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PRICE TWOPENCE.

PRAYER AND EARTHQUAKES.

DR. JESSOPP, the genial East Anglian parson and man of letters, once related a story of a farmer in his district who had curious notions of Providence. "That there Providence," he said, had rotted his potatoes last year, and this year had killed his "missis," and he was of opinion that Providence ought to mind what it was doing. Frankly, for our part, we confess to being of the same opinion. That honest farmer's notions were not so very curious, after all. He accepted in all sincerity what he had been taught about Providence. It was responsible for everything, and he kept a debit and credit account, in which the balance seemed to be lamentably on the wrong side. It was precisely in the same spirit that the dying hero of Tennyson's "Northern Farmer" asked, "What be God A'mighty about, a takin' o' me now?" He had done a brave stroke of work and had more before him, but Providence was cutting him off and leaving the lazy ones behind. His strong and pertinent question was therefore quite natural. If the truth were told, we fancy it would be found that in the minds of these hard, sincere sons of the soil—despite all the Sunday sermons they listen to, or sleep under—there bubbles up a protestation against the "all-wise governor of the universe" theory, which would stagger the theologians of all the schools.

Providence, in fact, has never been very firmly planted in the minds of the common people. They say "Amen," but they have their reservations, which are not often expressed to their religious teachers, but are more generally given tongue to under the rose, or forced out in critical moments like a cry from a heart in torture.

Tragedy and comedy are mixed up in all things. Was it not Heine who said that Brutus, before stabbing Cæsar, probably put his nose to the dagger to see if it smelt of onions? Providence itself, which usually appears in the midst of terror, can wear at times the mask of farce. For instance, in the North of England, quite recently, a woman gave birth to four children. No doubt she felt—and we dare say her husband did—that Providence might well have been less bountiful. The quaternion was a positive satire—one of those that can only come from "the Aristophanes of the Universe." It associated human beings too pointedly with the lower animals. Such a progeny was too like a litter. It was also a subtle stroke at the theologians, who talk of man as a special creation, if not the actual offspring of Adam. "There you are, gentlemen," Providence seems to say, "take those four children at one fell swoop, and see what you can make of them on your own principles, or on any principles but those of the Darwinism you hate." Yes, it was a practical joke of the highest order. But it was rather rough on the poor mother of four, to say nothing of the overstocked labor market in an old country like England.

Greece is a long way from the North of England. It is a long way to a traveller, and almost inconceivable

to a peasant who has never been more than walking distance from his own home. But it is nothing to Providence, which is supposed to regulate the affairs of millions of systems, separated by unrealisable abysses of space. Over in Greece, therefore, Providence has also been active. It has not sent a poor mother four children—without nurses; but an earthquake, or rather a series of earthquakes, which is said to beat everything seen in those parts since the disaster that was recorded by Thucydides. Towns and villages are in ruins, hundreds and perhaps thousands of people are killed, and myriads are reduced to destitution.

Providence is still unapproachable in this line of business. How paltry are such feeble imitators as Ravachol, Vaillant, and Henry! They kill one or two and injure a dozen; and the affair is the talk of the civilised world, until Providence strikes in to show its overwhelming superiority.

Perhaps the most ironical incident in the tragedy (for all tragedy, you know, is really tragi-comedy) was the one which was chronicled as follows in the daily papers:—"The churches are in ruins, and during the whole of this week the inhabitants spent the nights in the open air, praying for mercy from Heaven." It would be difficult to beat that. What a scene! A painter could not render it, because of its invisible elements. The very churches, God's houses, in ruins; the people homeless, appalled by what had happened, and in terror of what might come; all of them praying for mercy—and to whom? Why, to the Providence that wrought all that fatal mischief, and was still at it!

When a Vaillant throws his bomb he runs away. When the party called Providence sends its earthquakes, it waits till the living cry out to be spared the fate of the dead, and then rattles the earth again like a dice box, sending fresh quivers of fear through the heart of agony. Providence is inimitable, and prayer is—nonsense!

Men worship Providence, even civilised men, but as usual they will try to circumvent it. They will tell the Lord that he doeth all things well—on Sunday, and on Monday they will pour balm on the wounds of his victims. Subscriptions are being raised to find food and shelter for the people in Greece whom Providence has turned into starving outcasts. As for the dead, they will sleep on.

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport.

It is well that the subscriptions should be raised. Science, like Ariel, has put a girdle round the earth. The news of one people's calamity is flashed to another. Sympathy is excited. The springs of charity are loosened. A touch of nature makes the whole world kin. But all this help to the sufferers simply belies the doctrine of Providence, or else it makes Man better than God. The theologians may take their choice. Either alternative wrecks their system. Every fact, indeed, is fatal to it. Theology is a set of arbitrary fancies. It has no roots in the nature of things. It lives in the darkness of mystery, and dies in the daylight of reason.

G. W. FOOTE.

CARLYLE'S RELIGION.

(Concluded from p. 267.)

CARLYLE was a Theist, of a peculiar kind. He preferred to speak of the immensities, the eternities, and the veracities, to using the hackneyed theological terms. Indeed, his conception of deity was far other than that of the magnified non-natural man, of the ordinary Theist, who sits apart from the world, having first sent them spinning. His God was a vague Superintendent, who perplexed him by his indifference. Mr. Froude says: "I once said to him, not long before his death, that I could only believe in a god which (*sic*) did something. With a cry of pain which I shall never forget, he said: 'He does nothing.' Yet he never resigned Godism, and in his old age wrote in his journal: 'I wish I had strength to elucidate and write down intelligibly to my fellow-creatures what my outline of belief about God essentially is.'" A confession that the task had not hitherto been achieved. Probably he would have said, with Goethe's "Faust," "Name is but sound, and smoke, veiling heaven's golden glow." In his *Life of Sterling*, in which he lets out so much of his own heresy, he says: "One angry glance I remember in him, and it was but a glance, and gone in a moment. 'Flat Pantheism!' urged he once, as if triumphantly, of something or other in the fire of a debate, in my hearing: 'It is mere Pantheism, that—' 'And suppose it were Pottheism,' cried the other, 'if the thing is true?'"

The nickname Pottheism sufficiently shows that the other was Carlyle himself. On another occasion he breaks out, "Pantheism, Pottheism, Mydoxy, Thydoxy, are nothing at all to me; a weariness the whole jargon, which I avoid speaking of, decline listening to." Again he says: "A man's religion consists, not of the many things he is in doubt of and tries to believe, but of the few he is assured of and has no need of effort for believing."

On the subject of personal immortality he was certainly not orthodox. His most explicit declaration is in a letter to a lady (1848), who asked his views as to a future state. He answered:—

"My dear Madam,—The question which perplexes you is one which no man can answer. You may console yourself by reflecting that it is by its nature *insoluble* to human creatures; that what human creatures have to do with such a question, is to get it well put to rest, suppressed, if not answered, so that their life and its duties may be attended to without impediment from it. Such questions in this, our earthly existence, are many. . . . Consequences good and evil, blessed and accursed, it is very clear, do follow from our actions here below, and prolong and propagate, and spread themselves into the infinite, or beyond our calculation and conception; but whether the notion of *reward* and *penalty* be not, on the whole, rather a *human* one, transferred to that immense divine fact, has been doubtful to many. Add this consideration, which the best philosophy teaches us, that the *very consequences* (not to speak of the penalties at all) of *evil* actions die away, and become abolished long before eternity ends; that it is only the consequences of *good* actions are eternal, for these are in harmony with the laws of this universe, and add themselves to it, and co-operate with it for ever; while all that is in *disharmony* with it must necessarily be without continuance, and soon fall dead."*

He disbelieved in eternal torments. Tyndall records that when he said, "It is something to have abolished hell-fire," "Yes," he replied, "that is a distinct and an enormous gain."† Mr. M. D. Conway records, "I was present one evening when someone asked: 'Mr. Carlyle, can you believe that all these ignorant and brutal millions of people are destined to live for ever?' 'Let us hope *not*,' was the emphatic reply."‡

In Christmas week he said to his friend, William Allingham, that he had observed an unusual number of drunken men in the street, and "then," he quietly

added, "I remembered that it was the birthday of the Redeemer." Once he was persuaded to enter a Nonconformist chapel. "It was," says Mr. Conway, "I believe, for the first time in many years that he had entered either church or chapel, and was destined to be the last. 'The preacher's prayer,' he said, 'filled me with consternation. O Lord, thou hast plenty of treacle up there; send a stream of it down to us!' That was about the amount of it. He did not seem in the least to know that what such as he needed was rather a stream of brimstone." Of another religious service, a Methodist one, he said: "The sum and end of all the fluency and vehemence of the sermon and of all the fervor of the prayer was 'Lord, save us from hell!' and I went away musing, sick at heart, saying to myself: 'My good fellows, why all this bother and noise? If it be God's will, why not go and be damned in quiet, and say never a word about it? And I, for one, would think far better of you.'"

Being in Scotland at the house of an old acquaintance whom he knew to be a sceptic, Carlyle was shocked, when dinner came, by the complaisance with which his entertainer—evidently because of the neighbors present—entered upon a sanctimonious "grace—before meat" of the long Scotch pattern; and cut it short by exclaiming, "Oh,—this is damnable!" With the Hebrew old clothes and the dead Jew he had little patience. So in *Past and Present* he bursts out: "Revelations, Inspirations? Yes; and thy own god-created Soul; dost thou not call that a 'revelation'?" And in *Sartor Resartus*: "Art thou a grown baby, then, to fancy that the miracle lies in miles of distance, or in pounds of avoirdupois; and not to see that the true, inexplicable, God-revealing miracle lies in this, that I can stretch forth my hand at all; that I have free Force to clutch aught therewith?" This "Natural supernaturalism" may be said to be his transcendental theology. "Do you know why the age of Miracles is past? Because you are become an enchanted human ass (I grieve to say it); and merely bray parliamentary eloquence; rejoice in chewed gorse, scrip coupons, or the like; and have no discernible 'Religion' except a degraded species of Phallus-worship, whose liturgy is in the Circulating Libraries!"

Professor Tyndall says: "The miracles of orthodoxy were to him, as to his friend Emerson, 'Monsters.' To both of them the blowing clover and the falling rain were the true miracles." Froude says in so many words, "the special miraculous occurrences of Sacred History were not credible to him."

"He did not believe in historical Christianity. He did not believe that the facts alleged in the Apostles' Creed had ever really happened. The resurrection of Christ was to him only a symbol of a spiritual truth. As Christ rose from the dead, so were we to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Not that Christ had actually died and had risen again. He was only *believed* to have died, and *believed* to have risen, in an age when legend was history, when stories were accepted as true from their beauty or their significance. As long as it was supposed that the earth was the centre of the universe, that the sky moved round it, and that sun and moon and stars had been set there for man's convenience, when it was the creed of all nations that gods came down to the earth, and men were taken into heaven, and that between the two regions there was incessant intercourse, it could be believed easily that the Son of God had lived as a man among men, had descended like Hercules into Hades, and had returned again from it. Such a story then presented no internal difficulty at all. It was not so now."†

Unitarianism he regarded as a variety of Coleridgean moonshine devised by those who had not the courage of their principles. To Emerson he more than once alluded to "the dustbin of extinct Socinianism," and

* Nicoll, pp. 143-144.

† "Personal Recollections of Thomas Carlyle," *Fortnightly Review*, Jan. 1890.‡ "Carlyle's Religion," *Open Court*, July, 1889.

* Nicoll, p. 120.

