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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.



THE CHURCH IN DANGER.

Suggested by a Scene in "Les Cloches de Corneville."

JOHN BURNS'S MISTAKE.

It is not our intention to speak unkindly of Mr. John Burns. We do not quite think him a Bradlaugh, but he is a man of real ability and force of character, and of undoubted courage. Some years ago he talked rather wildly, but he was very young then and very enthusiastic. Time and responsibility have sobered him into an earnest but practical reformer. There is every probability, we should say, of his pursuing a distinguished career in the service of the people, to whose interests we are sure he is sincerely devoted.

So far from speaking unkindly of Mr. Burns, we confess that we like him. There is a certain bluff geniality about him which accounts for the designation of "Honest Jack." But liking, and even friendship, do not close the door to criticism. Mr. Burns is a public man, and his public actions are open to public approval or censure. We should imagine, indeed, that he would be one of the last men to resent such a statement.

Now we are very strongly of opinion that Mr. Burns has made a mistake, and a very serious mistake, in accepting the chairmanship of the so-called Progressive Association, whose ostensible object is to fight the Church party at the London School Board elections in November, and to return "Progressive" candidates. On the face of it, of course, it looks strange for a Secularist to be quarreling with anything "Progressive," but things are not always

what they seem, and a ticket does not always accurately describe the object to which it is attached.

Everything has an historical background, and to explain our objection to Mr. Burns in this matter we must start with the formation of the London School Board, nearly a quarter of a century ago. According to the Education Act, the School Board had a certain option; it could provide religious teaching or not, as it pleased. But if it did provide religious teaching, it was debarred from making it sectarian or denominational. In face of these conditions the Board, in 1871, agreed to what is called "the Compromise." It decided that the Bible should be read in the schools, and that comment or explanation should be left to the teachers—all of whom, by the way, are supposed to be Christian; at least, they must have passed through a denominational Training College if they expect to reach any high position, and must therefore have made a definite profession of Christian faith.

This "Compromise" was, and is, a kind of treaty between rival Christian sects on the basis of religious teaching. Non-Christians had no part or lot in it. Indeed, they had no sort of interest in such an arrangement. Some of them—perhaps the most of them—objected to religious teaching in public schools altogether, while others objected to the position thus assigned to the Bible; an objection with which the Catholics, for reasons of their own, were in general concurrence. Practically, the "Compromise" was a Nonconformist triumph. It was the *ne plus ultra* of the Protestant theory of "the Bible, the whole Bible, and

nothing but the Bible." It was inevitable that the High Church party, as it grew in influence and power, should seek to overthrow this arrangement. And the High Church party had logic on its side. Christian teaching must be definite to be worth anything. Nonconformist Churches, as well as the Church of England, have their dogmatic "standards." Accordingly, the party of Messrs. Diggle, Riley, and Coxhead—that is, the Church party—began to find fault with the Christian teaching in the Board schools. Mr. Coxhead made the awful discovery that a boy, on being asked who was the father of Jesus, replied "Joseph." Evidently the "deity of Christ" was in peril; and out of this arose all the subsequent agitation about the Trinity, eventuating in the famous circular to the Board teachers, which is the basis of the Nonconformist attack upon the "Diggleites."

The whole dispute is a domestic squabble among Christians, and it puzzles us how any *real* Progressive can feel anything but a determination to sweep religious education out of the schools altogether. While this bone of contention remains, the zeal of all the rival parties will be expended on "religion" instead of on "education," and the children will be constant sufferers.

For the present, however, the Nonconformists have got hold of the term "Progressive," and they are using it to bamboozle the Radicals, who, we must admit, are very easily imposed upon. Nothing could be bolder than their protests, nothing could be tamer than their action. When it comes to *voting*, they are nearly always to be found at the tail of the political Nonconformists. They have had "secular education" on their program for a whole generation, but they have never once made a stand for it. At the critical moment they always go in for that dear old "Compromise." It does not even occur to them to tackle the Nonconformists in argument, though they might win an easy victory; for every argument in favor of Disestablishment is also an argument in favor of Secular Education. If it is wrong to maintain Churches out of the public money, in order to *keep* people Christians, it is equally wrong to provide religious teaching at the public expense in Schools, in order to *make* them Christians. The true principle of religious equality is that the State should have no concern at all with religion, but leave it entirely to the private taste and conviction of the citizens.

Mr. Burns is professedly in favor of such religious equality, yet he has allowed himself to be captured by the Nonconformists. All his reputation and influence is to be at their service in supporting the "Compromise"—that is, in maintaining their sort of religious teaching in the Board Schools instead of that of the Church of England. Surely this is a great mistake on his part. It involves a deplorable sacrifice of principle. It also involves a bad blunder in policy. Mr. Burns is in error if he supposes it to be true, as Mr. Price Hughes declares, that there is no "serious demand" for secular education in London. He is a representative of the working classes, but in this instance he has misunderstood them. We will undertake to go with him before half a dozen meetings of *bonâ fide* working men in different parts of London, and to carry against him—if he is disposed to uphold it—a condemnation of religious teaching in Board Schools.

We have been told by Mr. Burns's friends that he is working for "half a loaf." But this "Compromise" is not bread at all; it is only baked sawdust. We are also told that if the "Compromise" is upheld now against the "Diggleites," we shall have better education under the new Board, and that the question of religious teaching might be dealt with afterwards. Well, if Mr. Burns is really of that mind, he should say so, and not deceive the Nonconformists. Whether he says so or not, it is possible that the Nonconformists will be beaten. The Church party may win again. And if it does, Mr. Burns will have sunk his principles, and dabbled in mere policy, for *nothing*.

It is doubtless too late to appeal to Mr. Burns on the present occasion. We do not suppose he will abandon his false position. But we hope he will not be caught a second time. We think a little reflection will convince him that the future of democracy is involved in the question of Secular Education. What our children are taught will decide whether society is to make peaceful progress, or to walk the paths of bloody revolution, with a prospect of reaction and despotism.

G. W. FOOTE.

SOME HINDU VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN the *Freethinker* of October 1, 1893, I was able to give an account of Christianity as viewed by a Japanese. It proved to be a funny faith, almost as absurd and incongruous a mixture as heathen idolatry appears to the average Christian. In the case of educated Hindus, according to my experience (and I have enjoyed the closest intercourse with several), there is rarely such open pronounced antagonism to Christianity, unless it be to the doctrine of the Atonement—the notion that Christ's blood can wipe out the unerring law of cause and effect. The educated Hindu is usually a Pantheist and a Fatalist. He is naturally tolerant, and inclined to allow that there is some good in all religions. A common aphorism is that all streams lose themselves in the same sea. He does not deny the pretensions of any other religion, but only their exclusiveness; and he prefers to allegorise, rather than to ridicule or reject, the literally absurd stories or dogmas of other faiths, as well as those of Brahminism. He is quite content that other people should be Christians. His attitude is usually one rather of contemptuous indifference than of active opposition. Christianity may suit the Kols, Bheels, Shanars, and other half-barbarous non-Aryan inhabitants of India; but the Brahmin, whose Aryan ancestry were civilised at a time when the ancestry of the Christian Feringees ran wild in woods, need only smile at the pretensions of such a low caste, puerile faith.

None the less, when you enquire what keeps the Hindus from accepting Christianity, you will find that they have fundamental differences. Their objections, though dissimilar from those employed by Freethinkers at home, are often acute. For instance, they want to know, if God incarnated himself for the salvation of all men, why their ancestors, who have preserved the names and stories of so many benefactors of the Aryan race, never heard of Christ; why he went to Judea to be born among a people who rejected him, and never gave the enlightened Hindus of early times a chance of hearing of Him who alone was able to make them wise unto salvation. They argue that since the Brahmins, though opposed on many points to Buddha, yet, in consideration of his greatness, included him among the Avatars of Vishnu, so they would have included Christ had they equal proof of his mission.

Another point wherein the attitude of Hindus is distinct from that of Westerners is, what the missionaries complain of as their chief difficulty, the deficiency of these heathen in the sense of sin. It must be allowed that, relatively to the population, there is less crime in India than in any Christian nation, fewer murders, and immeasurably less drunkenness and prostitution. But the Hindu has no sense of having offended God. Sin against God seems to him impossible when God is said to have made both the sinner and the sin. Sin, says the Hindu, is relative to the sinner. It is the result of his past. Sin, in the religious sense, is breaking taboo. But what is taboo to one caste is lawful to another. There is a passage in the Beza version of the Gospels which so well expresses the Hindu view that it may have crept in from an oriental source. It relates (Luke vi. 5) that Jesus, seeing a man working on the Sabbath, said to him: "If, indeed, thou knowest what thou dost, blessed art thou; but, if thou knowest not, thou art a transgressor of the law." The Brahmin would take this as a correct statement of the case as to what the Christian missionary calls "sin." The aim of the Yogi is to rise above all law, and so be superior to sin; and as it is held to be possible for man to be absorbed in and one with God, the idea of sin in any absolute sense is inadmissible.

Christianity the philosophical Hindu regards as an attempt to circumvent nature and obtain something for nothing; but the fundamental tenet of his philosophy is that everything must be strictly paid for. Christianity aims at suddenly renovating man's original constitution. It thus sets up a war with nature—that is, with the reality of things, and in its attempt only makes man miserable, bringing discord instead of harmony. Reason should not be in rebellion against nature. A Hindu writes: "The Christian piously terms the remonstrance of reason the temptation of the devil; and the protest of nature against the impracticability of Christianity, he considers, denotes the narrowness of the path to glory." But there are innumerable paths; all the difference is the length of the journey. The Christian, like the follower of the Tantra

system, tries to take a short cut and gets lost in the jungle. The Hindu pushes his raft into the centre of the stream, confident that, be the journey long or short, he will at last reach the sea. The belief of the Christian, that eternal perdition is the punishment of failure in one life, seems ridiculous to the Hindu, who holds that he has already passed through myriads of lives, and only calculated to madden, while he himself has the assurance of the Bhagvat Gita that "No man who hath done good goeth to an evil place."

But, as I have indicated, the principal opposition of Hindu philosophy to Christianity is the scheme of the Atonement. It is an interruption to the universal, unerring law of cause and effect. It suggests that, thanks to Christ, a man may reap something other than he has sown, gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. Such a suggestion is inadmissible. Brahma himself cannot break the eternal chain of cause and effect. "As among a thousand cows a calf finds its mother, so the previously done deed follows the doer," says the Mahabharata. Repentance, the keyword of Christian ethics, is only significant to the Hindu as change of direction. It has no power to blot out the past, or alter its inevitable consequences. Nor can the Hindu understand why God, the maker of all, should want the blood of His own son before he would redeem His creatures, or why, if Jesus came on purpose to die, he should pray that the cup might pass from him.

Finally, the Hindus retort on the Christians the charge of idolatry. For they say that to make any man take the place of God is idolatry. To declare "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," is to admit the mediator himself cannot be God. It is, therefore, idolatry to worship him as such. Jesus, like Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Sankara-Acharya, Chaitanya, Nanak, or the Bab, may be a way. He cannot be *the* way, for the ways are innumerable; but there is only one goal. Jesus is a way, but Brahm is the goal.

J. M. WHEELER.

THOUGHTS ON LIBERTY.

