

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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MR. GLADSTONE ON HERESY.

MR. GLADSTONE would have made a good bishop. His very style is prelatial. He has always been profoundly interested in religious questions. Early in life he wrote a big book, full of sonorous commonplaces on Church and State, which was "cut up" by the nimble pen of Macaulay. Just before leaving the political world, in which he has been such a far-shining figure, he wrote a labored and sophistical defence of the Bible. And now that he has happily recovered from the effects of an operation for cataract, he gives the first fresh strength of his mind to an article in the *Nineteenth Century* on "The Place of Heresy and Schism in the Modern Christian Church."

After carefully reading Mr. Gladstone's article through more than once we are at a loss to understand his object. The old parliamentary hand has cultivated the oracular manner of composition so long and assiduously that it has apparently mastered *him*. He has become the slave of his own instrument, which is by no means an uncommon occurrence. This is, at any rate, the obvious conclusion. But, after all, Mr. Gladstone is nothing if not subtle; and it may be that he has worked certain passages into this article, which is so generally obscure, for the purpose of appealing to them by-and-by in order to show—when the time comes to be more specific—that he "had already expressed himself to the same purpose in an article which did not attract the full measure of attention which he expected." If this be the case, despite the fact of his great age and his retirement from active politics, we should say that he has written this article in the interest of Disestablishment. Perhaps it is this very supposition which leads a Church paper to say that "this extraordinary man" may die a Catholic or a Baptist.

Roughly speaking, Mr. Gladstone argues that ancient heresies, such as the Church purged herself of in the early centuries, were transient phenomena; whereas the Protestant heresies, to use the language of the Catholics, have evidently come to stay; and perhaps there is now no great need of outward unity, as the spirit of Christianity may manifest itself in divers forms. As a matter of fact, there is a real unity in all this diversity, for these "dissonant and conflicting bodies" are all agreed on the "great central tenets of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of our Lord," which constitute the "very kernel of the whole Gospel."

This will be pleasant reading to the Nonconformists, who have broken away from the Church of England, as she broke away from the Church of Rome. It will be still more pleasant for them to read the following: "I have seen and known, and but too easily could quote the cases, in which the Christian side of political controversies has been largely made over by the members of the English Church to the championship of Nonconformists. I take it, for example, to be beyond all question that, had the matter depended wholly on the sentiment and action of the

National Church, the Act for the extinction of negro slavery would not have been passed so soon as in the year 1833." Mr. Gladstone is still a "loyal son" of the Church of England, but as Disestablishment is a plank of the Liberal program, he is led to play the part of a candid friend to his dear old mother. He will not disown her, but he reminds her of her "goings on," and one of these days he will call in the police.

Lord Rosebery, a few months ago, in his speech at Edinburgh, gave utterance to some Erastian sentiments, which are not shared by Mr. Gladstone. "Foul fall the day," he exclaims, "when the persons of this world shall, on whatever pretext, take into their uncommissioned hands the manipulation of the religion of our Lord and Savior"—which, by the way, is precisely what they did in establishing the Church of England, with its Prayer Book and its Thirty-Nine Articles. Mr. Gladstone also glances at the Diggleites on the London School Board, who are certainly trying to "frame an undenominational religion much to their liking," and to "authorise it by law in public elementary schools." The grand old man's advice to Christianity is to "keep its own acts to its own agents." The advice is excellent, and if Mr. Gladstone means it he is committed to Secular Education. Board School teachers are not the proper persons to impart religion to children. They are "uncommissioned"—that is, by the Holy Ghost, and they have no right to "trespass on the province of the sanctuary." Let the "commissioned" persons—that is, the Christian ministers, impart religion to the children, not in profane schools, but in consecrated churches and chapels, where they have a perfect right to teach any nonsense to those who are willing to receive it.

It is not our intention to follow Mr. Gladstone any further in respect to matters which are perhaps of great interest to the Christian Churches, but of little interest to outsiders. We shall now deal with his remarks on Heresy, leaving Schism to the tender mercies of Mr. Gladstone's fellow believers.