† Carlyle's *Life in London*, vol. i., pp. 280, 281; 1890.

Mr. Conway reports him as saying, "The best men I have known go that far must needs go much further."

His antagonism to the Church showed itself mainly in his gibes at Puseyism, the sacerdotalism and ritualism which has since become yet more prominent in the Church, on the principle of the more paint outside the more rottenness within. Thus he said:—

"Do you know English Puseyism? Good Heavens! in the whole circle of history is there the parallel of that—a true worship rising at this hour of the day for Bands and the Shovel-hat? Distraction surely, incipience of the 'final delirium' enters upon the poor old English formalism that has called itself for some two centuries a Church. No likelier symptom of its being soon about to leave the world has come to light in my time."

"The Church of England stood long upon her tithes and her decencies; but now she takes to shouting in the market place, 'My tithes are nothing; my decencies are nothing; I am either miraculous celestial or else nothing.' It is to me the fatalest symptom of speedy change she ever exhibited. What an alternative! Men will soon see whether you are miraculous celestial or not. Were a pair of breeches ever known to beget a son?"

To Emerson he wrote: "Adieu, my friend; it is silent Sunday; the populace not yet admitted to their beer-shops, till the respectabilities conclude their rubric-mummeries—a much more audacious feat than beer!" Mr. Conway reports him as saying: "The clergy are trying to make up for the vacancy left by the decay of all real Belief with theatrical displays, candles, and costumes. Everything goes to the theatre. 'Enter Christ!' That will soon be the stage direction. But it is all another way of saying, 'Exit Christ'—which states the fact more nearly."

Carlyle declared in his old age that he regarded Truth as the Alpha and Omega of his teaching. His religion may be summed up as the gospel of work, doing the duty nearest hand, and thus cultivating one's own best nature, irrespective of other reward. Loyal recognition of Fact he ever insists upon.

"Speedy end to Superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end. What can it profit any mortal to adopt locations and imaginations which do not correspond to fact; which no sane mortal can deliberately adopt in his soul as true; which the most orthodox of mortals can only, and this after infinite essentially impious effort to put out the eyes of his mind, persuade himself to 'believe that he believes.' Away with it; in the name of God, come out of it, all true men!"

J. M. WHEELER.

CONVERSIONS: WHAT IS THEIR VALUE?

THERE is no feature in connection with the propaganda of orthodox Christianity upon which Christians pride themselves more than upon the supposed conversions that are made to their faith. We say "supposed" advisedly, for if all the alleged conversions were real there would be but few people left, comparatively, to be converted. Many persons under the influence of excitement and fear are led to exclaim, "I have found Jesus"; although when they regain their normal condition they lose him and go "back into the world" and swell the list of "backsliders." This is particularly so during revival meetings, when the orthodox Devil and his brimstone home are made to do duty in dethroning reason and in suspending judgment.

Orthodox Christians not only regard the winning of recruits as a proof of the truth of their system, but they exultingly point to their gain of fresh adherents as undeniable evidence of the success of Christian advocacy. Now it should require very little thought to convince an impartial observer that such conclusions are thoroughly fallacious. The adherents of all systems, however erroneous, can boast of making converts. Christians should remember that if the number of adherents to any faith proves its truth, then Buddhism has an advantage, in this case, over Christianity, for the followers of Buddha have ever been more numerous than those who professed to follow Christ. Further, if the rapid accession of numbers be evidence of the

success of propaganda, then the mission of Mohammed was decidedly more successful than that of Jesus, for the "farmer boy of Mecca" succeeded during his lifetime in gathering around him more disciples than ever acknowledged the Nazarene while he was on earth—that is, supposing the story of his career to be true. And since the reported deaths of the two founders, the relative difference between the progress of their faiths has been equally marked. Sir W. Muir, in his work, *The Rise and Decline of Islam*, writes: "Amongst the religions of the earth Islam must take the precedence in the rapidity and force with which it spread. Within a very short time from its planting in Arabia, the new faith had subdued great and popular provinces. In half a dozen years, counting from the death of the founder, the religion prevailed throughout Arabia, Syria, Persia, and Egypt. . . . In comparison with this grand outburst, the first efforts of Christianity were, to the outward eye, faint and feeble, and its extension was so gradual that what the Mahometan religion achieved in ten or twenty years it took the faith of Jesus long centuries to accomplish." We cite these historical facts to show that Christianity has no superior claim to that of any other religion in the matter of conversions.

When occasionally a convert is gained by the Church from the Freethought ranks great rejoicing is manifested by the faithful, and our principles are condemned as being too weak to retain those who had accepted them as their guide in life. The important fact seems to be overlooked that the vast majority of Freethinkers are converts from Christianity, and that their numbers are constantly increasing. Christianity is found to be too fragile, and impotent to keep thousands of thinking men and women within its fold. And, to the credit of Freethought be it said, its adherents have been won from Christianity by the force of reason, not through the influence of fear. The method adopted by Secularists to gain converts is the very opposite to that resorted to by orthodox believers. We seek to reach the heart through the head; the Christian enthusiast tries to reach the head through the heart. In other words, Secular conversions are the outcome of persistent and calm thought, while those of orthodoxy are too frequently the result of uncontrolled emotion. Also in many instances the convert to Freethought has to brave the sneers of the religious world, to endure the pangs of giving pain to those near and dear to him, and in some cases to suffer the loss of social position. The convert to Christianity, on the other hand, often gains in public estimation, and the change is not unfrequently followed by the converted character finding his business prospects considerably improved. In this age of theological shams the mere profession of orthodoxy covers "a multitude of sins," and serves as a passport into society, while it secures for the convert pecuniary advantages that are denied the honest sceptic. Still he has his reward in the knowledge that in the end it will be found that "honesty is the best policy," and also in the consciousness that, instead of pandering to the hypocritical craze of the time, he is pursuing the dignified course of following the dictates of reason, and availing himself of the genius of mental freedom.

It must be understood that no objection is here urged against conversions *per se*. An old writer once said that the difference between a wise man and a fool was that the former changed his opinions, but the latter did not. It is not the change about which we are so much concerned, as the logical reasons for such a change. We care less *what* a man believes than *why* he believes it. It is quite possible for anyone to overlook facts that bear upon questions of belief, and thus to form a wrong estimate as to their value; hence changes upon speculative subjects may be expected more than once during one's life, and each change may be termed a "conversion." But in all conversions we are entitled to be assured of two things before we can judge fairly of their value. First that the change was brought about through the exercise of the intellect, and not in consequence of the exigencies of business, family associations, pecuniary considerations, or the requirements of fashion. All conversions from such causes are of no argumentative value; they are decep-

tive in their very nature. In the second place, it is only right that we should know, when an alleged conversion to Christianity occurs, what was the evidence that produced it. In nine cases out of ten it will be found that such conversions are either the result of feeling, social considerations, or of disappointed ambition, and that the process of reasoning had nothing to do in the matter. We have had some experience with a few of those so-called converts, but we never found them capable of giving one logical reason apart from sentiment for their "change of front," neither were they in a position to add one iota to the alleged evidences of Christianity. Now, it is not so with the converts from the orthodox faith to Freethought. These persons can state why they doubted the truth of the discarded system, and can give their reasons for so doubting. As a rule, such changes of opinion are not sudden, but are the result of long and careful study; this makes them far more valuable than those produced by orthodox alarmists. The one is the outcome of intellectual discrimination, the other of emotional impulse. Whatever may be true in the religion of the churches, all conversions through fear of a God, of a devil, or of hell, can be of no moral value, neither can they serve as a criterion of truth. It may be that our feelings are bound up with our opinions, but they both vary. A standard of truth can be obtained only from the intellect, and not merely from the emotions.

These considerations show how useless death-bed conversions are for all practical purposes. When such take place, the mentality of the individual is so impaired that the intellectual powers are incapable of performing their function, and no real value can be attached to the conversions then arrived at. To attempt to test truth by death-bed conversions is about as sensible as to expect to find a system of ethics among the inmates of a lunatic asylum. It is asked, "Why do not Christians become Atheists at death?" The answer is, because Atheism is the result of intellectual activity, which, as a rule, is almost absent at the approach of death. How is it that such thinkers as Darwin, Clifford, Tyndall, and Bradlaugh did not become Christians upon the eve of death? Just because their sceptical opinions were the result of intellectual conviction, and that which sustained them during life was found all-sufficient at the hour of death. It is Nothingarians who swell the list of death-bed converts—individuals who have been too indifferent when in health to discover reasons either for belief or disbelief. Consequently, when their last moments arrive they fall victims to priestly machinations, being unable to detect the delusions forced upon their weakened minds. To obviate this as far as possible, Secularists urge the necessity of everyone deciding for himself, ere the approach of death, which opinions appear to him more in harmony with truth; and then, having made the decision, to act up to it with fidelity. Thus no misgivings would be likely to mar the closing scenes of life. Therefore we say to one and all, in the words of Bryant:—

So live that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

CHARLES WATTS

I was walking one beautiful afternoon on Blackheath, with my four-year-old son, and as we walked he was muttering something I could not understand, so I stooped to know what he was saying. "What are you talking about, Frank?" says I. "Who painted the sky blue, father?" "God," I said; but he still kept chattering over and over again, till I stooped to listen to him. He looked up to the sky and said: "Didn't he have a lot of paint?"

OVERHEARD IN A SUNDAY SCHOOL.—Teacher (to class): Now hold up your hands all those who can give me a text beginning with E. Small boy holds up his hand. Teacher: Well, what is it; can you give me one beginning with E.? Small Boy: Yes, teacher; "E dunno where 'e are."

THE GOSPEL OF HUMAN HAPPINESS.

THAT wonderfully versatile man of letters who publishes a volume of poems to-day, and launches a philosophical treatise to-morrow—Mr. Grant Allen—writes in the March number of the *Fortnightly*, under the title of "The New Hedonism," a magnificent attack on Christian asceticism and the spirit which sees in human enjoyment a hideous sin. It is refreshing, in these days of half-and-half philosophising, where you expect to find, even on the most "advanced" sides, mawkish nonsense about the "divine fatherhood" and the "beautiful ideal of Christ,"—it is refreshing, we say, to come across a writer like Mr. Grant Allen who says what he thinks.

Mr. Grant Allen begins by saying that in place of the old precept, which he calls the precept of asceticism, "Be virtuous and you will be happy," he would place the precept of the new hedonism, "Be happy, and you will be virtuous." In passing, we may remark that we fail to see the necessary contradiction between the two rules of conduct, which Mr. Allen seems to see. Both agree that happiness and virtue are correlated, and that in seeking the one we necessarily find the other; where is the essential antithesis? But, passing this, Mr. Allen lays out the Hedonist philosophy, which, of course, is also the Secularist philosophy, in the following incisive passage: "Only two theories of the springs of action in humanity have ever been promulgated. One is the rational theory which we call hedonism, and which rightly recognises that pleasure and pain are, and must ever be, the sole guides of voluntary acts for all sentient beings, be they pigs or philosophers, saints or starfish. The other is the irrational theory, taking its origin in theological concepts (though, with cheap imitation thinkers like Carlyle, it often outlives its source), the theory which maintains that the universe was created by one or more superior beings, who hate pleasure and love pain, or who dispense them by caprice, and who desire that some or all of their creatures should suffer abundantly. This is the theory, so well set forth (though by a smug optimist poet) in Caliban upon Setebos; it lies at the root of all religious thinking, and in its rigorously logical development it is known to us as Calvinism."