IN these days of unrest and turbulence, of unreasoning violence and indefinite purpose, it is essential that the nature of true liberty should be clearly understood. In the name of freedom the greatest wrongs have been perpetrated, and the grossest forms of license have been indulged in. Experience has too amply verified the truth of Madame Roland's exclamation: "O Liberty, Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name." We have in our midst certain people who seem to think their own liberty consists in the right to do whatever they desire, without having any regard for the consequences of their action upon others. This is not my view of liberty, for that, in my opinion, includes the right of individual action, in so far as that action is not injurious to others. The test of all conduct should be its influence upon the general community. If it tends to the promotion of the well-being of society, it harmonises with the essentials of liberty. There are men who entirely ignore this consideration; with them the one object is to gain their own ends, irrespective of the requirements of their neighbors. If such persons were to become masters of the situation, the tide of progress would be arrested, and tyranny, in its worst aspect, would hold its sway. I desire change in many respects, inasmuch as it is necessary to all improvement; but I have no wish that changes should be effected without the observance of due thought for the welfare of the social life of the community. Revolution may be inevitable, but to be of lasting service it must be one of thought, governed by the interests, not of the one, but of the many. The want of the age is the cultivation of an intellectual force that will not only destroy injustice, but that will also prevent violence, which is too often born of uncontrolled passion. The world has suffered long enough from this reckless and selfish policy—a policy that, as a rule, tends to favor despotism, and which always retards the real advancement of a nation.

Liberty, properly understood, includes the right to think and to act under certain conditions; and here appears its primary glory, that of mental freedom. Its application is the exercise of thought without fear of social ostracism or of the infliction of legal penalties. As I understand and

appreciate the invaluable prize of liberty, it signifies that man's thoughts can be limited only by the nature of his faculties; and, therefore, as he is enabled to think only in accordance with the law of his being, the expression of his thoughts should not be restrained by any external law, or by any authority whatever. The desire for liberty is stronger in human nature than is either the dread of pain or the fear of death; and freedom is as necessary as bodily health to the joy of existence. For centuries, under the reign of despotic kings and the rule of bigoted priests, the mind of man has been enslaved; it is now time that we witnessed a thorough intellectual emancipation. This is a practical age, and in a free country liberty must be something more than a mere name; but, at the same time, it must not be prostrated to gratify the ends of individual selfishness. While it is catholic in its nature, its usefulness depends upon the manner in which its advantages are employed. Free ideas should be allowed to illuminate the mentality of the race, and the brilliancy of thought ought not to be dimmed by the clouds of serfdom. As Shakespeare says: "I would not my unhoused free condition put into circumscription and confine for the sea's worth." This is the spirit that needs to animate all who wish to assist in removing the shackles that have hitherto fettered human thought, robbing it of its grandest quality, that of freedom. Although, alas! the struggles for liberty have been suppressed, they have, nevertheless, continued to be renewed again and again. There are many who would heroically exclaim with Patrick Henry: "I know not what course others may take; but, as for me, give me liberty or give me death." Milton, too, in a similar passionate utterance, wrote: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties."

In our admiration of the advantages of liberty it is as well that we should remember at what personal sacrifice, and cost of blood and treasure, the freedom we possess to-day has been purchased. To secure it caused our forefathers untold sufferings in body, mind, and estate. Severe, indeed, have been the past struggles to remove the fetters that stultified the intellectual growth of the country. In those mighty conflicts homes were broken up, domestic ties were severed, and friendships were destroyed. Men yearned for peace, but there could be no peace while the majority of the human family were deprived of the birth-right of freedom. Before the present century liberty among the masses in England was unknown. It was like the dove said to have been sent out of the ark; it could find no resting-place, no harbor wherein it could enter, and no rock to which it could cling. Men and women of thought and of action, who seek the liberation of their fellow creatures from the despotic rule of the "powers that be," are always a terror to tyrants, who would glory in enslaving others if possible. Fortunately, many noble battles for emancipation have been won, and now it is acknowledged that it is to the existence of liberty that we are indebted for the establishment of the improved institutions that adorn the present age. We to-day regard liberty as being of higher and greater importance to human welfare than aught else, for it is the foundation of personal comfort and of national advancement. The mere possession of freedom places man on an exalted eminence, whence wider and truer views of life become possible. Men who are mentally free acquire new thoughts, which impart nobler aspirations, and inspire within them brighter hopes than could obtain in a condition of intellectual slavery. This is as true in the social, the political, and the religious world as it is in the communal state of existence, where the newly-born bring into the collective life of humanity an additional stock of energy and innocence that invigorates and purifies the air we breathe. It is the introduction of fresh ideas, born of freedom, that dispels the darkness of ignorance, and which breaks that midnight slumber of the human mind which kings admire and priests adore.

It is from this grand principle of liberty that we derive the hope and belief that a state of things can never be restored which shall place the intellect in blind subjection to kingcraft and to priestcraft. True, we may regret that the world has been slow to learn the lesson of human freedom. Still, slow as it has been, the lesson has been learnt, and now our utmost care should be to profit by the acquirement, and to endeavor to make the best of the progress that has followed the dawn of liberty. Our present concern is to see that the intellectual forces, which are now set in motion, gather strength as they increase in

volume, and that their power be used, not only to consolidate the freedom won, but to further extend that freedom upon a solid basis among all sections of society. Above all, while enjoying the bracing atmosphere of liberty, let us guard and control it by reason, prudence, and discrimination, so that it may not be contaminated by unregulated passion and reckless folly. Great as the triumphs of freedom are that have been won, more are yet to be gained, and wisdom should mark the method of future achievements. My desire in this matter is admirably expressed in the following lines by J. C. Prince:

In man I love all that is noble and great,
But war and oppression and falsehood I hate.
And oft has my spirit burst forth into song
'Gainst every species of riot and wrong.
Yet I've no wish to disorder the land
With the flame of the torch or the flash of the brand;
I'm for measures more gentle, more certain in sooth—
Improvement in morals, the triumph of truth.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

KEEPING HELL ALIGHT.

THE Christian doctrine of eternal torment has been utilised as an impetus to the propagation of religion for many centuries. Its potency has been realised by disciples of every age; for the inoculation of fear gives birth to a speedy embracement of the faith. It has, therefore, been cherished as an invaluable aid to conversion. Hell has been kept ablaze, its fiery elements have been wafted into fierce flames, and the devouring receptacle kept as wide open as possible. But, despite all the qualifications of religious leaders for the stoker's occupation, hell is, somehow or another, burning itself out. Little but the dying embers now remain, and shortly the great *bête noir* of the Christian will be as extinct as a snuffed candle. For which, of course, we shall all be very grateful. Respectable Christians decline to have hell at any price; still less can they afford to prolong the devil's life. Satan has been demolished, and the work has been accomplished in so naive a fashion that decent interment has scarcely been possible. Long before Christians took this step, however, he was obliterated by the progress of civilisation and the development of the human being. Notwithstanding all this, there are some religious enthusiasts of the baser or bloodthirsty order who wince at the idea of their being prohibited the terms "devil" and "hell." To omit these two items would rob their religion of half its charm; to forego the sensation of having the smoke of the damned ascend as a pleasant savor in their nostrils would, indeed, be apt to cause a recrudescence in their righteousness. "Ugh!" says an indignant gospeller, "if that wicked Brown ain't going to hell, I shall soon chuck prayer meetings and hymn singing for something more lively." It is not so much the desire for heavenly bliss as the awe of yawning hell that coerces people into the narrow path—so very narrow as it proves in many cases. There are some Gospel teachers so keen at their business that they recognise the great importance of keeping hell alight; and to this task they bring all their ingenuity, for upon their success or failure hangs, correspondingly, the continued life or doom of their creed.

Some little while ago Mr. St. George Mivart, whom we might call a Roman Catholic scientist, if the term did not strike the ear as paradoxical, wrote an article which pointed the possibility—nay, the certainty—of happiness in hell. Whatever else may be said of his theories, it can be granted that his thoughts were original; but Mr. Mivart, when assailed by his religious fathers for holding such heretical views, meekly drew in his horns: a proceeding in keeping with his position as a Roman Catholic, but hardly complimentary to his profession as a scientist. Seizing an opportune occasion, the Church reiterated her doctrinal views of hell, proclaiming again the declaration of Pope Benedict XII., "We define that, according to God's common ordinance, the souls of those who die in actual moral sin go down immediately after their death to the lower regions, where they are tortured with infernal punishments." And to exhibit the exact nature of the "infernal punishment" the elders of the Church recommended reference to the Bible and the Athanasian Creed,

so that it should be understood that "torture" implied "eternal fire." All of which tends to show that hell is to be kept alight at any cost. An opinion might be essayed that the Catholic Church has already had the superintendence of sufficient fires on earth for the consumption of human beings without being so anxious to continue the process on a larger scale hereafter.

Of the other Christians who are unwilling for the flames of hell to be extinguished, might be mentioned as particularly prominent the peripatetic gospeller. How exceedingly difficult it would be for him to cease mouthing hell and its attendant punishments. This is the principal characteristic of members of the Salvation Army, who, with much relish, consign everybody unsympathetic with braying and drum-beating to everlasting torments. General Booth has thought fit to infuse a good deal of hell into his Army doctrines, and it may be interesting to get a little acquainted with the beliefs on such questions which are inculcated by his "officers." In a book of some 130 pages, entitled *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Salvation Army*, prepared for the training homes by the General, the religious beliefs of the Army are laid down in the form of interrogatories and answers. Section 24 deals with "Hell," the first question in the catechism being, "Do you believe in hell?" To which the reply is, "Yes, all the time." What a cheerful idea to carry about with one. Question 3 reads, "Do you believe that this punishment will last for ever?" the answer being, "Yes," and as if to denote glory in this horrible and barbarous doctrine, the words are added in italics, "for ever." The conversation proceeds to controvert the pleas of certain Christian people, who make moderations respecting eternal punishment. Against those who are indulgent enough to the wicked to extend them a hope of reformation in hell, texts are quoted to emphasise the fact that hell contains no exit doors. To Christians who have more respect for God's character than Salvationists, the doctrine is pronounced false which teaches that, after a period of detention in hell, the soul is totally extinguished. The blood-and-fire soldiers could not enjoy eternal bliss unless they had the knowledge that sinners were burning everlastingly. How humane this blessed religion does make a man, to be sure!

Question 9, in this interesting section of the book, asks, "But how can you prove that the punishment of hell will last for ever?" The reply is astounding. It puts forward, as a reason for belief in eternal torture, that orthodox Christians have always believed so. This must be the very best excuse that can be given, for we can be assured that, if it were otherwise, General Booth, the great unorthodox, would not go for reason to the orthodox stores. How puerile such methods of reasoning are, and what a tribute they constitute to the Salvationist intellect, is palpable. If all mankind believed in a big, burning hell, that would not establish hell as a fact. Everybody believed the earth was flat at one time, until Vigilus demonstrated the falsity of the idea. Similarly incorrect beliefs have permeated the human mind, until one has arose and destroyed such calculations. Unanimity in thought is no guarantee for truth. Until men's minds are cultured, and their emotions and imaginations cease to be wrought upon, there will always be some people who will insist on having hell and everlasting torture. They will strive their utmost to keep hell alight, but it is doomed to extinction, if not by the higher evolution of the human mind, then by sheer inanition.

FRED. WILSON.

RELIGION IN SOUTH AMERICA.

LOOKING the other day over the pages of *La Nacion*, a newspaper published in Lima, I came across an account of the distribution of prizes at one of the principal colleges of the town. The prize in Natural History was awarded to a student who had given a clever exposition of the "Theory of Descent." That in Peru, that warm nest of clerical condors, we should find Darwinism taught and explained at schools, is a fact which, though trivial, nevertheless deserves the attention of Freethinkers, for it clearly shows that Freethought has taken root in South America, and is beginning to yield fruit. If we examine the attitude of the people in South America towards religion, two extremes present themselves to our view. On one side, the most

narrow-minded and obstinate superstition, and on the other the completest indifferentism. The women and the priests belong to the first category, and the men, especially the younger ones, to the second. In the case of the women, we must not be astonished at their ignorance and superstition. Born in a warm climate, and dearly loving the *dolce far niente*, they hate physical exertion of any kind; and, as for thinking, they would rather engage someone, if it were possible, to do this task for them. Educated in most cases at a convent, they imbibe from the nuns all sorts of ridiculous notions. The girls at the convents, with the exception of music, cooking, and needlework, hardly learn anything worth knowing. How imperfect their general education is only a person who has moved in South American society can have an exact idea. At home these young damsels are under the strict supervision of their mammas, who always examine very carefully a book before they give it to their daughters to read. Every evening the *señor padre* or local sky-pilot makes his visit and administers "spiritual advice," the rest of the evening being invariably spent in holding mystic conversations on the fascinating themes of "The wounds of Our Lord," "The Sorrows of Mary," etc. If, on the one side, religion has such a strong hold upon the women, fortunately it is not the case with the men. Trained from their youth to believe and practise the cruel dogmas of Roman Catholicism, a religion which requires the blindest submission, and demands so much sacrifice and penitence, the men, disgusted with its teachings, finish by considering religion nothing short of a nuisance. The churches, as a rule, are patronised by old women and girls, and if, perchance, men are seen loitering about a church, it is probably for the purpose of catching a glimpse of some dark-eyed beauty.

