not attempt to purchase a cheap superiority by pretending to divest ourselves of those natural passions and desires which are the common heritage of every child of man.

FREDERICK RYAN.

A DAY WITH THE SOULS.

HAVING been to a lecture on "Was Christ an Early Riser?" I was walking meditatively home, thinking the subject over from all points and its bearing on the present-day supply of alarm clocks, when, on looking ahead, I saw a shadowy something that was familiar to me. It had my appearance, seen through mist. I dispelled the idea of its being a ghost, because it seemed dressed in shadowy clothes, and I had never heard or seen the ghost of a frock coat. Hurrying, I tapped it on the shoulder, my hand cleaving the thing right down without inconvenience; but it turned, and then I saw a replica of my features, faded as if partially rubbed. My astonishment was not so great but that I had the presence of mind to question it by saying:

"Who and what are you? Are you my astral part, or are you my mahatma?"

"Neither," answered the shadow; "I am your Soul, and at the treatment you have subjected me to this evening I thought of leaving you and never —"

"Come, come," I replied; "don't let us part in this manner." So, leading it to a gas-branch, I gave it some special hydrogen, which seemed to cheer it; and seeing good humor light up its whole interior, I thought it a good opportunity to ask if it could take me to the Land of Souls, where they are reared and where they are supplied.

"Certainly," said my wraith, and waiving his gaseous hands before my face, I seemed to rise by holding on to those visionary clothes with a grim tenacity; and, after a time, entered a vast space with semi-circular seats arranged, on which were sorried ranks of shadowy souls waiting to be engaged, reminding me—an earth man—somewhat of cabs on cab-ranks. Suddenly one in power enters, calling out—

"Next one disengaged. Mrs. Snuggles, of Paradise-court, Bow, wants a fairly active soul for her babe just born."

Very leisurely a soul rises and comes to the front, complaining this was the third time he'd been incarnated in that neighborhood, and couldn't they send one of the newer shadows. But complaint was useless; he had at once to go to the compression room to fit him for the carcass of Mrs. Snuggles's new baby.

Another call was made for a soul for the baby of an arch-bishop, and there was quite a rustle of haste as the next soul hurried up with a sweet smile of satisfaction as it wended its way into the compression department.

A call being made for a soul for the offspring of a German pauper prince located in England, quite a flutter of gassy excitement took place, that sounded something like dead leaves being blown about in the autumn; but the flutter of expectancy was soon over when it was found the princely increase was not guaranteed by the usual function of wedlock.

The most piteous sight was to see the souls intended for lunatics and persons of weak intellect, their utter despair at the prospect of passing perhaps sixty or eighty years in a body with no reason, of having to adapt itself to its malformed surroundings, to stultify itself to the capacity of a pitiful idiot, to throw its experience of former healthy incarnations entirely away.

My Soul, being with its companions, seemed loth to re-enter my body and come back again to earth, although I had witnessed no inconvenience by its absence, but it being fashionable and respectable to have a soul, I coaxed it back with promises of more extended freedom, and so all was well.

They were rather a wild set, the souls intended for savages—they seemed to be the ne'er-do-wells of Soul-land, ripe for anything; would thoroughly enjoy the fun of savage raids, or the hunting of the gentle missionary or the wily boast of prey.

This experience has cleared up one great mystery for me. Many times, when walking behind a mother with a babe hanging over her shoulder, I have looked with wonder at the babe's face of concentrated intelligence gazing at me; at it ceasing to try and procure nourishment from sucking dimpled knuckles buried deeply in pinky flesh, and have thought the large eyes were only speculating whether I was a walking receptacle for milk or a solid cube of toffy. Now I know; it is the praiseworthy effort of a compressed soul rightly struggling to be free. I shall be careful in the future how I converse with babies.

F. A.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Thomas May, in his letter on this subject, published in your issue of the 29th ult., in quoting texts explanatory of the unpardonable sin, has omitted the very important verse 30 of Mark iii., which seems a solution of the supposed mystery. The verse reads as follows: "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit"—meaning that Jesus' miracles were of Satanic, and not divine (Holy Ghost), origin. The unpardonable sin, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, therefore consists in asserting that these miracles were wrought by Satanic, and not Holy Ghost, agency.

W. CABELL.

BOOK CHAT.

The *Truthseeker* advertises four Freethought works recently translated into German. They are Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses and Oration on the Gods, Men Women, and Gods*, by Helen Gardener, and *Miracles and Miracle Workers*, by John Peck.

Selections from Oahspe: a New Bible, is the title of specimens of a new revelation which came, we believe, to a Dr. Newborough by automatic writing. This new revelation is scarcely a whit better than the old. Jehovah now spells his name Jehovih, but he talks the same old twaddle. Thus the new revelation says (p. 9): "In the beginning God created the heavens of the earth," without any explanation of what is meant by "beginning," "creation," or "heavens of the earth." If the inspiration of the new revelation did not turn the brains of the writer, it is well calculated to turn those of the hapless readers. Fancy pondering such a revelation as this (p. 33): "Jehovih saith, I am the sum of the Voice of all the lower heavens; the doings of Gods and high officers; the Person of the Word of three thousand years." It appears from the last chapter that the revealer of the New Bible is setting up some kind of community of believers at Shalam, New Mexico.