This idea, that sacrifice, apart from its object, is a good thing in itself, is the fallacy that lies at the root of almost all the religious systems. Often Christian apologists, when seeking to "justify the ways of God," have contended that poverty, sickness, famine, war, are good and useful because they bring out sometimes the self-sacrifice and heroism of man. Granted, they do—sometimes. It should be pointed out that often they do not; they merely degrade and weaken, without ennobling. How many men die in England every year of starvation—or diseases caused by want of sufficient food—without any of this much-belauded self-sacrifice or heroism to lessen or alleviate their suffering? And be it noted, too, that the good gentlemen who are so loud in their praises of sacrifice—the Archbishops of Canterbury, the comfortable Nonconformist ministers, the Parkers and Farrars—are never disposed to place themselves in jeopardy through the extent of their own exertions. Let the blunt truth be spoken: this doctrine of the sacredness of sacrifice and suffering is one of the weapons by which priestcraft deluded, and still deludes, the people. "Suffer here, it is good; you are ennobling your nature; you may experience a passing pain, but you will reap a hundred-fold hereafter; we may be compelled to forego the joy of suffering, but blessed be ye of lesser burden and greater opportunity"; such is the method of the priest.

The ascetics even themselves, Mr. Allen points out, are "faddling hedonists." Their philosophy summed up is, that it *pays* to suffer here, because we will be repaid in another life. "The ascetic who teaches us to despise happiness and exalt self-sacrifice has no other reason to give us for the asceticism he practises than the hedonist reason that, in his opinion, it will result in a surplus of pleasure. And his opinion is mistaken; that is all the difference." Once get rid of the notion that this senseless suffering *does* pay, once show that the foundation on which it rests is false, and the ascetic creed collapses. If self-renunciation here will *not* mean happiness hereafter, the whole logic of asceticism is gone. And science has destroyed the false foundations of religion; no man of sense to-day, as Mr. Andrew Lang has said, believes in a

malignant deity to whom pain and suffering are worship, and who desires nothing better than that man should forever crawl about in fear and trembling and sorrow. Some religionists certainly act as if they did believe these things; but if they really seriously put it to themselves, they would recognise the folly of their pseudo-belief.

In condemning and combating the religious folly of the sacredness of sacrifice, the Secularist, of course, does not condemn or reprobate human generosity. That is a different thing altogether. No one withholds admiration from a man who gives up something so that a weaker brother may be helped; no one—least of all the Secularist—would deny the nobility of the fireman, or the surgeon, or the captain who risks his life to save the lives of others. That is a form of sacrifice which will live and excite enthusiasm as long as the human race endures. What is attacked is the religious idea of "sacrifice," the crushing of self, as *per se* a noble ideal. Says Mr. Grant Allen, and we quote the passage in full, as it puts the case so thoroughly: "If we all sacrificed ourselves habitually and always, the world would be so much the more wretched in consequence; if we all developed ourselves to the utmost of our ability, the world would be so much the richer and happier. Universal self-sacrifice is a meaningless conception. If one person sacrifices himself or herself for the sake of another, it is in order to make that other the happier. And if the other too lightly accepts the sacrifice, there is wrong and injustice. Most often, indeed, we feel called upon to sacrifice ourselves through some act of selfishness or wrong-doing on the part of our neighbours. Sacrifice is then, in itself, by no means a good thing; at best it is but a *pis aller*. It is forced upon us as a bad necessity by untoward circumstances. If others could be as happy without the need for our sacrificing ourselves, we should all be gainers. But Christianity has so exalted the false ideal of self-sacrifice as in itself a good thing that most people are genuinely shocked to hear it even called in question."

There is one particular natural function which asceticism has never ceased to degrade and put under a ban—the sexual function; and Mr. Allen does not shrink from tackling this matter and showing that it is asceticism which is unnatural and degraded, not the natural instinct which asceticism would label "filthy." After pointing out that Christianity really borrowed its ascetic creed from the religions that preceded it, and "incorporated into itself the common feelings and opinions of the stage of civilisation in which it originated," Mr. Grant Allen proceeds: "From beginning to end there is no feeling of our nature against which asceticism has made so dead a set as the sexual instinct. It has spoken of it always as one of 'the lower pleasures'; it has treated it as something to be despised, repressed, vilified, slighted. It has regarded it as a function to be ashamed of, a faculty allied to all things gross and coarse and evil—a mark, as it were, of our 'fallen' condition. I maintain, on the contrary, that every thing high and ennobling in our nature springs directly out of the sexual instinct. Its alliance is wholly with whatever is purest and most beautiful within us. To it we owe our love of bright colors, graceful form, melodious sound, rhythmical motion. To it we owe the evolution of music, of poetry, of romance, of *belles lettres*; the evolution of painting, of sculpture, of decorative art, of dramatic entertainment. To it we owe the entire existence of our æsthetic sense, which is, in the last resort, a secondary sexual attribute. From it springs the love of beauty; around it all beautiful arts still circle as their centre. Its subtle aroma pervades all literature. And to it too we owe the paternal, maternal, and marital relations; the growth of the affections, the love of little pattering feet and baby laughter; the home with all the associations that cluster around it; in one word, the heart and all that is best in it."

We have quoted at considerable length these passages which are among the most virile and supple that have ever come from Mr. Grant Allen's pen. Yet there is one other short passage which, if only for its literary charm, cannot be allowed to escape. Says our author: "If we were to take away from the country the music conferred upon it by the sense of sex, we should have taken away every vocal charm it possesses, save the murmur of the brooks and the whispering of the breeze through the leaves at evening. No thrush, no linnæus, no blackbird would be left us; no rattle of the nightjar over the twilight fields; no

chirp of insect, no chatter of tree-frog, no cry of cuckoo from the leafy covert. The whip-poor-will and the bobolink would be mute as the serpent. Every beautiful voice in wild nature, from the mocking-bird to the cicala, is in essence a love-call; and without such love-calls the music of the fields would be mute, the forest would be silent."

This passage, so nimble, so picturesque, so fine in phrasing, perhaps shows Mr. Allen at his best. Mr. Grant Allen is a voluminous writer, and like many voluminous writers he occasionally contradicts—or, at least, seems to contradict—himself. We do not forget a little poem, the theology, or seeming theology, of which Mr. Allen was at considerable pains to explain, and which seemed to set up self-sacrifice as the highest ideal of life. Perhaps we must not probe poetry too deeply; perhaps Mr. Grant Allen has changed. At any rate, from the essay with which we have been dealing two points stand out in regard to Mr. Allen personally which it is as well to make clear. Firstly, he is not a Christian; there is no haziness about his position. To the common query of the religionist to the Freethinker, "If you take away religion, what will you give us instead?" Mr. Allen says: "They might as well ask, 'If you take away the belief in the good luck of horseshoes,' or 'If you take away from the Fijian his cannibal sacrifices, what will you give him instead of them?' The simple answer is, Nothing. No emancipated man feels the need of aught to replace superstition." Nothing could be plainer, more to the point, than this. Mr. Grant Allen, then, is not a Christian. Secondly, he is in substance, if not in name, a Secularist. The whole philosophy he expounds is the Secularist philosophy under another—perhaps a more *dilletante*—title. In fact, his essay might well be reprinted, if such were necessary, as a Secularist pamphlet.

Mr. Grant Allen considers that the "rules of life which should govern a rational being, in a world of matter and energy, undominated by a malignant supreme being, have been fully elucidated from the philosophical standpoint"; and, therefore, the only thing left to do, he thinks, is to sow the new truths broadcast among the people at large. This, we may remark, is precisely what Secularists have been doing for a considerable time past. Still it is both interesting and gratifying to know that in the work we have the hearty benediction of one of the most accomplished men of letters of the day. FREDERICK RYAN.

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE.

THE Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, is within five minutes' walk of St. George's Hall. Visitors would do well to proceed from that centre by Commutation-street (east side), Islington, to St. Anne-street. Trams pass the door.

Light refreshments will be provided at the Hall for the convenience of visitors who have been travelling from an early hour. The stewards and other officials will wear a pansy in their coat.

Dinner for the delegates at the Victoria Hall, St. John's-lane, opposite the west front of St. George's Hall, at one o'clock.

Friends who desire accommodation reserved for them should write at once to Mr. Henry Hall, 20 Montague-street, Liverpool, treasurer to the branch, setting forth clearly what they require.

It should be noted that the train service to Yorkshire and the North-Eastern district has recently been much accelerated. Liverpool is now reached from Newcastle-on-Tyne in 4½ hours (via York); and from York the journey is accomplished in 2½ hours.

A clergyman, who had not been long in Bolton, had occasion to pay a visit to an outlying farm, and in returning he completely lost his way. Whilst he was endeavoring to find the right road, he met a farmer's boy, who was also bound for Bolton, and who, although extremely astonished at such ignorance, volunteered to show him the way. As they walked along the clergyman asked the boy what his occupation was. The lad told him, and then inquired: "An' whad does ta do, owd mon?" "Oh," replied the clergyman, "it is my duty to show men the way to heaven!" "Eh, gerrout wi' thee," exclaimed the boy, with a knowing wink, "abeawt thees showin' foalks th' way t' eav'n, an' doan't know t' road to Bowton!"

ACID DROPS.

Vanderbilt, the American millionaire, gives enormous sums to religious objects. He is wise in his generation. Men of inordinate wealth should all subscribe largely to Christianity or some other form of "spiritual" bamboozlement. There is nothing like it for keeping the poor contented and millionaires safe.

The Duke of Westminster, a millionaire whose millions consist of "unearned increment," mainly from London property, has the cheek to appeal for £25,000 for the defence of the Welsh Church.

All the Church organs are sounding an alarm over the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. Sacrilege, plunder, robbery of God, and other choice terms are freely used. Instead of uttering this nonsense, they should prepare for the days when a similar measure will be applied to England, and "free trade in religion" be the rule all round.

"General" Evans, of the Gospel Army, Glasgow, had been starring Sarah McCormack as a "Converted Nun" at the Globe Theatre. The man who collected the money deposed that fifty or sixty pounds were drawn weekly, of which Sarah received £1, the rest going to the Gospel Army. She located herself as having been at the Lanark Convent, but, when arrested for wilful imposition, confessed she had never been in the grounds. She was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment, but her "General" got off on the plea that he was deceived:—

Foul and false were the tales she told,
Which for twopence per night "General" Evans sold;
And a mock nun's garb her form arrayed
(Cost by the same kind man defrayed).

A simple public this "nun" bewitched,
Till fifty or sixty pounds enriched
The Gospel Army. To soothe the beguiled
"A free breakfast I'll give," the Commander smiled.

A few more such converts, don't you know,
Free dinners as well he could bestow.
He "wasn't enamored of Sarah," he said;
But at least it appears that Sarah paid.

"General" Evans has written to the *Glasgow Echo* on the case, and his letter is characteristic: "THE CONVERTED NUN. (To the Editor of the *Glasgow Echo*.) SIR,—Your report *re* the case tried in the Eastern Police Court to-day contains none of my statements of defence, particularly that 'there exists a greater fraud than any "converted nun," "converted Nero," or other so-called "converted," viz., the present Christianity, which produces every abomination under the sun, and such impostors as have deceived me as well as others. This is truly a gigantic fraud, in which we all participate—not only the missionary, but the minister, the priest, and the bishop. The Scriptures have been mutilated—the teaching of Jesus entirely ignored. Matt. v., vi., and vii. is being trampled under foot.—I am, etc., S. EVANS.'" Yes, General, the system is at fault, but you seem to have accommodated yourself to it pretty easily.