Another thing that makes the men indifferent is that, seeing the priests in their true light, they lose all respect for them. What sort of individuals some of these priests are may be inferred from the fact that anyone who chooses can become a priest. I have been assured that in many instances men who were unsuccessful in business have tried their hands at priestcraft, and found that preaching kingdom-come is a very remunerative occupation. In many cases they hardly know how to read or write, their sole science being plenty of audacity and a smattering of what the French call *latin de cuisine*, which they mix and twist as occasion may require. As for their morality, there is no exaggeration in the statement that in many of the villages the local priest lives, to the knowledge of everybody, with a "querida," or mistress, by whom he has, not unfrequently, half-a-dozen or so of sweet cherubs.

Of the numerous superstitions practised by the people in general, here are a few of the most startling:—During a thunderstorm it is customary to burn a few palm-leaves that were blessed on Palm Sunday. This is supposed to have the effect of calming the storm. Every time it lightens pious people make the sign of the cross, and exclaim, "May the Lord bless and save us." A very silly custom is that of placing a number of lighted candles in the corner of a dark room, and waiting for the souls in purgatory to come and blow them out. Bedrooms are generally decorated with all kinds of gruesome religious pictures. Crucifixes are great favorites, and occupy conspicuous places in most houses. There is a case on record of a woman praying one day before one of these wooden effigies, when the Lord, wishing, no doubt, to show that he does not always turn a deaf ear to prayer, let the crucifix fall upon the poor woman's head, killing her on the spot. I suppose she is now enjoying the blessings of that beautiful cuckoo-land above.

When a person is choking, or a fishbone is sticking in his throat, it is the general belief that by tying a scapular around the person's throat the obstacle will be removed. How simple-minded some people can be is illustrated by the story of a woman, whose husband was much addicted to use what could not be called exactly polite language. This woman, believing that her husband was possessed of some devil, whenever he had a swearing fit during the day used to sprinkle his face with holy water at night as soon as he fell asleep; with what result God, in his infinite wisdom, only knows. A friend of mine, a commercial traveller, told me that, having been invited to dinner at the house of one of the richest families in Ecuador, this family, on learning the next day that he was a Protestant, gave orders to destroy all the plates, knives, forks, etc., that my

friend had made use of during his visit. The priest was sent for, and on his arrival began to sprinkle holy water in every nook and corner of the house, "in order," as he said, "to drive away Satan and his angels, who had been brought into the house by that cursed heretic of a Protestant."

Another ridiculous custom is that of giving to children, when they are baptised, curious scripture names, or choosing as Christian names words that represent some rite connected or instituted by the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion. What would our English young ladies say to hearing such names as Sacrament, Consolation, Trinity, Conception, Rosary, Sorrows, etc.? The strangest experience, however, as regards the use of these queer names was made by the captain of a certain ship, who, having been invited to a ball at Rio, was introduced during the evening to a gentleman rejoicing in the grand name of Mr. Jesus Christ. Later on the captain was introduced to another gentleman of much importance. This time it was Mr. Holy Ghost. "After this," remarked the captain, "I expected every minute to run against Mr. God Almighty; but, as the old gentleman did not put in an appearance during the rest of the evening, I concluded that he must be suffering from a severe attack of the gout, which prevented him from joining in the extravagances of the light fantastic toe."

We should be disappointed if we expected to find in South America authors, artists, and scientific men of repute. Now and again a few gifted men have come before the public, but their productions can only be classified as mediocre. The press, a poor one indeed, is too feeble to be able to produce any influence. The few Freethought journals that, from time to time, have seen the light soon terminated their ephemeral existence, for want of enthusiasm and support. Freemasonry alone has managed to keep afloat, and is looked upon by the priests as the ally of Freethought, and not without reason, for the Freemasons with whom I have been acquainted were, for the most part, sceptics in religion.

Among the many causes that have contributed to throw South America into a mental lethargy must be mentioned the unsettled state of affairs, and the revolutions to which all her republics have been, and still are, a prey. Furthermore, the scarcity of colleges and public schools, which has retarded so enormously public instruction. The masses, unlike in England, lack the means of self-education. Books are scarce, and, in some instances, even prohibited. The number of public libraries is very limited; as for free libraries, they are utterly unknown.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, I feel confident that there is yet a splendid future in store for all the South American republics. They need not despair, for their salvation lies assured in that spirit of Secularism which is manifesting itself everywhere, and which, like a lava-stream from Mount Cotopaxi, will in the end sweep away every obstacle that dares to check its impetuous and luminous career.

F. MALIBRAN.

THE UTILITY OF SCIENCE.

THE old religions took man as the centre of the universe, and made nature a mere accessory of humanity. As the race has grown older it has grown out of the mistaken notion; yet the old idea had something at the bottom of it, like many old ideas. In the first place, it was natural. Mankind, and the affairs of mankind, are still the most important study of man; they will always remain the most important; man, in short, must be the centre of his own world, always. And if philosophy has exploded the old myths, it has established the truth—the natural truth which may have underlain the myths—on a firm and reasonable basis.

Thus, as Mr. T. E. Mayne points out in the April number of the *Westminster Review*, we value the various sciences by their relation to the necessities or the happiness of man. Anatomy, the study of the structure of the human body, is of vital importance; hence we value it highly. Conchology, or the study of shells, is a trifling thing, and, therefore, holds a low place.

Judged thus by the standard of human utility, theology, in the light of philosophy, holds a very low place. For it does not concern itself with man's practical welfare here,

but with his problematical welfare somewhere else. Now, it may be readily conceded that, if theology had thoroughly established itself, if it were demonstrated that man's conduct or belief here seriously affected his happiness hereafter, theology would have strong claims on man's attention. But, since theology has not alone failed to prove its case, since philosophy has distinctly disproved the theological propositions at many points, it becomes useless to bestow attention and energy upon so unprofitable and false a subject.

Man's progress here can only be accomplished by devoting himself to the secular sciences; they are the only, and the natural, providence of man. And, of course, by attention to the secular sciences, it is not intended to exclude the rational cultivation of the moral, or the æsthetic, or the emotional sides of human nature. These are as much a part of man and as necessary to his happiness as any other of his faculties. It is sometimes charged against the secular philosophy, by persons unfamiliar with its teachings, that it solely concerns itself with the "material" wants of man, and takes no account of the moral side of his nature. In so far as the charge is made against Secularism as a philosophy of life, it is false; and in so far as it has a personal reference, it has only to be said that Secularists are far more interested in the cultivation of the mind than any orthodox religionist is likely to be.

Secularism, in short, is concerned with all that goes to make life here happier, and higher, and better. And, as Mr. Mayne points out in the paper to which we have referred, "if it can be proved good for man to believe unsubstantiated tales, philosophy will accept them. It will even accept a palpable fallacy if the happiness of the human race is increased by the acceptance of it." But Secularists do not believe that it ever can be shown that the universal acceptance of a falsehood is conducive to human welfare. Since man has to depend on his knowledge of nature for his very existence, and since a want of knowledge entails injury, it must be of the highest importance to get a clear and truthful view of the forces by which he is surrounded. And this clear and truthful view is what science alone gives.

The utility—nay, the absolute necessity—of science is thus evident, if the race is to endure and advance. And this imperative claim of science is being recognised more and more every day. Men are abandoning the paths of myth and fancy to pursue those of rational inquiry and positive knowledge. And in proportion as these ideas spread, so in proportion shall progress be made. Already the physicists have exploded and discredited the ancient superstitions; the moralists have followed suit, and have destroyed the false foundations of theological morality. On every side one sees the break-up of the old creeds, the making of the new. And the new creeds, be it remarked, are not concocted by divinely-inspired fanatics in a night, but by long and patient research, and after careful sifting and testing and verifying. In short, the race has outgrown the theological stage; and, whatever theology may have been to man in the past, to-day it is but a hindrance and a clog. Let it go then; its day is over. The day of science has come.

FREDERICK RYAN.

THE SALVATIONIST'S HYMN.

(Suggested by G. L. Mackenzie's "Salvationist's Prayer.")

PRAISE the Lord I'm nicely saved,
No matter how you have behaved,
The road to heaven with sin is paved.
Hallelujah!

Christ for sinners died and bled;
All my crimes are on his head.
I sin; he suffers in my stead.
Hallelujah!

Lord, I love to live with thee,
Since thou dost provide for me;
Though I work not, want will flee.
Hallelujah!

So I sing and shout and play,
Making life one holiday,
While to hell most take their way.
Hallelujah!

LUCIANUS.

ACID DROPS.

Mr. J. C. KENWORTHY, who is writing a long series of papers on "The New Movement" in the London *Echo*, has arrived at "The Christian Socialist League." We understand that Mr. Kenworthy himself belongs to this organisation, and he naturally sees in it the promise of the millennium. He highly praises the work of Mr. J. Bruce Wallace, pastor of the Brotherhood Church, in Southgate-road, who "refuses all pay for his ministry." This is very good, kind, noble, etc., of Mr. Bruce Wallace. Still, we should like to know what he lives on? Has he private means? In other words, does he live on rent or interest? We pause for a reply.

Rev. S. Fletcher Williams, a Hackney Unitarian preacher, seems to have lost his head over the assassination of Carnot. He is reported as saying, "That Anarchy is Atheism is amply proved"; and the proof he offers is that "a leading Frenchman of this school, Benoit Malon, says: 'To suppress religion is to establish the claim of real happiness.'" Now, Malon was a Socialist and no Anarchist, while Tolstoi, perhaps the most devoted follower of Jesus Christ living, is one. Mr. Williams also refers to *Justice* as having given expression to similar views. But *Justice* is an organ of social democracy, not of anarchy. To confound the two shows the laxity of Mr. Williams's use of words and his incompetence to lecture upon the subject.

The editor of the *Daily Chronicle* is in love with Count Tolstoi's brand of Christianity, but he draws the line at absolute non-resistance. He feels a "special love" for his native land, and would "defend this inheritance by armed force." So much of the Old Adam it is difficult to expel. There are very few men like Count Tolstoi, who would offer a burglar a good supper before carrying off the swag.

The French police are much to blame for the assassination of President Carnot. They allowed a suspected person, whom they were supposed to be watching, to mount the step of the President's carriage. And as they cannot look after their business properly, the Government proposes to come to their assistance with a drastic law that will put every citizen's liberty, and often his life, at the mercy of "the powers that be." Such is the folly of panic legislation. No wonder the Radicals protest against it. Lovers of freedom are rightly alarmed when it is proposed to enact heavy penalties against the disseminators of "Anarchist theories"—which is elastic enough to include all reformers who are in any way obnoxious to the Government; especially when the accused persons are to be tried "in private," and newspapers are to be punished for giving any report of the proceedings. This is simply the establishment of a Star Chamber, and we hope it will never be sanctioned by the Chamber of Deputies. Stop outrage and murder by all means, but do not juggle away the people's common rights of citizenship in this free-and-easy fashion.

Our English Sabbatarians have lost a good opportunity. They have failed to point out that President Carnot was assassinated on a Sunday. Anybody can see it was a "judgment" upon him for—well, for not being an Englishman.