What is Heresy? The word comes from a Greek root, signifying to take or choose. A heretic, therefore, is one who chooses for himself; and, as to choose is to think, he is one who thinks for himself. Mr. Gladstone admits that "heresy does not in itself imply poisonous or mischievous opinion. It means self-chosen and self-formed opinion." Thus the sin of heresy consists in what Ingersoll calls taking a road of your own. Orthodox people follow the beaten road. They walk along the Church highway. It never occurs to them to ask how and when it was constructed; and as every road in life ends in death, beyond which no one is able to see, it is not so clear that the orthodox have such a very great advantage over the heretic. Besides, there are many religions in the world, and therefore many orthodox highways. It is only blind faith that can save a man from some measure of choice, and to whatever extent he chooses he is a heretic; for the sin is not in much or more, but in choosing at all. It is entirely a question of attitude. He

who defies God with a toothpick is as bad as he who defies him with an Armstrong gun.

"The Gospel," Mr. Gladstone says, "is not chosen or formed by us: but fashioned by God and tendered for our acceptance." How does he know that? Are there no other "revelations" than the Christian one? Would not Mr. Gladstone have spoken in the same way of the Koran or the Vedas if he had been born and bred in Turkey or India? Should logic be silenced by a geographical accident?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM.

No Secularist can be other than gratified that so much attention on the part of men of God, hitherto supposed to be devoted to theology and the affairs of another world, is directed to "the social problem" and the amelioration of this. It is a proof of the decisive advance of our principles all along the line. Something has been gained when Booth has to put forward a social scheme to obtain monetary support for the Salvation Army; when the question of municipal baths displaces the dogma of baptismal regeneration, and people care more for free evening schools than for the Apostolical Succession—more for the eight hours movement than for the Trinity.

The pleasing reflection that the claims of this world are forcing themselves to the front, gradually displacing those of a celestial dreamland, and that, in order for the Church to maintain its place and pretensions, it must pretend to secular utility, is, however, moderated by a few other considerations. In the first place, it is clear that, by coming down from lunar politics to the more practical work of preaching the improvement of human conditions, the clergy will best prolong their own dominance. At present the Christian Socialists in the Church are mainly hot-headed and warm-hearted enthusiasts, disgusted with the disparities of human fortune, and vividly contrasting the teachings of their Master with the actual conditions of modern life. But there is one thing always certain to sway a privileged caste or corporation—a consideration of its own interests. When we find Church dignitaries, and even a bishop with £10,000 a year, patronising Christian Socialism, we may well suspect an attempt to noble and lead and blindfold and strangle a movement which might otherwise prove dangerous. Be it observed, too, that the typical Christian Socialist of to-day is altogether of a different school from the Christian Socialist of the last generation. The followers of Kingsley and Maurice were of the Broad Church. They were anything but sacerdotal in their pretensions, and were, indeed, rather co-operators than State Socialists. The Christian Social Union is almost exclusively composed of members of the High Church, with pronounced sacerdotal tendencies. The leaders, Canon Scott Holland, Prebendary Eyton, Dean Stubbs, and even the Rev. J. Stewart Headlam, are all of the Catholic school, believing largely in ecclesiastic organisation as well as in economic organisation. Another pronounced feature of the Christian Socialism of the day is the disposition to put down objectionable things by law. With the Christian Socialist the law is the ever-ready *deus ex machina* that is to step in and put all things right by making them conform to the law of Christ. Christian ministers are not ashamed to acknowledge their own impotency, and that of their gospel, by appeals to law to suppress all they disagree with, and establish a "Christian organisation of industry." I fear that under this *régime* Freethought would have a short shrift. Indeed, they let us know that their organisation and re-organisation of society is exclusively Christian, and for Christians. Mr. Gore, the philosopher of the movement, lets us understand that the benefits of the coming Christian society, when industry is managed on Christian principles as it never has been during all the centuries that Christianity has been dominant, are only for Christians. The notion that opposition comes from enemies of God and enemies of society is certain to lead to intolerance and persecution. England has tried before now "the reign of saints," and is hardly likely to return to the experiment.

Christian Socialists profess to be democratic. Yet the Socialism of Christ, if Socialism it can be called, was intensely autocratic. What he proposed to set up was not a republic of man, but a kingdom of God upon the earth. He spoke as one having authority. He is called the prince of the house of David, the lion of the tribe of Judah. The very name Christ implies an anointed king. In selecting twelve apostles and declaring that they should rule over the twelve tribes of Israel, a sort of Duodecemvirate, and seventy disciples in imitation of the Jewish Sanhedrim, he, or rather the concoctors of the system which goes under his name, showed clearly that a new system of rule and a claim to universal dominion were intended. This claim has systematically and consistently been put forward, and, as far as possible, acted upon by the Catholic Church, which is still ready to coquette with Socialism for its own ends.