Mr. Hugh Price Hughes has got another friend—not a Secularist this time, but a Christian Evidence lecturer. This person has been haranguing in the North of England on the Atheist Shoemaker story, and referring to its author as "my friend Mr. Hughes." He also boasts of being in communication with Mr. Holyoake, whom he highly extols. His language, therefore, ought to be superfine. Two such "friends" as Mr. Hughes and Mr. Holyoake ought to make any man a perfect model of urbanity.

Well, here is a specimen. Speaking of the Hall of Science, this person called it "a disgrace to civilisation," and declared that "the scenes enacted therein were of the most blasphemous, disgusting, and abominable character." Now, as a matter of fact, Mr. Holyoake is one of the Directors of the Hall of Science. We leave Mr. Hughes's "friend" to work this problem out at leisure. Meanwhile, we should like to know what Mr. Holyoake thinks of this person's "manners." It is idle to say he has no interest in the matter. He has given this person a letter to read at public meetings against Mr. Foote.

This person seems to be in communication with Mr. Hughes, and to be doing a little lying for him. He says

that Mr. Hughes invited Mr. Gibson, senior, the father of the Atheist Shoemaker, to "call upon him in London, and offered to pay his fare." When? This is a very simple question, and we invite Ananias or his "friend" to answer it, if they can do so in simple language.

Mr. R. D. Holt, the Deputy Lord Mayor, was in the chair when the City Council refused to let the National Secular Society have the use of the Picton Hall on Whit-Sunday. Lord Mayor Bowring, also a Unitarian, was absent, on the occasion of a wedding in his family. The Liverpool Secularists fancy he would not have gone against them. Mr. Holt is *the* delinquent.

Father Ignatius has been thundering at Nottingham. He egged on a meeting of ignorant Christians to pass a resolution that Canon Driver should be expelled from the Church of England for his denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In all probability the heretical Canon is safe enough. The Church monk wields only stage thunder.

Canon Driver's book he described as "diabolical and damnable." His writings would make Infidels. "These blaspheming higher critics said that the Bible was a mixture of pagan fables, learned by the Jews in Babylon, and deliberate frauds, forgeries, and dramatisations. If that was so, the sooner they put the book on the fire the better. If Jesus Christ was wrong and the higher critics were right, then the higher critics ought not to receive money for teaching a religion founded on lies. If the higher critics were right, the Bible Society was a monstrous fraud." These statements were freely punctuated with "cheers."

It happened that the Rev. R. G. Plumtre was present at Father Ignatius's lecture, in the Mechanics' Hall, Nottingham, and he rose to defend the Bishop of Southwell for appointing Canon Driver an examining chaplain. Father Ignatius told him, if he was loyal to the bishop and Canon Driver, he was disloyal to Christianity. This led to a scene of great disorder, and the father excitedly declared that, "if loyalty to Christ is to be surrendered for loyalty to the bishops, let the bishops go to the devil."

The Catholics have got hold of Mr. Benjamin Kidd's idea, and under the presidency of Cardinal Vaughan, his kinsman, the Rev. Father Bernard Vaughan, of the Society of Jesus, has been lecturing on religion "The Potent Factor in Social Evolution." It would be safer to describe it as *The Potent Drug on Progressive Development*.

The *Catholic Citizen* tells of a priest who refused to officiate at a death where the deceased had left a desire to be cremated, and emphasises the fact that the Church prohibits this sanitary method of disposing of the dead as anti-Christian.

"Peter Lombard," writing in the *Church Times* on Medmerham Abbey, where in last century an order of pseudo-monks put up the motto of the Abbey of Theleme, *Fais ce que vouldras*, says that among them was Potter, the son of the Archbishop of Canterbury. "He and another prelate's son, Hoadley, of Winchester, by their shameful pens dragged their fathers' names through the mire, and shocked the whole church."

Two of the men in custody for outrage and murder in the Black Country were arrested suddenly in church on Sunday night, during divine service.

The other Sunday evening, at Hackensack, N.J., Miss Belle Shiels was singing the hymn, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," and had just uttered the words, "Let me to thy bosom fly," when a boy pointed a gun at her, it was discharged, and she flew. Death was instantaneous.

Dear Lord, instead of crushing this young bud,
On whom thy hand hath fallen to destroy,
Oh, why not, with a dull and sickening thud,
Let drop a brick on that blamed idiot boy?

Rev. H. Fulton, of Forsythe County, N.C., attempted to hang himself with a blind-bridle. His wife found him suspended from a beam in his barn. When she cut him down the would-be suicide remonstrated, saying, "In a few moments I would have been in the New Jerusalem."

"Yes," replied the enraged woman, "you would have looked nice in there with a blind-bridle about your neck!"

Earthquakes are among the special signs of our heavenly Father's care. An Athens telegram says that several earthquake shocks occurred again on Sunday and Monday in various parts of Greece. The aspect of some of the regions which have suffered is described as appalling. Villages are lying in ruins, the survivors being destitute even of bread.

Bro. Gardner, President of the Lime Kiln Club, has given up taking stock in Providence. He says: "I used to figger a heap on Providence helpin' me out, but de night I dun left my henhouse doah unlocked, an' went to bed depending on Providence to stand guard, I made sich a mistake dat I haint got ober feelin' mad yit. Doorin' dat dark an' tremulous night, a cull'd pusson jumped my fence an' entered dat henhouse an' removed fo'teen of de nicest chickens in all dis Stait. If Providence was around dar anywhar, she probably helped put dem chickens in de bag."

All the bishops work harder than working men, and spend more than they get. Yet somehow they contrive to leave a tidy sum for their descendants. The will of the Right Rev. Dr. Edward Trollope, Bishop of Nottingham, leaves personally of the value of £50,790, and this does not exceed the average. Nothing under a million is likely to hinder a bishop from crawling into the kingdom of heaven.

Bishop Moorhouse's predecessor at Manchester, Dr. Fraser, left £85,000, and a like sum was left by C. Wordsworth, of Lincoln. Auckland, Bishop of Bath and Wells, left £120,000, and Baring, Bishop of Durham, £120,000; while Monk, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, accumulated no less than £140,000. How attentive they must have been to their Master's injunctions to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Cardinal Vaughan has issued a circular containing resolutions passed by the Bishops of the Province of Westminster. One runs thus: "That Catholic parents cannot in conscience accept or approve for their children a system of religious education based upon private interpretations of the Bible given by school teachers, whether trained in religious knowledge or untrained." They want the ratepayers to support denominational schools, and the men of God to run them.

It is amusing to see the Ritualist *Church Times* calling on the London School-teachers to show "loyalty to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ" What they mean is, to be subservient instruments of the Church. This will not last for ever. The better portion of the teachers already question if Jesus Christ desires them to embue infant minds with all the nonsense of the Pentateuch.

According to the published returns for 1893, the average salary for school teachers in Church schools is but £73 5s. 2d., while in Board schools it reaches £104 0s. 3d. The disparity is even more pronounced in the case of school-mistresses, the average in Church schools being £50 9s. 4d., and in Board schools £81 2s. 3d. A Church teacher is also often expected to teach in Sunday school, act as organist, or otherwise become the factotum of the parson.

By the French law, Church accounts have to be audited by the local prefects. While the Church continues to take State pay there is nothing unfair in such an arrangement; but the bishops resent it as a violation of Church right. The Archbishop of Lyons has gone the length of counselling his clergy to ignore the law; whereupon his own stipend has been stopped, a proceeding which will induce submission if anything will.

Mr. James Branch, L.C.C., has been giving a representative of the *Weekly Dispatch* an account of the P. S. A., or Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement, in London. The Secular element seems much brought in. We are told that services are made attractive by music, a band, and solo-singers; there is a labor bureau and a steady consideration of political questions. A register of attendance is kept and prizes given. Where help is needed in a pecuniary sense it is forthcoming. Altogether the P. S. A., under Mr. Branch, does not seem to rely much on the arm of the Lord.

The Rev. E. J. Saxton, of the Congregational Church, Barnsley, is another of those ministers who have given up the brimstone and retain the treacle of Christianity. Lecturing on "Eternal Punishment," he declared he cherished the larger hope that the punishment of hell (whatever that might be) would ultimately bring salvation to all. Does he forget that Jesus places "everlasting punishment" side by side with eternal life, and that the larger hope has been forced on ministers by "infidelity," in opposition to the standards of the Churches? We should appreciate these liberal ministers more if they were ready to frankly confess their entire ignorance upon the subject. But that is not the ministerial attitude.

One of the Mohammedans who was at the Parliament of Religions has gone back and written a pamphlet concerning what he saw and heard in Christian America. He says that three hundred negroes were lynched there last year; that infanticide, prostitution, drunkenness, and crimes, almost unknown to Moslems, abound; and that the officials in large cities get rich by permitting immorality and blackmailing unfortunates. He says that the Christianity preached is totally unlike what was taught by Jesus. A letter from Beyrout, Syria, says the pamphlet is being extensively circulated in Syria, and is well calculated to deter the followers of the religion of the crescent from joining the religion of the cross.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle acrobat says: "There will be no door-knob on the inside of our family sepulchre, for we cannot come out of ourselves; but there is a door-knob on the outside, and that Jesus shall lay hold of, and, opening, will say, 'Good-morning! You have slept long enough! Arise! Arise!' And then what flutter of wings." What a nice little task for Jesus Christ to open the door-knobs of all the tombs; and then fancy Talmage resurrected with fluttering wings outstretched like a sea-gull starting skyward. 'Tis a pretty picture, and the funny thing is that an artist sketched it three or four years ago for the *Freethinker*.

In the *Popular Science Monthly* Dr. A. D. White gives illustrations of "Theological Teachings regarding the Animals and Man." He first cites St. Augustine as saying, "Nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of Scripture, since greater is that authority than all the powers of the human mind." At the Reformation, he says, "the vast authority of Luther was thrown in favor of the literal acceptance of Scripture as the source of natural science." He cites the great reformer as saying, "I hold that the animals took their being at once upon the Word of God, as did also the fishes in the sea." Calvin explicitly insists that all species of animals were created in six days, each made up of an evening and a morning, and that no new species has ever appeared since. As to difficulties in the Scriptural account of creation, Calvin tells us that God "wished by these to give proofs of his power, which should fill us with astonishment."

Dr. White, after citing other theologians, continues: "So literal was this whole conception of the work of creation that in these days it can scarcely be imagined. The Almighty was represented in theological literature, in the illustrations of Bibles, and in works of art generally, as a sort of enlarged and venerable Nuremberg toy-maker—a pictorial representation in accordance with the well-known sacred account. Showing the Creator in the act of sewing skins of beasts into coats for Adam and Eve, presented no difficulties to the docile minds of the Middle Ages and Reformation period; hence it was that, when the discovery of fossils began to provoke thought, they were declared to be 'models of his works approved or rejected by the great Artificer, outlines of future creations, sports of Nature,' or 'objects placed in the strata to bring to naught human curiosity.'"

In our own time Mr. Gosse, the naturalist, in his anxiety to save the authority of Scripture, suggested that Jahveh tilted and twisted the strata, scattered the fossils through them, scratched the glacial furrows and marks of erosion by water, and set Niagara pouring all in an instant, thus mystifying the geologists "for some inscrutable purpose, but for His own glory."

The beginnings of right notions came from another quarter than Christianity. Dr. White says: "Here and there, among men who were free from Church control, we have work of a

better sort. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Abd Allatif made observations upon the natural history of Egypt which showed a truly scientific spirit; and the Emperor Frederic II. attempted to promote a more fruitful study of Nature; but one of these men was abhorred as a Mussulman, and the other as an infidel."