Hugh Price Hughes is artful. A gentleman of our acquaintance wrote to him about that "Atheist Shoemaker" affair, and in reply was referred to Mr. Holyoake. The "Father of Secularism" stands sponsor for Mr. Hughes, who declines to vindicate his own reputation. Yes, it is artful. But then it is mean and cowardly. Mr. Hughes must surely be a descendant of Jacob.

Mr. R. W. Perks, M.P., is a distinguished representative of the Nonconformist conscience, and took the chair at the meeting of the Anti-Gambling League. He is one of the original seven shareholders of the International Tower Construction Company, one of whose declared objects is "to hold and promote race-meetings."

In the *Vegetarian Messenger* for July is a discourse by the Rev. James Clark on "Vegetarianism Viewed from the Standpoint of the Bible." The old bloody sacrifices of the Jews are dismissed as being allowed for the hardness of their hearts, and no notice is taken of the voice from heaven saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat."

Mr. Malibran's account of the exorcism used in South America after a heretic's visit is paralleled in Brittany. When Renan visited his native place, he made a call upon some of his friends in youth. On going away he found that he had forgotten an umbrella and a pocket-book, and returned next day to claim these objects. He found the priest, with his clerk and altar boys, at work with book, bell, candle-light, and holy-water, removing from the house the evil influence

which Renan's presence in it was supposed to have occasioned. The old friend at first seemed ashamed, but, gathering courage, told him that she felt he was accused, and must remain so until he had publicly, with a white sheet about him, abjured his errors. It is now proposed that Renan's statue shall be placed in the square of his native town of Tréguier.

The subject of baptism is a refreshingly cool one for the hot weather, yet the writers in the *Kent and Sussex Courier*, who have been arguing upon the subject, import a good deal of warmth into the subject. The question to which we should like to see them address themselves is the divine efficacy of soap as an adjunct to baptism.

The most recent map issued by Cassell & Co., in connection with their serial publication, *The Countries of the World*, by Dr. Robert Brown, gives the following in round millions as the number of adherents of the different religions:—Buddhists, 502; Romanists, 190; Hindus, 176; Moslems, 169; Protestants, 115; Greek Church, 78; Jews, 7. Sikhs, Parsees, and Fetish-worshippers are not counted; and Free-thinkers appear to be lumped in with Protestants.

What a large part has been played by deception in the "ghost" business. The fact is notorious to every student of the "supernatural." We need not be surprised, therefore, that a "ghost" in the province of Kai, in Japan, turns out to be a girl of eighteen who had learnt the art of ventriloquism. She made the house "haunted" in order to compel her foster-parents to restore her to her real mother.

The Rev. Edward White wants to brace up the believing energies of Christians. In a letter to the *Christian World* he contends that Christ *created*, as well as *arranged*, in his miracles. "A man with a wooden leg," he says, "would not have appealed to the Savior in vain." Perhaps not. But he would certainly appeal to the Rev. Edward White in vain. Yet it was promised by Jesus that his true disciples should do greater wonders than he did himself.

"Misdirected Zeal" is the description of the Lord's Day Observance Society's proceedings given in the *Christian World*. "Fussy Bigotry" would be nearer the mark. However, we will not quarrel with our contemporary. We are glad to note that it refers to the old Bible story of Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, who went up a hill and saw the God of Israel, as "this barbaric narrative."

Poor Jesus Christ! He isn't in it with General Booth—at least according to the *Hull News*. The head of the Salvation Army, it appears, has "inspired his own family, and even his relatives-in-law," whereas "the greatest religious teacher whom earth has known failed in this particular." After this the "General" will be able to advertise himself as going one better than Jesus Christ, giving the *Hull News* as his authority.

Says the *Sydney Bulletin*: "The trombone religion is obviously on the down-grade now; the over-sea colony seems to be dead and buried; the submerged-tenth has gone bung; the collection withereth, and the jersey fadeth. When an idol like this falls nothing will put it on its pedestal again; and unless Booth can be proved to be Jack the Ripper, no one will ever take a serious interest in him any more."

L'Eglise Libre, a French Protestant journal, complains of the Salvation Army sending girls to all the Paris cafés to sell *En Avant* and other Salvationist literature. The café frequenters think their only object is money, and the girls are often subjected to insult. *L'Eglise Libre* says the practice is unseemly and dangerous, to use the mildest terms.

France has another sensational murder trial in the case of the young priest, Bruneau, who is accused of murdering his curé, M. Fricot, at Entrammes. According to the prosecution, Bruneau has for years been leading a double life. At Entrammes he was noted for his piety and religious zeal. Profiting by the reputation he thus achieved, he borrowed large sums of money from farmers and wealthy old ladies who frequented his church. He had suits of clothes of the ordinary pattern, which he would put on in order to go and spend part of his time in riotous living at a little town about twenty miles off, where he was unknown.

Bruneau is said to have been guilty of numerous acts of theft. One evening the curé and the young priest went into the garden together, and the curé disappeared. His body was found two days afterwards in a well, round which spots of blood had been discovered. Bruneau accounted for some bloodstains on his clothes by saying that his nose had bled. On being arrested, he merely said: "I shall say nothing, except that I am innocent, and that, although they may cut my head off, they will simply guillotine the wrong

man." He is also accused of having broken into the shop of a florist of Laval; of having choked the woman, and then plundered her till.

The publication of Zola's *Lourdes* in the *New York Herald* has provoked a lively controversy in its columns, and has added interest to a pilgrimage of American Catholics who have chartered a ship, which leaves Brooklyn for Lourdes on July 18. The Father who conducts the party will say mass "every day that the weather will permit." We suppose that is when he is not sea-sick.

An instance of Bible-fetishism is given in last week's *Inquirer*. An old woman was asked by a district visitor if she had a Bible. Certainly. Did she ever read it? No; but "it was always ready in case of sickness."

A writer in the *St. James's Gazette* complains of the misuse of the words *Anathema Maranatha*, which, he says, approach blasphemy, for they mean: "Let him be accursed; the Lord is at hand." Paul, who used the words originally, was, of course, privileged.

At Preston a replica of Michael Angelo's "David," which has been placed in the museum, has excited the reprobation of prurient prudes. The Town Council are implored to clothe the statue. Well, a linen ephod would suffice to display the costume in which David danced before the Lord. But if that does not content the Preston prudes, no doubt Mr. Gott would supply cheap trousering. What a pity the Lord still allows children to be born in a state of nudity. His attention ought to be called to the scandalous fact.

The Bradford Y.M.C.A. has been entirely abandoned. Even the offer of premises rent-free has not been sufficient to keep the movement afloat. The young men of Bradford want association, but Christian association is not of the manly type desiderated.

A correspondent in the London *Standard* complains of a "tall, bearded man, aged about fifty-three," with a "raucous voice," who hails people in Oxford-street, enquiring whether their sins are forgiven. He thinks the police ought to interfere with this peripatetic soul-saver. But the *Standard* says it is best to let such persons alone, for the order to which he belongs is "one of the most distinct and numerous in this country." "There are myriads of respectable human beings in this country," the *Standard* observes, "whose sense of religion has tormented them into idiocy or madness." O worthy editor, we thank thee for the words. A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, we say, a Daniel.

The Bishop of Dover has been calling upon the laity to augment the stipends of poor clergymen in his diocese. Why does he not, first of all, live something after the rate of his Master himself! We guess that any of the apostles would have thought himself well-off with half the stipend of the poorest clergyman in Kent.

Bishop Westcott spoke in very hopeful terms of the labor problem at the Northumberland Miners' Gala, at Blyth. But he made a little slip in saying of the workers that the more they had the more they wanted. "Give them £10,000 a day, and they would want £20,000." The Bishop has the ten thousand, not daily, but annually. Was he measuring the workman's corn out of the episcopal bushel?

A Sydney suburban Church of England clergyman is said to be worth £100,000. Yet his assistant receives the usual curate's allowance.

Some one has taken the trouble to send us a printed sermon by a foolish person called William Birch, on "Comic Prophetic Events," but as it was delivered so long ago as March 18, 1888, we prefer to let it pass without criticism. It is William Birch's "776th" sermon, which says much for his powers of endurance, and still more for the powers of endurance of his congregation.

Profanity is creeping into the regular press. Here is a bit from a trade journal, the *Shoe and Leather Record*,—being the valedictory address of a country minister to his congregation:—"Brothers and sisters, I come to say goodbye. I don't think God loves this church, because none of you ever die. I don't think you love each other, because I never marry any of you. I don't think you love me, because you have not paid my salary. Your donations were mouldy fruit and wormy apples; and by their fruits ye shall know them. Brothers, I am going away to a better place. I have been called to be chaplain of a gaol. Where I go ye cannot come; but I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also."

If Christ came to Chicago just now, he would have an opportunity of discovering how far Christianity is a solution of the labor problem. Mr. Stead, who, although not quite

omniscient, has been to Chicago, though he evidently thinks Christ has not, confesses that the Church is helpless in dealing with such disputes as are now threatening almost to rend the States with civil war.

It is the proud boast of Americans that their State has nothing to do with the Church. Yet not only are all churches untaxed, but in a circular issued by the Society for the Preservation of American Institutions it is shown that, out of £1,000,000 appropriated by the City of New York for benevolence, during the last ten years, £900,000 went to the Catholic Church.

The German Parliament will not consent to the re-admission of the Jesuits, but as a compromise admit the Redemptorist and White Fathers. Apparently they are oblivious that these are affiliated orders under the rule of the General of the Jesuits. In fact, these and other orders were instituted by the Jesuits, because they were prevented from carrying out their schemes in their own name.

James William Wood, who posed as "King Solomon" in the Army of the Lord at Edward-street, Brighton, is reported to have turned up again with some devoted followers in Australia. His attempts to revive the methods of the Apostolic Age at Brighton were not looked on favorably by the respectable inhabitants.

Despite the death of Jezreel, *i.e.*, James White, and his wife, Queen Esther, there is still a band of Jezreelites in London. They have their headquarters in the Hampstead-road, and are known by a curious fashion of wearing the hair curled over the ears, for which they cite Lev. xix. 27. They believe that God is female as much as male, and quote Gen. i. 27 as favoring the bi-sexual doctrine.

There is much rivalry among the sects in the work of converting the natives of South Africa. The Methodists appear to be succeeding best, by their love-feasts and an old Christian institution revived in the warm climate, that of midnight meetings. This malpractice is very popular with the Kaffirs. "The Spirit comes in the night," they say. A native preacher, T. Nakin, remarks, "First comes the Spirit, but afterwards, on the way home, comes the temptation of the Flesh."

Mr. Thomas Tyler argues in the *Academy* that the *Song of Songs* has been already expurgated. He points to the Septuagint translation of chapter vi., 10-12, as proving that at the time when that version was made there was an additional passage, for the meaning of which he gives a reference to Proverbs v. 19, and Ezekiel xxiii. 3, 8, and 21. Most people will think that, if "God's smutty poem" was ever expurgated, the work was done very inefficiently.

Professor J. Rhodes Buchanan, an American "calamity prophet," appeals to what he calls the historic fact that Cazotte predicted the French Revolution, and the ends of several of the actors therein. He should know that this legend has long been exploded. Mr. Alger, in his *Glimpses of the French Revolution*, points out that it was a confessed invention of La Harpe, written a good while after the events predicted had occurred. La Harpe copied the sage practice of the writers of Isaiah and Daniel.

It is hard to tell whether the atrocities perpetrated by the English in Africa are worse than those of the Germans in Africa, or those of the French in Africa. But the reports from the English in Mashonaland, and the French at Timbuctoo, and the Germans in the Cameroons, are certainly most repulsive reading for any civilised people. Savages of the blackest hue were never guilty of more cruel or more infamous deeds than the troops and the agents of these three European powers have recently been guilty of in Africa. Africa seems doomed to suffer from the progress of the thing called Christian civilisation.—*New York Sun*.