The *Liberty Annual* (Watts and Co.) for 1894 is edited by W. S. Crawshaw. It is a thoroughly individualistic magazine, with a motto from Mill's *Liberty*. Mrs. Josephine Butler opens with a paper on "The True Conservatism and the True Liberty." Wordsworth Donisthorpe makes even the currency question interesting in "A Practical Step Towards a Free Mint." Mr. F. W. Read compares the proposed Eight Hours Bill with the Statute of Laborers in the time of Edward III. Mr. A. Lynch criticises Socialism acutely, though he believes "there is an orbled drop of central goodness in all their ideas of betterment." Mr. J. Greevz Fisher writes on "Commercial Freedom and the Post Office Monopoly," being very severe in his strictures on the red-tapeism and the lack of enterprise of the authorities at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Among recent novels are *The Boy God* and *The Heavenly Twins*. Cupid is evidently referred to in the first, and no one supposes the Holy Ghost responsible for the last-named.

Messrs. Chapman and Hall announce a volume of *Aphorisms from the Writings of Herbert Spencer*, illustrated with a portrait.

The term "sky-pilot" has obtained such currency to denote the men of God who offer to guide us to heaven for a consideration, that the Rev. Thomas S. Treanor has put out a book with the title *The Loy of a Sky-Pilot*. It is published by the Religious Tract Society.

Someone sends us *The Bible: How to Read it*, by the Rev. A. A. Lynn, vicar of Westgate-on-Sea. The pamphlet has reached its "one hundred and sixty-seventh thousand," so can boast a far larger circulation than the works of Herbert Spencer. It says that "perhaps eighty out of every hundred Christians are disobeying the command to search the scriptures," and recommends their daily perusal. Before you commence reading, say, prayerfully: "'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth'; then keep your eyes and ears open, listen attentively, for as you read God is speaking." A note to this passage says, "Always read the headings of the chapters." We wonder if the rev. author wishes these also to be taken for the word of God. They ought to be, for they sometimes improve the text, as when they represent the Song of Solomon as portraying the love of the Church to Christ.

The Bible: Its Seeming Difficulties, is another little book sent to us for our edification. These difficulties, it appears, arise because God "chose to convey to men his will through the medium of man, not speaking to them in the language of Heaven." So God repents, is wearied, rests, is angry, remembers, forgets, has hands, arms, eyes and hinder parts, just to accommodate himself to our weakness. So he speaks of the pillars of heaven, the corners and ends of the earth, etc., although he well knew heaven has no pillars, and earth no corners. Our author does not shrink from dealing with the legend of Cain. "As to Cain marrying his own sister or his niece, this was not forbidden; in fact, absolutely necessary, and therefore no sin." Then we are told the sun stood still because God was a jealous god, and the sun was worshipped as Baal. "Molech, the sun-god, was an image of a beast made of brass and heated, into which the worshipper placed his offspring as an offering." Speaking of the Resurrection, he says, "Doubts are suggestions of the evil one." We have been edified, but the evil one has, as usual, been making his suggestions.

That which is founded upon slavery, and fear, and ignorance, cannot endure. In the religion of the future there will be men and women and children, all the aspirations of the soul, and all the tender humanities of the heart.

—Ingersoll.

SUNDAY 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.]

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, W. A. Steward (Fabian), "Socialism and Religion in the Labor Movement" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "The Churches and the Miners; or, What is the Practical Value of Christianity?" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class, J. K. Page, "Can Trade Unions Raise Wages?" (free). Tuesday at 8.30, athletic class. Wednesday at 8, J. Frederick Green, "International Quarrels and how to Settle them" (free). Saturday, in the Minor Hall, social evening (free). Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, F. Haslam, "A Democratic Program" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club. Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, B. Vivian, "The Future of Co-operative Production" (free). Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, O. Cohen, "Christianity and Secularism." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy. Edmonton—Assembly Rooms, Silver-street: 7, Sam Standring, "Is there a God?" Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Nov. 23, at 8, musical selections; 8.30, G. Standring, "Christianity and Democracy." South Essex Secular Society, 33 and 35 Salway-road, Stratford, E.: 7.15, W. H. Smith, "Man and the Ice Age" (free). Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Hartfield-road Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, C. James, "The Philosophy of Atheism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, F. Haslam, "The Foolish Teachings of Christ." Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): W. Heaford, 11.30, "The Rise and Fall of the Gods"; 3.30, "Can we Rely on the Bible?"

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Room No. 6): 11.30, J. M. Parlant, "Commercialism and Communism." Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, C. Burton, "Mind and Body," with illustrations. Blackburn—"Haymarket," Cort-street: 6.30, discussion. A members' meeting at the Secretary's house at 3. Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, J. Grey, "The Utility of Trades Unions." Chester—Cathedral Restaurant, City Walls: 6, an Address, "Is Unbelief a Sin?" Derby—Shaftsbury Coffee Tavern, Morledge: Nov. 20, at 8, J. Hooper, "Conflicts between Science and Religion."