Emile Zola, interviewed about his new novel, *Lourdes*, which is now appearing in *Gil Blas*, said it originated in the accident of his visiting the locality of the pilgrimages. It illustrates "the instinctive hankering after the lie which creates human credulity." He said: "Lourdes, the grotto, the cures, the miracles, are the creation of that need of the lie, that necessity for credulity, which is a characteristic of human nature. At first, when little Bernadette came with her strange story of what she had witnessed, everybody was against her. The Prefect of the Department, the bishop, the clergy, objected to her story. Lourdes grew up in spite of all opposition, just as the Christian religion did, because suffering humanity in its despair must cling to something, must have some hope; and, on the other hand, because humanity thirsts after illusions. It is the story of the Christ. It is the story of the foundation of all religions."

The less-educated inhabitants of Florence have been complaining of a severe drought and prolonged absence of rain, which they ascribed to the incantations of the Indian servants attached to the person of Queen Victoria, who naturally desired that their imperial mistress should experience the amount of sunshine for the enjoyment of which she is proverbial. It was useless to argue with the Italians on the matter, and henceforth it will be still more useless, for on the very morning of Her Majesty's departure from the flower-town the rain came down in torrents, and has continued so to do at intervals ever since.

The brewer who endows churches must have some return for his money. They have just found this out at Warrington, where the poor rector, speaking at a prison-gate mission meeting, has vainly endeavored to steer a clear course between the endowments of drink and the human wreckage for which it is responsible. The rector claimed the authority of the Bible for the pastime of "liquoring up." Why stop at alcohol? There are few vices for which an earnest partisan cannot find some sort of encouragement in the Bible, if he be so minded.—*Star*.

The *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis, is an infidel organ, and worst of all it is edited by a woman, Mrs. Monroe Power, daughter of Dr. J. R. Monroe, its founder. This was too much for some bigots in the place, who in the night entered the office through the cellar, and, after turning on the natural gas in two stoves, lighted a lamp. The pipes were removed from the stoves in order to prevent the gas from escaping through the flues, and the doors and windows were carefully closed and locked. The men even took the precaution to close a transom which had been left open about two inches. The persons in the plot then left the building, closing and locking all the doors behind them. The expected explosion was prevented, however, by the arrival of the editor of the paper, who discovered the condition of affairs, and opened the doors and turned out the gas. The paper is bold in its denunciation of all forms of the Christian religion, and it is believed that the attempt to blow it up was made because of its editorial policy.

There are two indictments against C. C. Moore, editor and publisher of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky—one for "blasphemy," the other for nuisance. The indictment for blasphemy is founded on the words: "I say that Jesus Christ was a man exactly like I am, and had a father and mother exactly like I had." The charge of nuisance is said to be secondary. We wonder they have not instituted a third charge for misusing the word "like." His trial is to come off in July. If the Kentucky eagle swoops down on such a case of blasphemy as this, it will render itself ridiculous all over the world.

Atheists are always committing suicide. Talmage says so, and everybody knows it. Here is a case in point:—Christian Wynne Hughes-Games, aged twenty-four, a surgeon, and brother of the vicar of Birling, committed suicide by taking morphia at Seaford. "I throw myself on God's mercy," he said. An evident Atheist, this!

Jeremiah Hacker, an aged American materialist, has written his "last song." Here is a specimen stanza:—

What God said to Moses,
What God said to Josh,
What God said to Aaron
Is nothing but bosh.
If God talked to men then,
He would talk to them now;
To have them do right
He'd be telling them how.

Jeremiah has passed his ninety-first birthday. When you reach that age you may do that sort of thing, but younger poets will probably do well to keep their verses locked up until then.

A correspondent of the *Daily News* says that the engagement of the Queen's granddaughter to the future Russian Emperor ought to be made the occasion of modifying the Athanasian Creed. The bride of the Cesarewitch must become a member of the Greek Church, and it is rather hard upon the Queen to be bound, as head of the English Church, to maintain that her granddaughter shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly.

This advertisement, from a Manchester paper, is admirable in its frankness: "Holiness meetings, Star Hall, Ancoats. To-day at three and eight. 'I will.....purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin' (Isaiah i. 25)."

The Newcastle Watch Committee, at the instigation of the Lord's Day Observance Society, is apparently contemplating a raid upon the poor devils who turn an honest penny by ministering to public wants on Sunday. We are happy to see that the local Secularists are well to the front in anticipating this ridiculous tyranny. They have convened a public meeting, which was presided over by Mr. Bartram, and formed an acting committee, of which Mr. Joseph Brown is secretary.

The Masters in Lunacy have been enquiring into the vagaries of the Rev. Augustus Francis Tollemache. This man of God had a penchant for whistling, even in church; but then, God's holy Jews blow the horn there on some solemn occasions. When the bishop came he held aloft an umbrella and a ring towards him, as he said, to keep off the Evil One. But no genuine believer in the New Testament can deny that even the bishop might be possessed by the Evil One. Altogether the man of God seemed to be afflicted with too much religion, and that is madness indeed.

She was the daughter of a preacher who didn't approve of dancing, and she had been to a dance the night previous, much to the old gentleman's dissatisfaction. "Good morning, child of the Devil," he said. "Good morning, father," pleasantly responded the daughter. The old gentleman is not half so sarcastic as he formerly was.

INFIDEL AND CHRISTIAN SLAUGHTER.

THE Terror itself, which has occupied a space in men's minds so entirely out of proportion alike with its actual destructiveness and its latent political significance, was leniency and order compared with the methods by which Christianity had propagated itself in the hands of the Inquisition, of Alva, of the English Protestants in Ireland, of the dragoons of Louis XIV. Men have vented bitter sarcasms on the dissemination of Liberty and Fraternity, by the guillotine, and have laughed at the missionary cry of "Sois mon frère, ou je te tue." Would it be so much less difficult for some Burke of the other side to paint Religion stalking over Europe, with words of charity and blessing and brotherly love on her lips, with the cord and the knife and the torch in her hands, with her feet crimson and wet with the blood of slaughtered confessors?

Once more, let us be just. Crimes, as Burke has taught us, are the acts of individuals, and not of denominations of men. The Revolution had fierce and anarchic sons, but then it found ferocity and anarchy.—*John Morley's "Edmund Burke: an Historical Study"; 1867; p. 288.*

Sunday-school Teacher—"What are the heathens?"
Bright Boy—"Heathens are people wot don't quarrel over religion."

SPECIAL.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed in future to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

May 13, N.S.S. Conference, Liverpool; 20, Plymouth.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—May 6, Glasgow; 7, 8, 9, debate at Glasgow; 13, N.S.S. Conference, Liverpool; 17 and 18, debate at Dundee; 20 and 27, Hall of Science, London; 30 and 31, debate at South Shields. June 3, South Shields; 4, West Auckland; 10, Sheffield; 17 and 24, Hall of Science. July 1, Liverpool; 8, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.
- IN consequence of Mr. Foote's illness and absence from town, several correspondents remain unanswered.
- G. JACOB.—Of course it does not follow that because a forged reference to Christ was inserted in Josephus that therefore he did not designedly omit all reference to him. But what would be the most probable conclusion from his silence?
- JOSEPH BROWN.—See paragraph. Shall be glad to hear farther if the Watch Committee takes action.
- V. PAGE.—At your convenience. Don't hurry. If the Christians at Nelson are in love with such a champion, we can only pity them. Calumny is an old weapon, and it is always used against the truth.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Mr. Foote will be at the Oddfellows' Hall soon after half-past nine. Mr. Ridgway had better see him in the ante-room before the morning sitting.
- L. SMALL.—Thanks.
- S. FALKINDER.—It shows thought, but has no special merit as a composition. The subject is hackneyed. Why not attempt a fresher vein?
- W. SANDERS.—Pleased to hear from one whom we have aided in his emancipation. The subject you refer to is dealt with in Mr. Foote's *Rome or Atheism*? No doubt the ultimate battle will be between Freethought and the Romish Church. That Church does not deny its responsibility for the Inquisition. Its most brilliant modern champion, Joseph Le Maistre, merely argues that the tortures of the Inquisition were common at that time to the jurisprudence of Europe.
- H. NICHOLSON.—The reptiles shall be dealt with one at a time. Some of our friends lack patience. We have plenty. We once waited twelve months for a door to open. It was a dear but a life-long lesson. We bide our time. When it comes we shall act. Meanwhile, as you have our pamphlet, why not write a correction to the local paper yourself?
- T. NESBIT.—Thanks for cuttings.
- J. B.—William Cobbett's *Legacy to Parsons* is convincing. The Church of England is a creation of Parliament and the Crown, in doctrine, ritual, and revenue.
- L. N.—Simply tell the pious woman that her solicitations annoy you and must be discontinued. If she persists in them, walk away and leave her talking to the air.
- W. H. sends us an old number of the *Methodist Times*, in which Mr. Hughes says: "We confess that we share John Wesley's love of plain and strong words. All students of the Bible inevitably catch the Biblical habit of calling a spade a spade."
- H. W. JONES.—The notice of motion by the Blackburn Branch comes too late, the agenda being already printed. Our very existence as an aggressive party is a challenge to Christians. Hope to see you at Liverpool.
- R. O. SMITH.—Your post-card announcing collection at the Gladstone Club, Bermondsey, does not state the amount.
- H. ROBERTS.—Buddha and Confucius both lived five hundred years before Christ. The Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the Chinese *Shoo King*, and the Hindu *Rig Veda* are more ancient than the Old Testament.
- A. J. H.—Thanks. See paragraphs.
- J. NORTHCOTE.—The yearly mortality from snakes and wild beasts in India is computed at over 74,000.
- MR. S. STANDRING reports that "The two Freethought Saturday afternoon pilgrimages to the British Museum (Assyrian and Babylonian rooms) have been so successful that several friends have asked for a continuation of the visits. I will, therefore, organise a series of pilgrimages immediately after Whitsuntide."
- "TUNDRIDGE WELLS," who inquired through the *Freethinker*, a short time ago, about Freethinkers in Tunbridge Wells, is invited to communicate with Miss Vance. There is a possibility of forming a Branch.
- T. P.—Papers are always welcome.

- A. J. MARRIOTT.—The point is noticed in the chapter on Peter in Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes*.
- D. F. GLOAK.—Delighted to hear of Mr. Watts's success at Dundee; also of your general progress. Will you be represented at the Conference? We hope so.
- H. THATCHER.—Your letter and cutting have been sent on to Mr. Foote, who will probably deal with the matter next week.
- W. MANN.—The *Academy* from which the extract was taken is not by us. It must have been a week or two before the date of the *Freethinker*, perhaps even three. The extract was from a review signed by A. W. Benn.
- LECTURE NOTICES, reports, and letters that can be dealt with by the sub-editor should be marked outside.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. Forder.
- 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—Liver—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Post—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Pioneer—Twentieth Century—Independent Pulpit—Islamic World—Barnsley Chronicle—Consett Guardian—Watts's Literary Guide Supplement—Inquirer—Christian Life—Schoolmaster—Brixtonian—Freethinker's Magazine—Lucifer—Wiltshire Times—South Shields Free Press—Southend Standard—Rad—British and Colonial Printer and Stationer—Humanitarian—Glasgow Observer—Liverpool Courier—Isle of Man Times—Kentish Express—El Diluvio—Nottingham Daily Press—Methodist Times.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—(Narrow Column) one inch, 3s.; half column, 15s.; column, £1 10s. Broad Column—one inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. 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.
- 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.