Christianity is all things to all men. In the gospels are blended two distinct and incongruous ideals. There is the ideal of the ascetic monk, the pattern of submission, the teacher of non-resistance to evil, who declares that the meek shall inherit the earth; and there is the ideal of the priest crusader, fiercely denouncing antagonists, declaring he will deny those who deny him, and heading a riot in the temple. Neither of these ideals is modern or suited to the needs of to-day. There is nothing in the Gospel in praise of labor or of education. The example offered is of a preacher who leaves his work. Paul, more moderate in this, is distinct in his inculcation of submission to the powers that be, and tells slaves to remain as they are. Peter says: "Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." John the Baptist tells the soldiers, "Be content with your wages."

Socialists regard poverty as a curse; Jesus said, "Blessed be ye poor." Jesus said, "The poor ye have always with you." Professor Hertzka, in his *Laws of Social Evolution*, calculates that, so far as Austria is concerned, the whole amount of labor and time force necessary, under modern methods, to supply not only the necessities of life, but the comforts of the well-to-do, could be provided for its twenty-two millions by the labors at the present rate of 930,000 persons. If all the five millions of Austrian males able to work did so, they could supply the whole population with all the necessaries and luxuries of life by working 37 days per year. If they chose to work 300 days per year, they would only have to do so during 1.38 hours in each day.

The method of Jesus in dealing with poverty was the almsgiving that is misnamed charity. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." This is neither the plan nor the ideal of modern Socialism. His parable of the vineyard, so often put forward by Christian Socialists, and made the text of Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, really endorses what Socialists complain of—viz., that those who do the least work come off best.

The old Pagan ethic was of a civic character, but the core of Christianity is intensely individualistic. Indeed, till recent times, it was considered as a great merit of Christianity that it appealed to man as an individual. Father, mother, wife, children, and friends are considered as nothing when compared with self-salvation or damnation. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The apostles knew of no other inspiration than the prospect of individual benefit. Peter said unto him: "Behold, we forsook all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" And Jesus answers: "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Material rule and absolute dominion over their fellows are thus promised as the reward of sacrifice on earth. Further, Jesus declares "everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." The communism of a hundred wives in heaven for wife desertion on earth is hardly the ideal of the nineteenth century.

J. M. WHEELER.

Mark Twain says:—Adam was but human. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake; he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent; then he would have eaten the serpent.

QUESTIONS FOR THEISTS.

(Continued from page 492.)

BEFORE the Theist can make good his assertion, that there exists "an infinite, all-powerful, and intelligent Being distinct from the universe," he should be able to satisfactorily answer the following questions: (1) Can the universe be limited by human thought? (2) Can we conceive of a time when the universe was not? (3) How is it possible for God, if he be distinct from nature, to control and regulate it? (4) Have we any proof that the power of nature is acquired and limited? (5) Where is the evidence that God's intelligence is different from, and superior to, that of man? (6) Supposing God exists, has his intelligence always been used for the benefit of the human family? (7) Is the world governed upon the principles of justice, goodness, and mercy? It occurs to us that, before the Theist should positively allege that he knows a God exists, a reasonable reply should be given to these queries. If it is admitted that no logical answer can be given to them, is not that very admission a proof that Theism is a belief without adequate evidence?

Remembering the difficulties that these questions suggest, it is not surprising that Dr. Knight, in his recent work, *Aspects of Theism*, should write thus: "The God of the logical understanding, whose existence is supposed to be attested by the necessary laws of mind, is the mere projected shadow of self. It has, therefore, no more than an ideal significance. The same may be said, with some abatements, of the Being whose existence is inferred from the phenomena of design. The ontologist and the teleologist unconsciously draw their own portrait; and, by an effort of thought, project it outward on the canvas of infinity." In reference to design, an able American writer puts the following pertinent question: "Did God design the universe? If so, his plans must be eternal—without beginning, and therefore uncaused. If God's plans are not eternal; if from time to time new plans originate in his mind, there must be an addition to his knowledge; and, if his knowledge admits of addition, it must be finite. But if his plans had no beginning; if, like himself, they are eternal, they must, like him, be independent of design. Now, the plan of a thing is as much evidence of design as the object which embodies the plan. Since the plans of deity are no proof of design that produced them (for they are supposed to be eternal), the plan of this universe, of course, was no evidence of a designing intelligence that produced it. But since the plan of the universe is as much evidence of design as the universe itself, and since the former is no evidence of design, it follows that design cannot be inferred from the existence of the universe."