According to the *Church Times* report of the meeting of the English Church Union, called to consider "the New Criticism," and especially to condemn the Rev. C. Gore's *Law Mundi*, the name of Mr. Gore was "mentioned more than once in a manner very far from respectful, and it required the firmness of the President [Earl Halifax] to check a threatened outbreak of disorder once or twice." The Rev. H. R. Barker moved a resolution calling on the English Church Union to condemn "all criticism of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments which tends to throw doubt on their substantial historical trustworthiness, to injure their paramount authority, or to impute ignorance, misapprehension, or error to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ." The English Church Union would not adopt this, but voted instead for an amendment declaring that the Union adhered to the traditional position of the Church on the question of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Barker declared his intention to demand a poll of the whole body of the Union upon the question.

The Rev. Peter McInnis Neilson, minister at Stratford, who was arrested when on the point of sailing from Southampton, was brought before the magistrates for neglecting to maintain his wife, whereby she became chargeable to the West Ham Union. The man of God, not having made any satisfactory arrangements with the guardians, was ordered to be detained until satisfactory sureties were given.

Professor Henry Drummond says that he recently read through seven hundred boys' letters, in which, among other things, they were asked to state what influence chiefly kept them from going to the bad. Not a single boy mentioned the minister, but hundreds of them mentioned their mothers.

On Monday evening, July 2, an entertainment was held in a church school at Wimbledon in aid of the local poultry show. One of the items on the program was a stump speech by a lad who introduced a joke about two niggers in a thunderstorm; one suggesting it was the day of judgment, and the other ridiculing the idea of the *day* of judgment in the *night*. Such fun as this was naturally not to the taste of the vicar, who sternly called the boy off the platform, and rated him soundly for offering such an insult to "religion." Somehow or other, the vicar's fastidiousness was not shared by the majority of the audience, and the boy showed his independence by refusing to sing again.

The clergy are rare beggars. Here, for instance, is the vicar of St. Stephen's, Holloway, asking the public at large, through a press advertisement, for £300 to repair the church, and hundreds of pounds more for other expenditures in connection with his gospel-shop. Why on earth doesn't he ask the Lord for the money? "Ask and ye shall receive." Oh yes, that's as true as Gospel. But the parson smiles and writes out an advertisement.

This year produced the hottest eighteenth of June ever known in the history of New York. Three murders and eleven suicides marked it in the calendar. Such is the effect of heat. What a lot of murders and suicides there must be in the kingdom of Old Blazes!

THE FOOTE TESTIMONIAL FUND.

[Eighth List.]

W. R., £3 16s.; E. Hartmann, £1 1s.; E. Hickman, 10s. 6d.; F. Armstead, 10s.; Mr. Cronkshaw, 10s.; J. A. R., 5s.; C. Warley, 5s.; J. Titherington (2nd sub.), 4s.; S. M. Peacock, 2s. 6d.; A. B. Moss (2nd sub.), 2s. 6d.; R. H. W., 2s. 6d.; Ips, 2s. 6d.; A. Gibson, 2s. 6d.; F. Schaller, 2s. 6d.; C. Shepherd, 2s. 6d.; J. J. T., 2s. 6d.; W. Morris, 2s. 6d.; H. F. S., 2s. 6d.; God, 2s.; J. Gompertz, 2s.; J. Hession, 2s.; R. Ashworth, 2s.; Socialist Admiral, 2s.; T. Evans, 2s.; A. Friend, 2s.; J. Scott, 1s. 6d.; W. S. Towell, 1s.; W. L. Jones, 1s.; Mr. Carr, 1s.; T. J. Sanders, 1s.; J. E. Saunders, 1s.; Socinian, 1s.; G. Church, 1s.; A. Dawson (2nd sub.), 1s.; Mrs. R. Ashworth, 1s.; J. Leonard, 1s.; M. Ormerod, 1s.; Socialist, 1s.; E. Richardson, 1s.; J. Graham, 1s.; W. H. Worsley, 1s.; A. Baker, 1s.; J. Heathcote, 1s.; R. Morgan, 1s.; T. Graham, 1s.; J. Bramwell, 1s.; H. Reynolds, 1s.; J. Andrews, 1s.; W. Ryder, 1s.; J. W., 1s.; G. L., 1s.; V. Morria, 1s.; F. Engel, 1s.; Boy Shepherd, 1s.; Friend, 6d.; W. Fitzgerald, 6d.; Four Socialists, 6d. each; J. Galloway, 6d.

Friends having collecting cards are requested to return them before the end of July.

GEO. ANDERSON, *Treasurer*, 35a Great George-street, S.W.
R. FORDER, *Sub-Treasurer*, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.
GEO. WARD, *Secretary*, 91 Mildmay-park, N.

Church Taxation.

The State of New York has a constitutional convention now in session. A proposition is before it not to exempt church property from taxation, but to make it bear equally, with all other property, the burden of governmental protection. The census of 1890 showed that in that State alone \$140,123,008 were invested in Church property. The real value is probably many times that amount, for the estimated value of the Trinity Church property, in the city of New York, alone exceeds \$50,000,000.

Colonel Ingersoll is quoted as citing a passage from Benjamin Franklin which seems pointed: "When a religion is good I conceive that it will support itself. When it cannot support itself, and God does not care to support it, so its professors are obliged to call for help from the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."

SPECIAL.

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

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 15, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London, E.C. : 7.30, "Christ in Chicago?" (Admission free; reserved seats, 3d. and 6d.)

July and August, London Hall of Science every Sunday evening.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—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.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

X. Y. Z.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. DIAC.—See "Book Chat."

J. LITTLE.—The matter has been noticed already, and hardly seems worth a second mention. Thanks all the same.

E. G. TAYLOR.—We have not Buckle's *Fraser* article on the Pooley case at hand. You will find it in his *Miscellaneous Works* (3 vols.), which is no doubt in the Manchester Free Library.

J. A. RICHARDSON.—Your "Last Chapter" is clever, but the incident it deals with is half forgotten already.

J. C. LEWIS.—Cuttings are always welcome.

J. BURRELL.—See paragraphs. We hope the concert for the benefit of Mr. Ballance will prove a great success. Shall be happy to render any assistance in our power.

LOUIS LEVINE (Charleston).—Your American papers and scraps are ever welcome.

J. M. HEADLEY, 21 North Howard-street, Great Yarmouth, and at 67 St. Nicholas-road, supplies the *Freethinker* and progressive publications at these shops, and at his stall on the beach near the Concert Ring.

C. WRIGHT.—Lot's wife is still shown on Mount Usam. It is a spar of rock forty feet high. There were giants on the earth in those days. The Fathers had some nasty tales about its feminine character.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: Huddersfield Branch, 7s. 6d.; W. Mann, 5s.

H. GILBERT.—We will not mention the person you refer to. He would be too glad to get the advertisement. His ruffianism is constitutional. Still, we are glad he is on the Christian side. It is so much better than having him on ours. Perhaps it would be a good thing to give him a lesson. We have our eye upon him, and we may find an opportunity. With regard to disturbance at a Freethought meeting, any Christian who is guilty of it can be proceeded against by way of summons.

E. S.—(1) "False and pernicious teaching" is a direct quotation from the Nonconformist manifesto in our June 10 article, and it refers to the Church of England. "Down with the Church" is our own summary of the Nonconformist policy. It is a telling way of expressing the essence of Disestablishment and Disendowment. (2) Certainly a Socialist can join the N.S.S. We have members who are Socialists. (3) Christian Socialism is an absurd phrase. The name of the religion that was established by God Almighty is used as an adjective to qualify a human scheme of improvement. Oh what a fall is there! (4) Will see about the tracts.

F. G. ROE.—Thanks for enclosure. What is your intention in sending us the Summer Program?

C. HUGHES writes: "I sent your admirably-written article on the late Lord Coleridge to his son, whose reply may interest you: 'Many thanks for your letter and its enclosure. I once backed a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, and I have never seen fit to alter my opinion. Yours faithfully, COLERIDGE.'" The Bill that Lord Coleridge refers to is the one that was introduced by Charles Bradlaugh.

INQUIRER.—(1) Church-rates are not entirely abolished. They still exist in some places, as in the City of London. (2) The "Voluntary Rate" you refer to, in connexion with St. Leonard's, Shore-ditch, has no force whatever, though we dare say it will deceive a good many innocent persons, and induce them to shell out.

W. CABELL.—The misprints were diabolical, and we have given the printer a wiggling.

E. J. N.—The Westminster Confession is easily procured in Scotland. In England it has to be picked up second-hand.

LIVERPOOL MEMBER.—No doubt you will consider our last week's article sufficient. Resolutions are useless when not acknowledged by the press.

S. GOLDSTEIN.—Mr. Forder will send the *Freethinker* as desired. See "Sugar Plums."

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Liberator—Western Figaro—Ironclad Age—Truthseeker—La Verité—Dagblad—Progressive Thinker—Freedom—Für Unsere Jugend—Crusader—Man of the World—Monist—World's Advance Thought—Universal Republic—Secular Thought—Echo—Light of Truth—Open Court—Liberty—Glasgow Weekly Herald—New York Herald—Isle of Man Times—Animal's Friend—New York Book Review—Twentieth Century—Scottish Guardian—Yarmouth Gazette—Bradford Telegraph—Crescent—Hackney and Kingsland Gazette—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Boston Guardian—Newcastle Daily Leader.

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.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

DESPITE the sultry weather, there was a good audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "John Burns's Mistake." Mr. Foote occupies the platform again this evening (July 15), his subject being "Christ in Chicago!"

Mr. Charles Watts lectured at Liverpool on Sunday, July 1, and in Manchester last Sunday. Considering the excessively hot weather we have had, the audiences at both places were good. Discussions followed all the lectures. Mr. Watts will now rest from lecturing until September next, when he will commence his winter's work by a special course of lectures at the Hall of Science, London.

Next week's *Freethinker* will contain a fine portrait of Mr. Charles Watts, with a biographical notice. We hope our readers will introduce that number of the *Freethinker* to their friends and acquaintances, to give them an opportunity of seeing the kind of monsters that are bred by Atheism.

Margate is the place fixed upon for the London Secular Federation's annual excursion on Sunday, August 19. The air of that favorite watering-place is particularly bracing, and the excursionists will have plenty of time to enjoy it. A special train is chartered to run right through from London Bridge without stopping, except at Chatham, where the local Branch of the N.S.S. will join the party. The return tickets are only four shillings, and we hope the London Secularists will turn up in strong force on this occasion. Mr. Foote will join the excursion and preside at the common tea which is being arranged for at Mr. Munn's.

One of our readers at Khaarstroom, South Africa, who receives a copy of the *Freethinker* weekly from a London friend, tells us it has made a very favorable impression out there. One colonist, a Dutchman, is so pleased with the paper that he has become a regular subscriber, and is doing his best to promote our circulation amongst his friends and acquaintances. A good many copies of this journal are sent out to that part of the world.

Wimbledon Secularists are requested to support the local Branch of the N.S.S. in its Sunday propaganda. Mr. Stanley Jones was to have lectured at the Broadway last Sunday, but the rain necessitated an adjournment to Liberty Hall. Out of doors an organised opposition was threatened by a Christian Evidence man, and even in the hall a Christian so brutally interrupted the speaker that he and his followers were ordered out of the room by the proprietor. The policy of ruffianism is being steadily pursued by our Christian opponents, and our platforms should be supported against their base attempts to create disorder.

Foggy November is supposed to be the season of suicides. But this is a great mistake. More people take their lives in the Dog Days. For this reason we call our readers' attention to our reprint of David Hume's *Essay on Suicide*, with a critical and historical introduction by G. W. Foote. Not that our readers are likely to commit self-slaughter, only they are interested in all the problems of humanity, and this is one that is assuming great importance. Hume's essay is not included in the ordinary editions of his writings.