Dundee: 11, mutual improvement class, "Astronomy"; 2.30, concert; 6.30, Mr. Harkins, "Secularism and the Popular Faith"; after which he will recite "The Progress of Madness." Failsforth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "The Choice of Books." Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, D. G. Lindsay, "Modern Politics"; 6.30, The Author of *Faith as an Intellectual Function*, "The Testimony of the Emotions to Rationalism." Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7, public discussion on "The Creation Story" (continued). Hull Sunday Association, St. George's Hall, Storey-street: 2.30, Councillor Exton, "A Review of the New Unionism." Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Carr-street: 7, Mr. Martinelli, "The Great Ice Age in its Relation to the Antiquity of Man." Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: A. B. Moss, 3, "Delusions of Theology"; 6.30, "The Drift of Darwinism." Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 3, logic class, L. Small, B.Sc., "Syllogisms"; 7, Mr. Bayliss, "Voltaire." Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Busholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': Charles Watts, 11, "America Re-visited"; 3, "Human Life from a Secular and Theological Standpoint"; 6.30, "The Fanaticism of Religion." Monday from 8 to 10.30, dancing (6d.) Tuesday at 8, debating circle, W. Payne, "The Police and the Public." Thursday and Friday, debate between Mr. Duffy and W. Heaford on "Is the Bible or Secularism the Better Guide for Mankind?" Nelson—Page's Shop, 36 Leeds-road: Tuesday at 7.30, business meeting. Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, R. Mitchell, "The Gospel Devils" (free). Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, chess club; 7, T. A. Williams (of Bristol), "Vivisection: Cruel, Useless, and Unscientific" (free). Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc. South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, important business meeting. Wolverhampton—Midland Tramway Coffee House, 35 Snow-hill: 7, committee meeting.

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Nov. 19, Camberwell; 26 to 30, Portsmouth. Dec. 1 and 2, Portsmouth; 3, Luton; 10 to 17, Manchester; 24, m., Battersea; e., Camberwell; 31, Leicester. C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Dec. 10, Portsmouth. ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Nov. 19, Leicester. Dec. 3, Birmingham. TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith London, W.—Nov. 26, Camberwell. H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Dec. 3, Battersea; 10, Camberwell; 17, Deptford Liberal Club.

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ANGELS.

MR. F. BURNAND, the editor of Punch, is a good Roman Catholic, and has been gracing the columns of that once humorous journal with some lines on angels :

I wonder if you give your mind
At all to angels. "Which?" you say?
Why, angels of the hymn-book kind,
Not imitation ones in clay.

I often do. They fascinate
My fancy to a strange degree ;
And meditating much of late,
There came two serious points to me.

You notice in the Holy Writ
Angels are never feminine ;
But, wheresoever they may flit,
He came, he spake, he gave the sign.

The men who wrote of them were sage,
And knew their subject out and out ;
But we live in a wicked age
That twists the angels' sex about.

And painters paint them girls. And then
The question sets one's brains afire—
Why choristers on earth are men,
If women form the heavenly choir ?

And if they do paint here or there
A man among the cherubim,
I claim to know why not a hair
May grow upon the face of him ?

I know the Roman Church decreed
"A priest shall wear a shaven face."
But what of angels ? There indeed
Razor and strop seem out of place.

Then why this hairless cheek and chin ?
I ask, and Echo answers Why ?
Have angel-cheeks no roots within ?
—Here comes my keeper. So, good-bye !

BOARD SCHOOL RELIGION.

Father—"Well, my dear, what has the teacher been telling you to-day, anything more about the big fish in the sea?"

Child—"Oh! Father, I want to tell you something. Jesus makes the deaf hear, the blind see, and the ill people well."

Father—"Who's Jesus?"

Child—"A man—a gentleman."

Father—"Where does he live?"

Child (impatiently)—"I don't know."

Father—"Why didn't he make Mrs. W. well when she was ill?"

Child (impatiently)—"Because he didn't know where she lived!"

Father—"Why doesn't he make the blind people you see in the street see?"

Child—"Because he doesn't know them. Some more Jesuses look after them. Another Jesus looks after this street. (A slight interval elapsed here, in which the little girl appeared to be thinking deeply). Jesus walked across the sea, and the men who were mending the fishing-boats called Jesus, Master. The teacher says when they went fishing in the sea all night, they did not catch anything, and when they went a minute ago, and when they put their nets down to the water, they felt a lot of fish. The water was full of fish, and they had to have their men to go and help pull them in the boat; the net was full. Oh! liz—" (Here a coach horn in the street proved of much greater interest for the nonce than the story she was relating).

Father—"How could he walk across the sea?"

Child (impressively)—"When it was ice!" [Fact.]

H. R. C.

OBITUARY.

Died at Retford, on Oct. 31, Robert Denman Turner, formerly a zealous member of the Salvation Army, but for the last two years of his life a zealous Freethinker and member of the National Secular Society. The night before he died a friend asked if he could do anything for him, and his request was to have a few lines read from Ingersoll. He desired to have a Secular burial, but there was unfortunately no one at hand to read the service, and his father and mother got a minister to say a few words rather than bury him in silence.

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