EDITORIAL.

SOME of my correspondents are a little too exacting. Perhaps I did not make it quite clear that I have been really ill. It is impossible for me to attend to all my ordinary business at present. I have not the energy for it. I am trying to get well, but the process is slower than I expected. This is a fact that warns me I must be careful. During the whole of the coming summer—at least I *hope* it will come—I shall probably have to minimise work and take as much holiday as possible. Platform work, at any rate, *must* be minimised. All the same, I shall be at the Conference on Whit-Sunday, though I hardly expect now to be in "perfect health and strength" on that occasion. I used the word too rashly. Still, I hope to be able to get through the day's labors without any serious injury; and when they are over I shall try the air on the Isle of Man, which I found to agree so well with me when I fought the "Battle of Douglas Head."

At the present moment, next to my complete restoration to validity, the dearest wish of my heart is for a successful Conference at Liverpool. I hope to face from the chair on Whit-Sunday morning a large and representative gathering of Freethinkers from all parts of the United Kingdom.

G. W. FOOTE.

FUND FOR NAILING DOWN THE "ATHEIST SHOEMAKER" LIE.

South Africa.—R. W. B., 5s.; Mrs. R. W. B., 2s. 6d.; J. K., 2s. 6d.; W. R., 5s.—J. O. (Oolne), 2s.; C. Thomas, 5s.; F. Dyson, 2s.

SUGAR PLUMS.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place at Liverpool on Whit-Sunday, and we hope it will be as fine as any that has ever assembled. Branches all over the country should be making, if they have not already made, arrangements to be represented. Individual members should also attend if possible. We should let the enemy, and the world in general, see that the spirit of Charles Bradlaugh lives on in the party he led to so many victories. Those who think its work is done are mistaken. It has battles yet to fight, and perhaps to face many serious dangers. Every soldier of Freethought should rally to the flag.

Delegates and members going from London to the Conference, and wishing to travel with their fellow members, should communicate with Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, E. C., who will be pleased to give information as to train, etc. The address of the Liverpool secretary, Mr. C. Døeg, is 9 Cromwell-terrace, Garden-lane.

We are pleased to hear of the marked success of the Dundee Branch of the N.S.S. On Sunday last Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times to splendid and most enthusiastic audiences. In the morning four hundred persons were present, in the afternoon five hundred, and in the evening over six hundred assembled. These were the first Sunday lectures that the Secularists have had in Dundee for many years, and they are all delighted with the result. Mr. Watts, we are informed, was in his best form, and received quite an ovation at each meeting. Parties of two, five, and ten arrived in the morning from distances of ten and twenty-five miles, and remained the whole day. Ten new members joined the branch after the evening lecture.

Between the afternoon and evening lectures a "festival" was held, when eighty-two friends sat down to tea. After the repast an hour and a half were spent in singing and reciting. Mr. Watts also gave a brief address.

To-day, Sunday, May 6, Mr. Watts lectures three times in Glasgow, where he also debates to-morrow and the two following evenings with Dr. Jamieson upon the questions of "The Existence of God" and "Has Man a Soul?"

The *Freethinker's Magazine* for April has, as frontispiece, a portrait of Mr. Charles Watts, and a paper by him on "The Philosophy of Secularism." There is also a portrait of the late Abraham Schell. Mr. Robert C. Adams, President of the Canadian Secular Union, sends an able "Open Letter to the Rev. B. Fay Mills," in which he challenges the repetition of the fictions about the death-beds of Voltaire and Paine, and asks him to discuss "which principles will better promote human welfare: those of evangelical Christianity or those of Naturalism?"

The *South Shields Free Press* has very fairly printed a *résumé* of Mr. Foote's pamphlet on Mr. Hughes and the Atheist Shoemaker, supplied to it by "Freethinker." Our friends who, noticing mistakes or misstatements in the local press, thus supply the antidote, do us a real service.

A useful leaflet on "Religion in Board Schools" is issued with *Watts's Literary Guide*. It is written from the advanced teacher's standpoint by Mirabeau Brown.

The school teachers' requisition, asking their withdrawal from giving religious instruction, has been already signed by several thousands. Strong efforts have been made to represent the Board circular as harmless, but the disposition of Riley, Coxhead, and Co. to impose tests has been too clearly shown.

In a letter to the *Sydney Bulletin* a native thus discourses of the "godless system": "Appropos Secular Education and Bishop Dunn; the province of Westralia, in which I was reared, is the only one where denominational instruction is given in schools. All denominations were, in my day, assisted by the State, and the result is a continual war between the sects. In my younger days I looked upon the boys and girls of other denominations as heretics and infidels, and hated them because they were doomed to hell fire. My religion affirmed this, and I knew no better. I have since cursed, with a bitter curse, those who taught me such a

doctrine. Look at the harmony existing between children of all denominations attending our State schools, and compare the schools where priestcraft is prominent. The State that is blessed with free and compulsory education is the State where enlightenment and liberal ideas prevail; but the State that tolerates religious instruction is the place where bigotry, prejudice, and rank conservatism are rife."

That the Welsh Church Disestablishment Bill should be read for the first time on the day of the Jubilee of the "Society for the Liberation of the Church from State Control" shows that the world does move, although the motion is rather slow.

At one time, and not long since, the Baptists were accepted as most rigid believers and disciplinarians. But, judging from the appearance of Mr. Moncre Conway yesterday, as a lecturer on and a vindicator of Thomas Paine (the author of "The Age of Reason") in Dr. Clifford's chapel in Westbourne-park, Nonconformity is undergoing a remarkable change. "Tom Paine," who has been held up to obloquy and execration for a century, like some other historic characters, has a chance of enjoying, some time during the coming century, a picturesque apotheosis.—*Echo*, April 30th.

On Sunday last two lectures were delivered on quite new ground—Boreham Wood, Herts. Thanks to the energy of a few friends in the village, very large crowds assembled and heartily cheered the lecturers, who were Mr. Forder in the morning, and Mr. Ramsey in the afternoon. Special thanks are due to Mr. Schofield, of Finchley, who drove the lecturers over from High Barnet on both occasions.

Mr. C. Cohen will give a course of Tuesday evening lectures at Battersea Park Gates during the outdoor season, commencing on May 8, at 7 p.m. Friends in south-west London are earnestly requested to help make these lectures a success.

The *Freidenker*, of Milwaukee, opens with a story by the popular German writer, Bertha v. Suttner, entitled "Gott Verziehe Ihr." Frau von Suttner is a decided Freethinker, and shows herself so in one of her earliest books, entitled *Inventory of a Soul*. Her book, *Down with Weapons*, is one of the most popular works that has come from an Austrian of late years, and is a powerful indictment of warfare and the war spirit.

J. K. Sykes, who keeps progressive movements to the fore in Southend, has a letter in the local *Standard* on "Tom Payne."

Mr. Edmund Gosse has a rather cold article on Walt Whitman in the *New Review*. He calls him a maker of poems in solution, and says: "I am inclined to admit that in Walt Whitman we have just missed receiving from the New World one of the greatest of modern poets; but that we have missed it must at the same time be acknowledged."

In the *Humanitarian* Dr. Norman Kerr recommends amended legislation for habitual drunkards. Mr. W. H. Wilkins writes on "Anarchists and the Rights of Asylum," also pleading for repressive legislation. The editress, Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin, writes on her libel case against the British Museum. She says "it is far from my wise to assume a judicial attitude," and she certainly succeeds.

We are requested to announce that Mr. J. J. Earl, of 11 Ash-street, Deacon-street, Walworth, is the new secretary of the Lambeth Branch. Local Freethinkers intending to join the branch should communicate with him.

Our friend, the eminent Spanish Freethinker, Adolfo de Maglia y Galbis, went with the Spanish pilgrims to Rome. He describes in the columns of *El Diluvio* the actual condition of "the poor prisoner of the Vatican." He found him in a magnificent palace, surrounded with every grandeur, luxury, and artistic delight, with a huge retinue of servants, and very unlike the picture of humility, modesty, and poverty represented in Spain by the preachers of Peter's Pence. The number of the journal in which he gives his description has had a wide circulation.

Sunday afternoon lectures will be held in Regent's Park. Freethinkers are requested to support the speakers.

ST. ANTHONY.

In the Palazzo Borghese there is a celebrated painting, by Paul Veronese, of St. Anthony standing at the water side preaching to the fishes. In the Italian *Life of St. Anthony* the biographer gives the following account of the preaching to the fishes, together with a report of the sermon itself: "When the heretics would not regard his preaching, he betook himself to the sea-shore, where the river Marcechia disembogues itself into the Tiber. He here called the fish together, in the name of God, that they might hear his holy word. The fish came swimming towards him in such vast shoals, both from the sea and from the river, that the surface of the water was quite covered with their multitudes. They quickly ranged themselves, according to their several species, into a very beautiful congregation, and, like so many rational creatures, presented themselves before him to hear the Word of God. St. Antonio was so struck with the miraculous obedience and submission of these poor animals that he found a secret sweetness distilled upon his soul, and at last addressed himself to them in the following words: 'Although the infinite power and providence of God, my dearly beloved fish, discovers itself in all the works of his creation, as in the heavens, in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, in this lower world, in man, and in other perfect creatures; nevertheless the goodness of the Divine Majesty shines out in you more eminently, and appears after a more particular manner than in any other created beings. For, notwithstanding, you are comprehended under the name of *reptiles*, partaking of a middle nature between stones and beasts, and imprisoned in the deep abyss of waters; notwithstanding you are tossed among billows, thrown up and down by tempests, deaf to hearing, dumb to speech, and terrible to behold; notwithstanding, I say, these natural disadvantages, the divine greatness shows itself in you after a very wonderful manner. In you are seen the mighty mysteries of an infinite goodness. The holy scripture has always made use of you as the types and shadows of some profound sacrament.

"Do you think that, without a mystery, the first present that God Almighty made to man was of you, O ye fishes? Do you think that, without a mystery, among all creatures and animals which were appointed for sacrifices, you only were excepted, O ye fishes? Do you think there was nothing meant by our Savior, Christ, that, next to the paschal lamb, he took so much pleasure in the food of you, O ye fishes? Do you think it was by mere chance that, when the Redeemer of the world was to pay a tribute to Caesar, he thought fit to find it in the mouth of a fish? These are all so many mysteries and sacraments that oblige you in a more particular manner to the praises of your Creator.....

"All this, as I have already told you, ought to inspire you with gratitude and praise towards the Divine Majesty that has done so great things for you, granted you such particular graces and privileges, and heaped upon you so many distinguishing favors. And since for all this you cannot employ your tongues in the praises of your Benefactor, and are not provided with words to express your gratitude, make at least some sign of reverence; bow yourselves at his name, give some show of gratitude, according to the best of your capacities; express your thanks in the most becoming manner that you are able, and be not unmindful of all the benefits he has bestowed upon you.'

"He had no sooner done speaking, but, behold, a miracle! The fish, as though they had been imbued with reason, bowed down their heads with all the marks of a profound humility and devotion, moving their bodies up and down with a kind of fondness, as approving what had been spoken by the blessed father, St. Antonio. After many heretics, who were present at the miracle, had been converted by it, the saint gave his benediction to the fish and dismissed them."