In America the Catholic demand for State-aid for their parish-schools is aiding the cause of Secular education. Few religionists outside the Catholic Church are prepared to see its religious teaching State-endowed, and among those best acquainted with the free schools the conviction is spreading that they can best do their proper work when giving no religious instruction whatever.

The *Monist* for July gives a portrait of the late Prof. G. J. Romanes, with an "In Memoriam" notice by Dr. Carus, who also writes on "The Message of Monism to the World," and Prof. Adolf Harnack on "The Religion of Science." Prof. Richard Garbe contributes valuable "Outlines of a History of Indian Philosophy."

The Huddersfield Secular Society's Sick Club sends us its annual report to June 26, 1894. There seems to have been very little sickness among the members, and the balance-sheet looks remarkably healthy. It might be well for other places to follow the example of Huddersfield in this matter.

Cremation is extending in America, and the *New York Sun* devotes a long article, with illustrations, to the subject of cinerary urns to contain the ashes of the dead. Bronze, copper, cast metal, onyx, marble, and china are brought into requisition for these memorials.

The Manchester Crematorium was opened in October, 1893. In that year three, and in 1893 thirty, cremations took place. During the first six months of the present year there have been twenty-nine cremations, showing that the Pagan mode of disposing of the dead is spreading. Of those cremated, forty were males and twenty females.

The Westminster Branch of the N.S.S. is getting up a concert for the benefit of Mr. Ballance, one of its members, who met with an accident which has rendered him stone deaf, and incapacitated him from following his trade of a plumber. It is hoped to set him up in business in some way. The concert is to take place at the Westminster Town Hall on Thursday, July 26. The tickets are 5s., 2s. 6d., 1s., and 6d., and can be obtained of any London Branch secretary, of Miss Vance at 28 Stonecutter-street, or of Mr. J. Burrell, 136 Lillington-street, Westminster, S.W. It should be added that Mr. Ballance has done a great deal of good work for the Westminster Branch, which very much misses the service he has so long been in the habit of rendering.

The Islington Branch spent a pleasant day at Hampton Court on Sunday last. They went down by road, disported themselves in Court Gardens and on river, took tea *ensemble*, and altogether had an invigorating time. The skies smiled on the Sabbath-breakers, and only frowned when they were well on their homeward way.

A newsagent at Shepherd's Bush, who has only recently opened a shop there, finds a good sale for the *Freethinker*. He disposes of nearly three quires (81 copies) every week, and the sale is steadily increasing. He himself is so pleased with the paper that he has ordered all the back numbers for his own reading.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

EXECUTIVE MEETING held at the Hall of Science, June 21. The President in the chair. Present: Messrs. C. Watts, S. Hartmann, R. O. Smith, G. Standring, E. Truelove, J. M. Wheeler, C. J. Hunt, J. Samson, W. Heaford, R. Forder, A. B. Moss, W. Callow, G. J. Warren, G. Ward, E. Bater, T. Gorniot, E. Quay, H. J. Stace, G. G. Steel, G. H. Baker, and E. M. Vance, Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed, cash statement received. Cheques were ordered to be drawn for printing account and office money. Expenses of Conference were discussed and ordered to be paid.

The Committees for the ensuing year were then elected:—*Benevolent Fund*.—The members of last year's Committee—viz., Messrs. Burton, Hartmann, Warren, Hunt, Roger, Mrs. Thornton Smith, and Mrs. Standring—were re-elected; and, in addition, Misses E. Robins and A. Brown and Mr. Geo. Ward.

Organisation Committee.—Messrs. C. Watts, R. Forder, T. Gorniot, R. O. Smith, G. Standring, G. Ward, G. J. Warren, and S. Hartmann.

Sub-Committee for Examining Lecturers.—Messrs. J. M. Wheeler, J. Samson, and V. Roger.

Finance Committee.—Messrs. G. G. Steel and E. Quay.

An application from the London Secular Federation for a grant towards the Outdoor Propaganda was considered; and, on the motion of Mr. Warren, seconded by Mr. Bater, £5 was granted.

The President addressed the meeting on the subject of the Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, and it was resolved to appeal to all members of the N.S.S. and Freethinkers generally to write to their local Members of Parliament, asking them to support the Bill. Two hundred and fifty printed copies of the Bill were ordered to be purchased, to be supplied by the Secretary to applicants.

The following resolution from the London Secular Federation was then discussed: "That the Executive be asked, if possible, to secure a Secular candidate for the School Board in Finsbury."

Mr. Watts explained that he had decided not to run for East Lambeth. It having been intimated that Mr. G. H. Baker had some intention of standing for Finsbury, that gentleman was invited to explain his position to the meeting; and, after some discussion, it was finally moved by Mr. Bater, seconded by Mr. Steel, "That the meeting proposes Mr. Charles Watts as a Secular candidate for the School Board Election in Finsbury, and pledges itself to support him." Carried unanimously.

The President was asked to make some additions to the Principles and Objects, in accordance with the resolutions passed at the Conference.

Correspondence from the Battersea and Reading Branches was remitted to the Organisation Committee, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *Assistant Secretary*.

RELIGION IN GERMANY.

We are often told that Germany is reverting to religion. This because, under the pious Emperor's *régime*, the open expression of heresy is attended with pains and penalties. Religion is insisted on in schools. Professors who taught their actual opinions would soon be removed from their chairs; but the countrymen of Lessing, Goethe, Heine, and Schopenhauer remain indifferent to religion.

A certain Professor Richard has been writing to the *Lutheran Observer* a description of the religious condition of the city and of the country in general. He tells his readers that, while the entire population of Berlin is 1,600,000, there are "less than 60,000 church sittings in the entire city, including even the halls in which worship is held." In Wittenberg, the home of Luther, and where he nailed his theses to the church door, though it has 16,000 inhabitants, "for decades only one church has been open," and the sacristan told Professor Richard that "about four hundred people were accustomed to attend church services there." Dr. Stoecker, the Court preacher, has published in his own paper this paragraph: "With few exceptions, the academically-educated German is alienated from the Christian faith. The amount of ancient culture and scientific knowledge which he must take in during the gymnasial time, without a sufficient counterbalance in the world of Christian and national thought, leads the German mind, if it be not restrained by special influences, to freethinking and indifference."

Socialism is doubtless on the increase in Germany, and the overwhelming mass of Socialists are Freethinkers. The majority hold that religion is a private affair, but a section contend it is public and should be proscribed. A recent writer says: "I attended a Socialistic 'free religious community' meeting in Berlin, and learned that the congregation consisted of 10,000 persons. At the meeting I bought several printed sermons, some of the titles of which were:—*Das Leben ohne Gott—Life without God; Die ateistische Sittlichkeit—Atheistic Morality; Die Weltlichkeit der Schule—The Secularisation of the Schools*. The congregation supports its own school, in which are 500 pupils from ten to fifteen years of age. I attended the school exercises for three hours, and I am surprised that the German Government tolerates it. The three years' course of the school is intended to give the pupil Freethinking and Materialistic views of life. The present teacher is Bruno Wille, a well-known Socialist and Freethinker."

The Myth of Cain and Abel Explained.

"The Israelites, a nation of sheep-feeders, had been for a considerable time in a hostile position towards the Egyptians, a nation of tillers of the ground. They were going to wander as sheep-feeders in the desert, and, at the first convenient time, they were to attack the Canaanites, a nation of tillers of the ground. It seemed desirable that they should have some pretence for doing so; and one was found in the belief that, from the earliest ages, the agriculturist had, when opportunity was favourable, oppressed the shepherd; and, therefore, at any time, the shepherd tribe was entitled to revenge itself on any agricultural tribe."—*Sir G. B. Airy (Astronomer-Royal), "Notes on the Earlier Hebrew Scriptures," pp. 26, 27.*

A PERSIAN FREETHINKING POET.

AN Oriental Freethinking poet, whose name does not occur in my *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, is Nasir-ibn-Khusrau (Abu Mu'in). A probably apocryphal *Diary of a Journey through Syria and Palestine*, in 1047 A.D., ascribed to him, has been translated by Guy Le Strange, and published by the Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society. This, to me, is chiefly interesting because the writer gives an account of the Freethinking poet, Abu-l-âla (Ma'arri), to whom I devoted a recent article (*Freethinker*, June 17). He says that the blind poet possessed great wealth, and slaves, and very numerous attendants. All the inhabitants of the city seemed to be his servants. As for himself, he had adopted the way of the ascetics, being clothed in a rug, and never quitting his house. He took for his daily bread half a man (or about one and a half pound) of barley bread, and beyond this eating nothing more. The gate of his house is ever open. He never refuses any one of his goods; fasts daily, and meditates nightly, not occupying himself with worldly things. Some one said to him, "God has given you wealth and goods. Why distribute them to others, and not enjoy them yourself?" "No more than what I must eat can I take," he answered.

Abu Mu'in-Nasir, the son of Khusrau, was born in the neighborhood of Balkh, in the year 1003 A.D. (394 A.H.). He was a descendant of the Imman Ali. Early in life he travelled through the northern provinces of India, possibly in the service of Sultan Mahmud, of Ghazni, or of his son, Masoud, for he alludes to having attended the court of these princes. He was, by his own account, an Epicurean, addicted to the pleasures of the wine-cup.

Thus, one of the verses ascribed to him says:—

Dead drunk, not like a common sot, one day
Nasir-i-Khusrau went to take the air.
Hard by a dung-heap he espied a grave,
And straightway cried, "O, ye who stand and stare,
Behold the world! Behold its luxuries!
Its dainties here—the fools who ate them, there!"

Evidently no common sot, for bad habits did not subdue his biting wit. As to his opinions there has been much controversy. Judging by his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, some have supposed him to be truly pious; while others have considered him a Dehary (freethinker), a Barzakby (deist), or that he was a materialist and blasphemer. He is said to have been a friend of Husain-ibn-Abdallah-ibn-Sina, known to Westerns as Avicenna, the Arabic Pantheistic philosopher and "prince of physicians" (980-1037). He travelled widely, and studied many languages and various philosophies. A pretended autobiography, which makes him live 140 years, tells how he was accused of, and persecuted for, heresy and atheism, but makes him die a professed believer in the orthodox Moslem faith. The date of his death is generally given as 481 A.H. (1088), which brings him to the ripe age of eighty-five, despite his drinking habits.

Though the description of Palestine ascribed to Nasir-i-Khusrau may be by a different author, it presents many items of interest, and shows that the Christian legend was a very different one in his day to that now current. For instance, they showed in Jerusalem the birthplace of Jesus and his cradle, a stone receptacle large enough for a man to make therein his prayer prostrations. The Mosque was known as Mahd-Isa (the cradle of Jesus). "On the shaft of one of the columns there is impressed a mark as though a person had gripped the stone with two fingers; and they say that Mary, when taken in the pangs of labor, did thus with one hand seize upon the stone." He says that the Christians had a church, which they call Bai'at-al-Kumânah, the Church of the Dung-hill—probably a Muslim corruption of Kayamah, or Resurrection. Inside Isa, peace be upon him, is portrayed riding on an ass. There is also a picture divided into two parts, representing heaven and hell.

A lithographed copy of the poems of Nasir-ibn-Khusrau was published at Tabriz in 1864. A translation of one poem is given in Mr. E. G. Broome's *A Year Amongst the Persians* (p. 480). It will suffice to show that Nasir-ibn-Khusrau inherited some of the thought and scepticism of Abu Fala, and was a worthy predecessor of Omar Khayyam.

O God, although through fear I hardly dare
To hint it, all our trouble springs from Thee;
Had'st Thou no sand or gravel in Thy shoes,
What prompted Thee to bid the Devil be?

'Twere well if Thou had'st made the lips and teeth
Of Tartar beauties not so fair to see:
With cries of "On!" Thou bid'st the hound pursue,
With cries of "On!" Thou bid'st the quarry flee!