I daresay St. Anthony was very sorry to see his congregation breaking up without a collection; if the worthy saint gained nothing but "many heretics" after the sermon, his successors have made a pretty good thing out of both it and him; if you chance to be in the neighbourhood of the church on the saint's day, you will see a priest standing in front of the edifice, in his robes, with a bucket of holy water beside him and a mop (which he dignifies by the name of *aspergillum*) in his hand. The animals, horses, oxen, sheep, goats, mules, etc., decorated with bits of colored ribbon and other finery, march past in single file, the padre giving each one a spirt from the mop, while he keeps muttering, "By the intercession of the blessed St. Anthony these animals are delivered from evil in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." Of course a fee is paid for each animal blessed; and a good day's "innings" it must be for the Church, if one may judge from the heated condition of the blessed padre as he stands there hard at work, the perspiration streaming down his fat and cunning-looking face, while he keeps shaking his mop at the donkey of the laborer, the handsome horses of the bourgeois, or the chargers of a cavalry regiment; for without the padre's blessing no horse or mule would carry its rider safely.

Protestants, straighten your Presbyterian upper lips,

compose your Methodist Hugh Price Hughes countenances, nor let a sound escape your Episcopal vocal organs until you have freed your own minds from as gross superstitions and absurdities as the foregoing. While you believe that Peter found the piece of silver in the fishes' mouth, that a whale swallowed Jonah and gave him three days' and nights' lodgings gratis, in spite of the fact that it is anatomically impossible for a whale to swallow a man without making mince-meat of him, and that it is physiologically impossible for a man to live seventy-two hours in the belly of a fish or anywhere else without air; while you are ass enough to believe that a donkey gave free advice to its rider, in talking snakes, and speaking pigeons, don't laugh at the ignorant, simple-minded Catholics. They have been taught to believe, and not to think. So have you. If they reasoned, they could not believe; neither could you. It is time enough for you to sneer at the credulous children of the Scarlet Lady when you join the ranks of Freethought, whose soldiers laugh at both of you.

JOHN SAMUEL.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. H. S. SALT AND THE "HUMANITARIAN."
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Since it appears from the notices which you publish from time to time of the Humanitarian League that many of your readers are interested in its movements, will you allow me to draw their attention to the announcement which has just been made (and which may otherwise escape their notice), that Mr. H. S. Salt, its Hon. Sec., has disowned any connection with the publication known as the *Humanitarian*. This publication, which is under the direction of Mrs. Woodhull Martin, printed matter in its last month's issue which is anything but appropriate for a *humanitarian* journal to circulate. Written by Dr. Lauder Brunton, in a paper on "The Progress of Pharmacy," the passage is as follows:—"Rich fields of new investigation, rich harvests of practical usefulness in relieving disease and in prolonging life, are rapidly opening out; but how are these to be utilised? In Germany pharmacological institutes connected with the different universities are fully equipped, and the salaries of professors and assistants are paid by the State. These institutions contain departments for the chemical investigation of crude substances, of isolated alkaloids, or of manufactured products, and also for the experimental investigation of the physiological action of these substances." Surely this is strange *humanitarianism*; and, by the way, was it not the famous Dr. Wilks, himself a vivisector, who—in an address delivered to the members of the Midland Medical Society—said, "Those who are the most esteemed cultivators of this branch of medicine believe that the method is, first, to observe the action of a drug on a healthy animal, or a man, and then make the result applicable to pathological states; and they thus raise pharmacology to a branch of science. For my own part, although not denying it, I have been reluctant to hold this view in its entirety, because the method has seemed to me to have often failed when put into practice, and so brought discredit upon the therapeutic art....." (italics mine)? Will you have the kindness to lend me your valuable assistance in making the foregoing particulars known?

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

OBITUARY.

On Saturday, April 28th, the remains of Mr. Fred Lewis, of the Islington Branch, were interred with Secular rites in Highgate Cemetery. The deceased member was one of the first to join the branch. His end was sad and sudden. He was found drowned in the dock at Poplar, where he worked; and it is assumed he walked into the water on the Sunday night previously, in the dusk, his sight being bad. Mr. Guest, secretary of the branch, read the burial service.

TAX THE CHURCHES.

Is it not a burlesque on common sense, in view of daily observation, to exempt church property from taxation, or to extend to its owners special privileges because of alleged moral influence in the interests of the State? If the church exerts such wondrous allurements in behalf of public virtue, why does it not show itself in the statistics of crime? Why do church members, and persons educated in Sunday-schools, constitute a majority of criminals? And why does the gallows yield such bitter fruit? Hart, executed on the 16th ult. at Rockford, for the murder of his two sisters, surrounded by circumstances so foul that much of the evidence was suppressed on the trial in the interest of public decency, was a Catholic. Thomas Higgins, executed in this city on the 23rd, was a Catholic. Pröndergast declared himself a good Catholic soon after his assassination of Mayor Harrison. Not all murderers are Catholics, but nearly all are orthodox in religious faith. And so, too, as we have repeatedly shown from statistics, is the case with an overwhelming multitude of offenders covering every grade of crime.

These being facts which no well-informed person dare gainsay, then the interest of good morals is not subserved by the churches. Instead of extending to them special privileges, it would almost seem they ought to be placed on the restrictive list with intoxicants, and, if not suppressed, made to share in the expenses of government, which their pernicious dogmas increase.—“*Progressive Thinker*,” Chicago.

DESIGN IN NATURE?

There is no parallel, whatsoever, between the process of manufacture and the product of creation—between the act of a carpenter working with his tools to construct a cabinet, and the evolution of life in Nature. On the contrary, there are many marked and sharply defined contrasts between them. First of all, in the latter case, there is fixed and ordered regularity, no deviation from law; into the former contingency enters, and often alters or mars the work. Again, secondly, the artificer simply uses the materials which he finds lying ready to hand in Nature. He detaches them from their “natural” connections, and arranges them in a special fashion. But in Nature—in the successive evolutions of her organisms—there is no detachment or displacement, no interference or isolation. All things are linked together; every atom is dependent of every other atom, while the organisms grow and develop “after their kind,” by some vital force, but by no manipulation similar to the architect’s or builder’s work. And yet again, thirdly, in the one case, the purpose is comprehensible; the end is foreseen from the beginning, because we know what the mechanic desires to effect; but in the other case, we have no clue to the “thought” of the architect. Who will presume to say that he has adequately fathomed the purposes of Nature, in the adjustment of any one of her phenomena to another of them?—*Dr. W. Knight*, “*Aspects of Theism*,” pp. 61, 65; 1893.

SAFE FROM ALL SCOFFERS.

A certain adherent of the church heard an unbeliever express the opinion that the so-called Word of God is simply the word of the men who wrote it; that religion in general is delusion touched with hypocrisy; that the church is not necessarily a mundane type of the kingdom of heaven; that clergymen are guilty of unlawful solicitation when they claim to belong to a third sex; and that preaching is equivalent to talking through the hat. Such was the anger of the adherent at thus hearing ideas expressed which he had devoted his life to concealing that he sprang upon the unbeliever and beat him to the earth with a club. A police officer, who was unintentionally present, arrested the adherent for disturbing his peace; while the unbeliever was taken to the station-house as a drunkard, where he died before the newspaper reporters could call the attention of the department to the fact that the man’s skull was fractured. The adherent being brought to the bar of justice, the Court inquired why he had killed his neighbor.

“Because,” said the adherent, “he was an Infidel and a scoffer, denying those principles which lie at the foundations of society. I cannot tolerate either his presence or his existence, or abide with him in the same community.”

“If that is your trouble,” replied his honor, who was a just judge, and whose judicial mind was crossed withal by a streak of humor, “I can provide you with a retreat where you will not meet an Infidel once in a hundred years.” And he sentenced him to the penitentiary for life.—*G. Macdonald*.

TWO J. C.’S.

It is often said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is as well attested as the death of Julius Cæsar. It ought to be as the supernatural prodigies said to have accompanied that tragedy, when—

The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.

Professor J. A. Froude, in a “*Plea for the Free Discussion of Theological Difficulties*,” which he wrote in *Fraser’s Magazine*, and which is re-published in his *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, thus disposes of the rash contention: “Julius Cæsar was killed in a public place, in the presence of friend and foe, in a remarkable but still perfectly natural manner. The circumstances were minutely known to all the world, and were never denied or doubted by anyone. Our Lord, however, seems purposely to have withheld such public proof of his resurrection as would have left no room for unbelief. He showed himself, ‘not to all the people’—not to his enemies, whom his appearance would have overwhelmed—but ‘to witnesses chosen before;’ to the circle of his own friends. There is no evidence which a jury could admit that he was ever actually dead. So unusual was it for persons crucified to die so soon, that Pilate, we are told, ‘marvelled.’ The subsequent appearances were strange, and scarcely intelligible. Those who saw him did not recognise him till he was made known to them in the breaking of bread. He was visible and invisible. He was mistaken by those who were most intimate with him for another person; nor do the accounts agree which are given by the different Evangelists. Of investigation in the modern sense (except in the one instance of St. Thomas, and St. Thomas was rather rebuked than praised) there was none, and could be none. The evidence offered was different in kind, and the blessing was not to those who satisfied themselves of the truth of the fact by a searching inquiry, but who gave their assent with the unhesitating confidence of love.”

COLONEL INGERSOLL AS A FRIEND.

Colonel Ingersoll has one of the kindest of hearts toward all mankind. Only a few days ago a newspaper man told me a characteristic story about him. This newspaper man found himself in New York out at elbow, unable to get work, and unwilling, of course, to ask alms. In his straits it occurred to him to go and see Colonel Ingersoll, although he was quite sure that the Colonel would not remember the single occasion when they had met.

“Well, what can I do for you, young man?” said the Colonel, coming right to the point.

“I am a newspaper reporter, and want you to give me an interview.”

“On what subject?”

“Any subject you please, sir.”

“For what paper?”

“For any paper that will buy it of me.”

“Well, that’s cool! Don’t you know my time is valuable?”

“Yes; but I am in a tight place. I am out of work; I don’t know which way to turn. There is no market for what I write. There is always a market for what you say. Talk to me twenty minutes, and it will be twenty-five or fifty dollars in my pocket.”

“But I would rather give or lend you the money.”

“I couldn’t take it as a gift, and I have no right to ask a loan. I want to earn it, and I think I am justified in asking charity to the extent of a few minutes of your time.”

“All right,” was the cheery rejoinder. “Fire away with your questions.”

The reporter fired away on the first topics that came into his mind, and soon had material which he made into copy salable to a syndicate for a hundred dollars. Nor was Ingersoll’s good nature exhausted with a single interview. Said my friend: “I ate, drank, and slept on Ingersoll for a month, or until I got regular work, and whenever he gave me an interview he went over my notes and touched them up until the matter was in his best style. That’s the sort of man Bob Ingersoll is.”—*Major Handy*.

The family living next door to little Bess had a new baby. A few days after it was born she was allowed to go over to see it. When she returned she gave her brother a detailed description of it. “Is it a boy or a girl?” he asked. “Why,” replied Bess, “what a ridiculous question! They can’t tell until it is baptised.”

THE CURATE AND THE BOATMAN.