With what force does the old Persian seize on the point put forward by several modern evolutionists, that the speed of the hunted is ever matched by the speed of the hunters, so that on the Theistic hypothesis the Lord has designed the legs of the wolf for pursuit, and the legs of the deer for running away.

This little taste of Nasir's quality makes one desire more. Hafiz, Firdusi, Sadi, Jami, and Omar Khayyam are no longer mere empty names. They have, moreover—especially the last—contributed to the enduring reputation of their translators. The note of penetrating thought and intellectual liberty is attached to all the great Persian poets, and Mr. Broome, or any other Persian scholar, may do a service to literature if he makes us further acquainted with the poetical works of Nasir-i-Khusrau.

J. M. W.

WHAT OCCURRED AT GADARA.

THE Mahatmic report of the new vernacular version of "What Occurred at Cana" (*Freethinker*, July 8) having excited considerable interest, especially in the temperance world, I proceed to offer further extracts from the Revised Version of the Gospels. In the example here given from Matthew viii. 28-34 the Sanctified Spook, under whose inspiration the version has been made, has taken no other liberty with the text than simply bringing it up to date, in conformity with the thought and language of the day.

"On landing at the other side of the lake in the country of the Gadarenes, Jesus was met by two madmen, supposed to be possessed by devils, issuing from the subterraneous catacombs, where the people of that country deposited their dead. They were so violent in behavior that people were afraid of travelling that road. Seeing Jesus, whom they had heard of, they broke out into loud vociferation, such as their demented minds dictated. 'Why the deuce do you come here, O Jesus, you Son of God? Have you come to inflict torments upon us before our time?' It happened that there was, at some distance, a large number of pigs feeding. The madmen, after the absurd fashion of their kind, asked that the trouble with which they were afflicted should go out of them and pass into the pigs. 'Go,' said he, and no sooner had he spoken than the whole herd of pigs, affrighted at his voice and at the madmen, rushed violently down a precipice into the sea, and perished. Their keepers ran into the town, telling what had happened to the swine and the madmen. Alarmed at this public destruction of good pork, the people came out in a body to meet Jesus, and unanimously entreated him to leave their district."

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

DR. CONYERS MIDDLETON.

THE *Westminster Review* for July devotes an article to this Freethinking clergyman, who did so much to explode the pretensions of the Christian fathers, and thereby the foundations of the Christian faith. Of his *Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers* the writer speaks very highly. He says: "Among the great men who have treated the early ages of Christianity in a critical spirit, Gibbon alone deserves to be put into competition with him; and even Gibbon, who at times allows his scorn to get the better of his tact, must yield the palm to Middleton. Any man who would undertake to republish, at a cheap price, *The Free Inquiry* and a selection of other masterpieces of Middleton would do an equal service to liberal thought and to sound literary culture." Middleton's work, though ostensibly an attack on the outworks of the Christian Church, really penetrated to the citadel. He showed that there was nothing worthy of the name of evidence for the miraculous powers alleged to subsist in the early Church, and that the fathers, upon whose testimony the allegations were received, were crafty, credulous, and unworthy of credence. But it is upon the evidence of these very men that our Gospels are received. Their veracity even is not above suspicion. To take but one example, St. Jerome, after relating an absurd story about certain reddish stones which the Christians asserted to be stained with the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, adds: "I do not find fault with an error which flows from hatred to the Jews and a pious zeal for the Christian faith."

Such is the character of the witnesses upon whose authority the Gospel tradition depends. Macaulay said that

Middleton's work "settled the authority of the Fathers for all reasonable men." Middleton paused at the apostolic age, only denying that miracles had taken place since. But everyone saw that his arguments would logically lead to the rejection of the Gospel miracles also. "It was not the conclusion that frightened people," said Macaulay, "but the means by which the conclusion was reached." Some Catholics have been bold enough to take the bull by the horns and say: "Yes! there is no better evidence for the earliest miracles than for the modern ones; indeed, those taking place to-day at Lourdes are immensely better attested than those of the Gospels."

The writer of the article in the *Westminster Review* concludes with the following noteworthy words: "Middleton's work, so far as it went, was done with commendable thoroughness. But he was either afraid or unwilling to pursue it further. Many superstitions yet remain unchecked. The slavery to names and dates still continues in undiminished vigor. That which we instinctively deny of a Dominic we admit in the case of a Paul; and the shadow of Peter, if it does not now-a-days heal diseases, is still miraculously long and portentously dark. Let us not pause in the good work. The process which Middleton applied to the miracles of the second and third centuries let us boldly apply a little nearer home. Let us cease to dispute about the outposts, and carry our assault directly against the citadel."

A letter by Dr. Conyers Middleton to Lord Hervey, Sept. 13, 1736, shows sufficiently that he, at least, was mainly a Christian for what he could pick up. Speaking of the bishops and church dignitaries, he says: "These slumberers in stalls suspect me very unjustly of ill designs against their peace; there are many things in the Church that I wholly dislike, yet, whilst I am content to acquiesce in the ill, I should be glad to taste a little of the good, and to have some amends for that *ugly assent and consent*, which no man of sense can approve of. We read of some of the earliest disciples of Christ who followed him, not for his works, but his loaves. These are certainly plausible, because they saw his miracles; but to us, who had not the happiness to see the *one*, it may be allowable to have some inclination to the *other*." This letter is given in J. Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (v. 421), who says: "It is also well known that he wrote a treatise on the inutility and inefficacy of Prayer, which was communicated to Lord Bolingbroke, who much approved it, and advised the publication of it." Dr. Heberden, to whom the paper was given, committed it to the flames, "an act worthy of so good a man, and the fittest end of such a work."

CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA.

PROFESSOR R. L. GAENER, the scientist who went to Africa, with phonographs, to learn the language of chimpanzees and other apes, has returned to America, and, of course, been interviewed. In the *Chicago Herald* he is reported as saying:—

"I wish I could make my visit and work in Africa of value to the Christian people of this country, who have spent millions of dollars in sending missionaries to that continent. My advice would be given to them untainted by prejudice, and I would say, 'Don't send any more missionaries there.' It cannot be said that I, southerner that I am and formerly slave-owner, am prejudiced in favor of the negro; but I can say that I found them contented and happy in their native country, and in their lives practising all the virtues that we as Christians practise, and not as many vices."

RELIGION BAD FOR AFRICANS.

"I can say without feeling, except for regret, that the Christian religion has a bad effect upon the African. In the towns where missionaries make conversions families become divided and dissensions arise. More than this, the African, upon conversion, immediately practises zealously that portion of the Christian creed relating to atonement. He commits depredations and asks forgiveness, and then believes himself guiltless."

Thus Professor Garner admits that Christianity puts a premium on crime. He said that in the districts he visited such a thing as murder within the community was unknown. He says that, when asked about white men, "I was compelled to tell them to be careful of the man who came to them with 'God palaver,' as they called it. I felt it my duty to tell them to be distrustful of the messages the missionaries might bring. But I told them to treat kindly the white man who would come to them and ask to deal with them commercially. I think it is not only a great waste of energy and money to send missionaries to Africa, but it is absolutely detrimental to the people sought to be benefited."

Sky-pilot—"I can never credit that we are descended from monkeys." Miss Smart (after looking him over)—"I can."

BOOK CHAT.

THE latest volume of the "Sacred Books of the East," edited by F. Max Müller, vol. 49, is the *Buddhist Mahayana Texts* (Oxford Clarendon Press). In the first, the Buddha Karita, of Asvoghosa, tells (book i., v. 19, p. 4) of the Buddhist Immaculate Conception in the following language: "Then, falling from the host of beings in the Tushita heaven, and illuminating the three worlds, the most excellent of Bodhisattvas suddenly entered at a thought into her womb, like the Naga-king entering the cave of Nanda." It declares (v. 29) his birth miraculous, and that he announced, "I am born for supreme knowledge, for the welfare of the world; thus this is my last birth." Buddha is made almost as cheeky as Jesus Christ, in announcing himself as "the way, the truth, and the life." But, of course, these utterances were invented for them by devoted followers.

The Buddhists also appear to have had their Assumption of the Virgin Mary, for this sacred book declares (book iv., v. 18, p. 19): "But the queen Maya, having seen the great glory of her new-born son, like some Rishi of the gods, could not sustain the joy which it brought, and that she might not die she went to heaven." It also makes Buddha worker of miracles, "delivering from their ills the blind, the hump-backed, the lame, the insane, as well as the destitute" (book xvii., p. 25).

Some of the Buddhist sacred books used in Japan are translated by Professor Max Müller himself, who, in his introduction, denies the charge of representing the "Sacred Books of the East" as better, purer, and more beautiful than they are.

"Peter Lombard" mentions in the *Church Times* that he was speaking of St. Jerome, and saying what a wonderful scholar he was, when a young lady remarked, "Was it not he who wrote *Three Men in a Boat*?" The wonderful scholarship of Jerome, by the way, will evaporate if the productions ascribed to this father were, like so many ascribed to other Christian fathers, the work of a number of monks collaborating for their own ends.

From its anxiety for orthodoxy, Dr. Smith's Bible Dictionary is so much out of date that we are pleased to observe that Messrs. A. and C. Black will issue a new *Dictionary of the Bible*, which was projected by the late Professor W. Robertson Smith, and which will embody the results of the best criticism. It will be edited by Dr. Cheyne, assisted by Dr. J. Sutherland Black, and will contain several articles written by the late Professor Robertson Smith.

A trenchant criticism on Mr. Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* appears in the current *Fortnightly*, from the pen of Dr. Karl Pearson.

A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, by the late F. H. A. Scrivener, fourth edition, edited by the Rev. E. Miller, 2 vols.; G. Bell & Sons, 1894. This new edition of a standard work is almost doubled in size, and, while passing under Dr. Scrivener's name, contains much of which he might not have approved. The chapter on the Latin Vulgate, for instance, is re-written under the direction of Bishop Wordsworth, although no indication of this appears on the title-page. But the work, though full of learning, is written to subserve the interests of the faith, and throughout its bias appears. The yarns of the monks are repeated as if gospel. To us the most notable thing is its admissions. Thus it says (vol. i., p. 3): "The more numerous and venerable the documents within our reach, the more extensive is the view we obtain of the variations (or various readings, as they are called) that prevail in manuscripts. If the number of these variations was rightly computed at thirty thousand in Mill's time, a century and a half ago, they must at present amount to, at least, fourfold that quantity." Again (vol. ii., p. 272): "All that can be inferred from searching into the history of the sacred text amounts to no more than this: that extensive variations, arising, no doubt, from the wide circulation of the New Testament in different regions, and among nations of diverse languages, subsisted from the earliest period to which our records extend." So it appears from this standard work that, while God took the trouble to give an inspired revelation, he took no pains whatever to ensure a correct text.

25 Bewijzen voor de Waarheid van den Christelijken Godsdienst (L. J. Vermeer, 92 Haarlemmerdijk, Amsterdam; 25 cents). This pamphlet gives twenty-five of the most convincing reasons for the truth of the Christian religion ever offered to sceptics. They are carefully thought out, weighty incisive, well calculated to produce conversion, and,

indeed, unanswerable. Their force is brought home by illustrations. The frontispiece, representing a torture-chamber of the Inquisition, gives a preliminary idea of the mighty power of religion; and could the pressing arguments of thumbscrew, rack, spiked collar, wheel, and Spanish boot be once more brought home to heretics, they might well give pause to the most obdurate infidel. The preface to the work, wherein Torquemada & Co. commend the efficacy of their arguments to their "beloved brethren in Christ," and the historical memoranda which accompany the illustrations, forcibly elucidate the blessings of Christianity.

* * *

We understand that Professor Edwin Johnson has made a translation of the work of his predecessor, Father Hardouin, which has never been rendered into English. Like Professor Johnson's own works, it is of historic literary interest, apart from the question of the truth of the theory that the bulk of ancient literature is really the work of Benedictine monks.

* * *

The Good Time Coming is a brightly written pamphlet by an Aberdeen Socialist, Mr. W. Diack. It is well worth reading, even by the opponents of State Socialism. The author sees that society must have a moral basis, and cannot be founded on the mere appetite for good things among the masses.—A. Martin, George-street, Aberdeen (1d.).

CORRESPONDENCE.

ANSWER TO PRAYER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The *Boston Investigator* errs for once. I could get answers to prayers in the course of ten years which would suffice to buy a much larger quantity of pea-nuts than a pint; for it wholly depends upon what you pray for as to whether or no you are likely to get an answer—*e.g.*, my mare is likely, in the course of nature, to have a foal next May. I pray that she will have a foal; and I'll bet Price Hughes, or any other man who prefers lying to betting, ten to one that I win. On the other hand, I might pray that my mare should, at the end of her period of gestation, give birth to a mastodon; and I'll, in this instance, bet Hughes, or any other man, a thousand pounds to a gooseberry she won't "throw" a young mastodon. If I pray for rain in this country, it is about even betting that my prayer is "answered," seeing that on at least half the days of the year there is, generally speaking, rainfall in these islands. If, on the other hand, I pray for rain in the dry season at, say, Timbuctoo, it is a million to one I get no "answer."

Some ingenious tribes have invented a praying machine, anticipating a penny-in-the-slot sort of religion, which we, in civilised lands, shall doubtless soon arrive at; and I'll just stake my bottom dollar that that machine, praying for probable things, would attain a success unreachable by the truthful Hughes, if he were to pray, and were assisted in his prayers by all his dupes, for things improbable. In fact, the so-called "answers" to prayers depend on the natural reasonableness of the things or occurrences we pray for. If we pray for a slice of the moon, or that our favorite piece of china, which has been smashed by accident, shall accidentally become whole again, we are not likely to get any answer; if we pray that the rate collector may not forget to call upon us during the quarter, or that the youngsters next door shall not omit to thrash their piano in their customary vigorous manner during the coming month, the answer to such prayers will be certain. These instances will serve, as well as a hundred others, to show that not only can you get answers to your prayers, but, if you mind what you pray for, you can get answers as regularly as you make prayers. I intend praying to-day that I may be compelled to attend to my business in the usual manner on Monday, just to give reasonable prayer a chance, and I'll be bound I shall find myself on Monday morning at my usual work, at my ordinary hour. And the *Boston Investigator* thinks that my prayers are not answered!

POCCURANTE.

P.S.—People, generally speaking, suffer many illnesses before the fatal one attacks them. Therefore, the prayers for the recovery of the sick are usually answered, at least nine times out of ten; prayer for recovery from measles being answered with ten thousand times more regularity than prayer for recovery from lockjaw, or cancer, or consumption—which latter diseases, indeed, seem very unremunerative objects for the prayers of any religion.—P.

An Irishman, attending a conventicle, heard a member make the following announcement: "Brethren and Sisters, I am going to marry a daughter of the Lord—" "The deuce you are!" says Pat; "then I hope it'll be a long time afore you'll see your Father-in-Law."

PROFANE JOKES.

The Lord, no doubt, has often noticed the vast difference in the prayers of an engaged girl and of a married woman.

"I want to be an angel,
To sing he tried and tried.
His neighbors got their pistols, and
His wish was gratified."

Two of the best theological definitions ever put forward come from school-boys: that of Faith as "believing what you know isn't true"; and Parable, "a heavenly story with no earthly meaning."

THE PASTOR'S LITTLE GIBE.

We all have here our work to do,
If we'd be worthy of our hire;
For some must watch, while some must pray—
The fighting we do in the choir."

Aunt Clara—"Georgie, God has brought a little baby to our house." Georgie—"Honest, Aunt Clara?" Aunt Clara—"Yes; you can come and see it." Georgie—"I suppose God got tired of it and left it on the front steps, like the man I read about, didn't he?"

A GREAT AMERICAN.—Foreign Tourist (in old churchyard)—"Bare your head, my son. This is the grave of a great man, loved and honored by the American people." Son—"How do you know? There is no name on the crumbling stone, and the grave is wholly neglected." Foreign Tourist—"That's how I know."

Bagley was one of three hundred men and women who were standing on the pier waiting to board an excursion boat. An excitable Jew behind him kept pushing him ahead. Bagley expostulated with him mildly at first, but this had no effect, so finally, much out of patience, he turned around and exclaimed, "This isn't the crucifixion you're going to; it's only a boat-ride."

AT THE PEARLY GATES.—St. Peter—"What were you on earth?" Candidate—"A banker." St. Peter—"Ah! did you ever speculate with trust funds?" Candidate—"No." St. Peter—"Ever rob the bank?" Candidate—"No." St. Peter—"Ever swear to a false bank-statement?" Candidate—"No." St. Peter—"Just join that band of impostors over in that corner. You'd make more by telling a straight story up here, old man."

A rustic recently went to church where a mission sermon was being preached from the text, "Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." In the afternoon he went to church in an adjacent parish, and there saw the same mission preacher, who again took for his text, "Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." The following morning he hurried to catch a train, and as he neared the station he heard the tolling of the church bell. Scarcely had he seated himself in the train when a gentleman, whom he recognised as the preacher, asked him if he could tell him who the bell was tolling for? "I don't rightly know," was the reply, "but I think it must be Peter's wife's mother, as she was mortal bad all day yesterday."

Bells.

Visitors to the gallery devoted to religious objects in the British Museum will be struck by the immense bell, embossed with Chinese characters, placed among the objects illustrative of Buddhism. Bells, indeed, have been religious objects of great antiquity in that religion. Their primary purpose was to ward off evil spirits, and it was with this object they were adopted by Christian monks from their Buddhist brethren. Durand, whose *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* enjoyed a great reputation in the Middle Ages, and was one of the earliest works printed, assures us that evil spirits were much afraid of bells. So, also, says Wynkin de Worde in the *Golden Legend*: "It is said, the evil spyrtes that ben in the region of thayre, doute moche when they hear the belles rongen; and this is the cause why the belles ben rongen when it thondreth, and when grete tempeste and outrages of wether happen, to the ende that the feinds and wycked spyrtes should be abashed and flee, and cease of the movynge of tempeste." Bells were not only rung during thunderstorms, but while any one was dying, in order to drive the evil spirits away and give the ghost a good start. Hence, perhaps, exclusive of the additional labor, was occasioned the high price demanded for tolling the greatest bell of the church, as "the passing-bell;" for, that being louder, the evil spirits must go farther off to be clear of its sound, by which the poor soul got so much the start of them; besides, being heard farther off, it would likewise procure the dying man a greater number of prayers.

Scraps.

Fear was born in the dark.

Man may be more pious with his eyes shut, but he cannot see so much.

The more mystery is encouraged, the more deceit can impose upon the human mind.

Men have no more right to choose the amusements for other men than they have to choose their religion for them.

When everybody is happy here, there will be less talk about happiness hereafter.

Man should no more preach Jesus and him crucified than he should preach Socrates and him poisoned, or Bruno and him burned at the stake.

The beating of humanity's heart cannot be felt by placing the finger on the Church's pulse.

Christianity says to the world: "When you have sinned enough, come unto me, and I will save you."

Religion is no more the parent of morality than an incubator is the mother of a chicken.

There is about as much perfumery in petroleum as there is righteousness in orthodoxy.

If Christianity is true, why is the Church so afraid of infidelity?

Cremation has killed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

—*Boston Investigator.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc. must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.C.): 7, musical selections; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christ in Chicago!" (Admission free; reserved seats, 3d. and 6d.)

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 8.30, social gathering for N.S.S. members and friends (2d.). Tuesday, at 8.30, dancing class.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. Rowney, "Death and Resurrection of an Immortal God."

FINSBURY PARK: Tuesday, at 8.30, important members' meeting at 91 Mildmay Park.

WIMBLEDON (Liberty Hall, Broadway): Tuesday, at 8.30, entertainment and dance.

N.S.S. CRICKET CLUB.—First meeting at Milner Lodge, 18 Waterloo-terrace, Upper-street, Islington, on Sunday at 6.30. All intending to join should be present.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.15, F. Haslam, "Exodus from Egypt."

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. James, "Lying for Jesus."

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Jews' March."

EDMONTON (Angel-road): 7, Arthur B. Moss, "Design and Natural Selection."

FINSBURY PARK (near the band-stand): 11, H. Courtney will lecture; 3, C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Education."

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, W. Heaford, "Secularism and Christianity." Thursday, at 8, W. J. Ramsey, "Christian Evidencemongers."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. Heaford, "Christ and his Teachings"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "Science and the Bible." Wednesday, at 8, J. Rowney, "Death and Eternal Judgment."

ISLINGTON (Prebend-street, Packington-street): 11.30, J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, H. Snell, "The Bible in Board Schools."

LAMBETH (Kennington-green, near Vestry Hall): 6.30, C. J. Hunt, "Christianity and Education."

LEYTON (High-road, near Vicarage-road): 11.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

MILE-END WASTE: 11.30, St. John, "Why I am an Atheist."

REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "Education and Theology"; 3.30, George Standing will lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 11.15, A. B. Moss will lecture; 3.15, G. Spiller (of the Ethical Society), "Is Christianity a Success?"

WALTHAMSTOW (Markhouse-road): 6.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

WESTMINSTER (Old Pimlico Pier): 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Secularism: its Relation to the Problems of the Day."

WIMBLEDON (Broadway, near Railway Station): 7, F. Haslam will lecture.

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. Guest, "Theology and Education"; 7, S. E. Easton will lecture. Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Woman."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Coffee House, corner of Broad-street): Thursdays, at 8, papers, discussions, etc.

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall): 10, ramble to Brockley.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Ann-street): 11, Tontine Society; 7, Roger Pride, "Secular Socialism."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, H. Smith, "Secular Education and Crime." July 22, excursion to New Brighton; tickets, 3s.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 2.15, excursion to Glen Howe; members and friends meet near top of Surrey-street, opposite Monolith. Return fare, 1s.; children, 6d.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

JARROW (Market-square): 6.30, members meet for ramble.

NEWCASTLE (Quayside): 11, Mr. Stansell will lecture.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—July 15 to 20, Ryhope; 22, South Shields; 26, Wood Green; 29, m. and a. Victoria Park, e. Walthamstow. August 2, Wood Green; 5, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 9, Wood Green; 12, m. Clerkenwell, a. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 16, Wood Green; 19, Reading.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—July 15, m. Westminster, a. Finsbury Park; 22, m. Camberwell, a. Regent's Park, e. Camberwell; 29, m. and a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—July 15, m. Leyton, e. Walthamstow; 22, m. a. and e. Hyde Park; 26, e. Hammersmith; 29, m. Finsbury Park, e. Lambeth. August 5, m. Pimlico Pier, a. Regent's Park; 12, m. Battersea.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 41 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—July 15, m. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 22, m. Clerkenwell; 29, m. and e. Camberwell. August 12, Failsforth.

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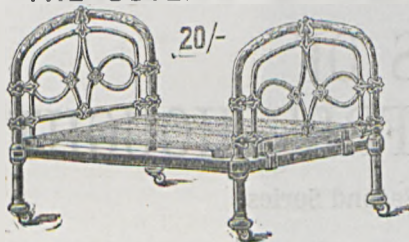
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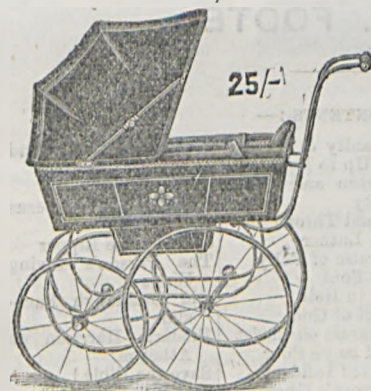
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

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