A CURATE in our city once fell very deep in love,
 With a charming maid whose gentle ways he likened to a dove;
 But when he popped the question all his longing turned to woe,
 And his budding hopes were blasted when the maiden answered "No!"
 So he went straight to his vicar, with a most lugubrious tale,
 Of how his work excited him and made his cheeks turn pale.
 His appetite had failed him, he had no desire to dine,
 So he asked the "vicar's" permission to allow him to resign.
 "Oh, that's nonsense," said the vicar, who had heard the whole affair;
 "A holiday will put you right—you just want change of air.
 Take a run across to Paris; but that's hardly in our line—
 So you'd better do the Holy Land, and 'take in' Palestine.
 You'll see some strange and wondrous sights—'twill broaden out your mind;
 And some answers to the puzzles in the Bible you will find.
 Seek out the cot where Christ was born, the tomb where he was laid;
 And don't forget Golgotha's Mount, whereon the debt was paid.
 Gaze on the Gadarean cliff, adown which rushed pell-mell
 That shrieking 'cataract of pork,' possessed by fiends from hell."
 So the curate packed his little trunk with things he would require—
 A change or two of clothing, and a flask of liquid fire.
 Then he went to Gaze's office, and, with voice serenely bland,
 Asked for their best excursion rates to "do" the Holy Land.
 Being satisfied upon this point, though "parting" made him sore,
 He took passage in a vessel which in time reached Canaan's shore.
 And when at last he got ashore and stood upon the ground,
 Reminiscent of Jesus and his miracles profound,
 His heart was filled with fervor, he forgot his love affair
 In contemplating holy scenes, which made him gape and stare.
 He had a drink where Jesus met the woman at the well;
 He saw where scabby Lazarus lay, quite long enough to smell.
 He saw the field where Jesus strolled one Sunday, without fear;
 He saw the ham-knife which was used to saw off Malchus' ear.
 He saw where sat the multitude for their *al-fresco* food,
 Comprising bread and fish galore beyond their greatest need.
 He saw the little joiner's shed where Jesus served his time;
 He saw the necktie Judas used, to expiate his crime.
 He wandered through Jerusalem—once mighty, now forlorn.
 He saw the Bethlehem stable where his martyred Lord was born.
 He saw the Gadarean cliff, he saw Mount Calvary;
 And saw the crested waves which lashed the shores of Galilee.
 And as he gazed across the deep, with bulged, enraptured eyes,
 A boatman standing by, who munched a "quid" of fearful size,
 Accosted him with "Morning, sir; what say ye to a sail?
 You needn't be a bit afraid, there's no chance of a gale.
 I'll show you where the Savior walked—in fact, the very wave
 On which he stood when doubting Peter nigh found a watery grave."
 "All right," the eager curate said; "I'm very glad you spoke.
 When I get home I'll have a lot of news to tell the folk."
 So he nimbly stepped on board the craft, which, favored by a breeze,
 Was pointed straight for what the boatman called the Isle of Trees.
 "Right over there, sir, is the spot from where he made a start;
 And we're now right above the spot where Peter clean lost heart.
 So when you think you've looked enough, we'll get back to the shore;
 I feel a trifle thirsty, and my arms are getting sore."
 So the boat was turned right about, and when they reached the land
 The curate took his well-stocked purse and held it in his hand.
 Then said, "Oh, guileless boatman, this has been a happy day;
 'Twill haunt my brain for many years. How much have I to pay?"
 "Well, sir," the boatman made reply, "it's been a half-hour's job;
 I've rowed you round where Jesus walked; my charge is thirty-bob."

"Great heavens!" gasped the curate, as his face went blue with fright;
 "You surely don't mean what you say, or have I heard aright?
 Your charge of thirty shillings is a most outrageous fee;
 'Twould buy up all the boats that ply for hire on Galilee."
 "Now that will do," the boatman said; "I calculate and guess
 My bill is fixed at thirty bob, and not one darned cent less."
 In vain were all the curate's sighs, quite useless all his talk.
 And as he paid, he moaned, "No wonder Christ preferred to walk."
 NOAH LOT.

BOOK CHAT.

Woman: Four Centuries of Progress, by Susan H. Wixon (Truthseeker Co.), is a lecture delivered before the International Freethought Congress at Chicago. It is instructive and eloquent. *The Giant Delusion* is by Otto Wettstein—another paper read at the Congress. It is a forcible assault on the superstition of "soul" and "immortality." *The Bible Inquirer* is a useful collection of striking contradictions in the "infallible book."

Vegetarianism in the Early Christian Church, by Wm. E. A. Axon (Manchester: 9 Peter-street; Id.), is a pamphlet by a gentleman as well known for his erudition as for his enthusiasm in the cause of vegetarianism. He makes out a good case for the existence of a vegetarian section in the Christian Church, but does not deal with the text, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat."

Vegetarianism and Peace (Id.) is an address by the same writer, who urges that, while the history of the past has been a long panorama of bloodshed, those who refrain from the slaughter of animals are at least more likely to refrain from the slaughter of man than those to whom killing is already familiar and not repugnant.

Why We are Anarchists is a pamphlet by the "Common-wealth" Group, published by Reeves, 185 Fleet-street (Id.). We do not criticise it. We simply commend it to the attention of social students who want to know what Anarchists have to say for themselves. Even the wildest opinions, as they may be reckoned, come more agreeable in the form of a pamphlet than in that of a bomb; and, after all, ink is a better propagandist than dynamite—if there is any truth in what you are propagating.

Mr. James Platt, senior, wrote some popular shilling books on Business, Life, Progress, Money, and Morality, in which he showed himself somewhat of a Freethinker. We suppose James Platt, junior, who sends us *Tales of the Supernatural* (Simpkin & Co.; 1s.) is a son. There are six romantic stories: "The Seven Sigils," "The Hand of Glory," "The Rabbi Lion," "The Evil Eye," "The Witches' Sabbath," and "The Devil's Debt;" and they may just suit those who like that kind of thing.

Anarchism and Outrage is a halfpenny pamphlet published by C. M. Wilson, at 61 St. Augustine's-road, Camden Town. The author contends that homicidal outrage is not the logical outcome of Anarchism. The Anarchist "is not the enemy of society, only of anti-social abuses."

Mr. Morse Stephens, in his *Europe, 1789-1815*, pronounces Robespierre as "a profoundly religious and virtuous man," who, however, found it necessary to destroy all who refused to believe in him and his doctrines.

As a sequel to his popular book on boy life, Mark Twain has written *Tom Sawyer Abroad*. Some of his quaint heresy breaks out occasionally, as in the following definition of a crusade: "A crusade is a war to recover the Holy Land from the Paynim." "Which Holy Land?" "Why, the Holy Land; there ain't but one." "What do we want of it?" "Why, can't you understand? It's in the hands of the Paynim, and it's our duty to take it away from them." . . . "Religious to go and take the land away from the people that owns it?" "Certainly! it's always been considered so."

"No God!" *The Atheistic Cry an Absurdity*, by F. Dunn. This professes to be a vindication of the existence of God and of the Divine origin of the Bible. The author quotes *The System of Nature*, which he attributes to "Mirabeau." His originality is yet more fully displayed in some poetry at the end. Here is a sample:—

Atheist, agnostic, philosophic
 Moralist—What say ye? Is the earth, of
 These conditions, aye, to be the theatre?

But our readers will probably cry, "Hold, enough!"

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 postcard.]

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7, musical selections: 7.80, Robert Forder, "Did the Jesus of the Gospels ever Live?" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Stanley Jones, "Christianity and Social Questions" (free). Monday, at 8, free entertainment and dancing. Tuesday at 8, dancing (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, A. B. Moss, "Shelley: Poet of Freethought."

Notting Hill Gate—"Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-street, W.: Monday, at 8.50, business meeting of West London Branch to discuss Orange agenda.

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway): 8.30, members' meeting.

Wood Green—Star Coffee House, High-street: 3, members' monthly meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, H. Snell, "Secularism and the Labor Question." Tuesday, at 7, O. Cohen will lecture.

Camberwell (Station-road): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Bran and the Bible."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, F. Haslam, "What is our Religion?" Members' meeting after lecture.

Edmonton—Angel-road: 7, Sam Standing, "Priests and their Bibles."

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11 and 3, lectures.

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 7, Lucretius Keen, "Who are the Blasphemers?" Corner of the Grove: Thursday, at 8, Sam Standing, "The Resurrection of the Body."

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, Lucretius Keen, "Will the Old Book Stand?" Wednesday, at 8, J. Rowney, "Secularism Superior to Bible Teaching."

Islington—Prebend-street, Packington-street, Essex-road: 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Miracles and Medicine."

Kennington Green (near the Vestry Hall): 6.30, W. Heaford, "Is Christianity True?"

Kingsland—Bidley-road (near Dalston Junction): Sam Standing, "What is Man?"

Leyton—High-road (near Vicarage-road): 11.30, C. James will lecture.

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Samson."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, James Rowney, "Christ's Teaching Defective"—part v. 3.45, Messrs. Paul and Gooderich will speak.

Tottenham Green (corner of Seven Sisters-road): 3.30, Sam Standing, "The Anti-Theology of Rocks, Fossils, and Skeletons."

Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 11.15, George Standing, "The Church and the People." (Collection in aid of the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.)

Wimbledon—The Broadway (near the Railway Station): 7, St. John will lecture.

Walthamstow—Markhouse-road: 6.30, a lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Orthodox Fallacies"; 7, S. R. Thompson, "Christianity and Secularism Compared." Wednesday, at 8, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Morality."

COUNTRY.

Blackburn—Secretary's house, 87 Penny-street: 3, members' meeting.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall: 2.30, for ramble to Kingsweston Common.

Derby—Friar Gate Coffee Tavern: Tuesday at 7.30, Mr. Harper, "Cosmological Formation of the Earth."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 11.30, Chas. Watts, "Education, Secular and Christian"; 2.30, "The Bible and Civilisation"; 6.30, "Christ Not a Reformer for Modern Times." Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, at 8, discussion between Charles Watts and Dr. A. Jamieson on "God and the Soul," at North Saloon, City Hall, Candleriggs.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 6.30, important members' meeting; 7, adjourned open discussion on Florence Marryat's lecture, "There is no Death."

Ipswich—Co-operative Room, Cox-lane: 7.30, important members' meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' (Large) Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 6.30, annual meeting of the Branch, followed at 7.15 by a public meeting in the large hall, at which several members will speak.

Manchester—Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints': 3, Percy Percival, "The Past and Future of Secularism"; 6.30, "Secularism, Socialism, and Positivism."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, a meeting. Wednesday, at 7.30, dancing class for members and friends (3d.).

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, W. P. Soper, a reading.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street (near the Monolith if fine): 11, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Secularism"; 3, "Christianity and Slavery"; 7, "The Evidences of Theism."

South Shields—Library Hall, Ocean-road: 11, Touzeau Parris, "How to Make the Best Use of Knowledge"; 3, "Anarchism, its Origin and Meaning"; 7, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults (long room above), Bridge-street: 7, R. Weightman, "Christ and Buddha; a Contrast."

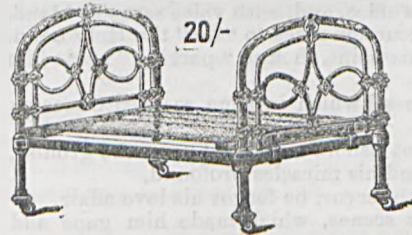
LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—May 6, Sheffield; 8, Battersea; 9, Wood Green; 13, m. Camberwell, a. Victoria Park, e. Camberwell; 15, Battersea; 18, Wood Green; 20 to 28, Manchester; 29, Battersea.

U. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—May 6, Belfast; 13, Conference; 20, e., Edmonton; 27, m., Pimlico Pier.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Botherhithe, London, S.E.—May 6, m. and e., Camberwell; 13, e., Edmonton; 20, m., Clerkenwell Green; 27, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith: London, W.—May 6, South Shields.

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