Again, if it be contended that an intelligent power can and does control matter and force from outside the universe, it should be shown how this outside power can be separated in thought from matter and force, and yet, at the same time, be a perceptible existence. At the most this can only be inferred. Matter being infinite (that is, unlimited) in extension and duration, the "non-matter" cannot exist apart from it. Neither can it be ascertained how far (if there be any relation) the one is independent of the other, or how the presence of "non-matter" can be even inferred, except by its influence on matter. Is it possible to conceive of the universality of both matter and non-matter? The Theists speak of an "intelligent Being" who rules the universe and regulates the destiny of man. But intellect implies a power capable of exercising reason and judgment. We have no evidence of intellect existing by itself. Perception is a function of an organism; all intellect, as we know it, is attended by living organised matter, and the one is always related to the other, not apart from it.

We fail to see how the human mind can conceive an idea of an "intelligent Being" apart from, or independent of, matter, for the same reason that we are incapable of forming an idea that motion can exist separately from matter. In order to establish the existence of a Being distinct from matter, it is necessary to assume that matter is limited in extent and in time, and that it is destitute of all the properties that we claim it now possesses, except that of mere existence. But even then we should require evidence that any mind could have produced everything out of nothing, and have endowed it, under certain forms, with powers to live, feel, and think.

If it is assumed that all physical forces that are manifested in nature, which exhibit skill, will, intention, and purpose, are qualities of mind, and not of matter, then the question arises, By what mode of action does an "intelligent Being apart from them" exercise will, intention, and purpose, through such forces? If we do not know, why should we assume that we do?

But if all unverified assumptions are accepted, or are assumed, as necessary to explain phenomena, the evidence of them can be found only in the very nature that they are supposed to explain. Moreover, the assumption of an "intelligent Being" existing outside of nature can only be a deduction from manifestations inside of nature, where it is admitted that he is not present. This is a contradiction, for it implies that action is caused by a power that is not there to act. We can only assume nature and its properties as being capable of partial explanation, or even cognition; and, although we cannot fully account for them, we do but multiply impossibilities of thought by attempts to explain their ultimate nature, origin, and purpose. Is it not self-evident that—(1) Every part of existence, the All, must be related to every other part? (2) That the whole of existence can have no relation to any other whole? (3) That only the one whole contains self-knowledge, self-will, and self-intention? (4) If the universe, which to us is the whole, had intelligence imparted to it from without, when, where, and how was it imparted? (5) How could an intelligent person manifest intelligence, without the conditions being present which we know to be necessary for its manifestations?

Every intelligent being, whatever attributes he may be endowed with, must be a person having identity; he must also be distinguishable from every other intelligent being. The material world is full of such distinct intelligent beings, and therefore they must stand in some relation to any other being who may exist. We repeat, that a being, to be thought of at all, must be characterised by relation, likeness, and difference, which cannot be affirmed of an abstraction apart from the universe or separate from the All. Now, it may be fairly alleged that the very thought of personality is inconsistent with infinity. Experience teaches us that a being who feels, thinks, and reasons is limited by an organism that is acted upon, and that responds to the movements of an external world. From experience we also learn that no intelligent being can exercise his intellectual powers without food and air. We do not mean that thought is the direct product simply of food and air, any more than are muscular action and animal heat; but we do mean that we have no knowledge of living beings in which these three manifestations are not dependent upon food and air. Now, the question for Theists to endeavor to answer is, If the sources of these energies are not in the universe, where are they? Why should we attempt to rob nature, of whose power we know something, of that potency which is displayed on every hand, and ascribe it to a source of which nothing is known, whatever is believed upon the subject?

Further, to logically affirm the existence of an "intelligent Being" apart from the universe, not only must the universe be deprived of many of its properties, but it must be assumed that this supposed "intelligent Being," who is said to exist distinct from the universe, could operate from without, and at the same time be within the universe. Now, here is a difficulty. How could a person operate where he was not? If he is distinct from the universe, he is not in it; and if he is not there, how could he control and regulate that with which he is not connected? If it is said God is infinite, then in that case he is in the universe, and not apart from it. This may not be the perplexing metaphysical view of the matter, but we regard it as being the more reasonable and practical one.

We have had quite enough of mysticism associated with this question. Hence, Agnosticism upon this subject appears to us to be the more reasonable position to take. Agnostics, refusing to profess a knowledge they cannot command, aim to differentiate the knowable from the unknowable, and then devote their time and energies to widening the sphere of that within human gnosis. Whatever else is possible, it is certain that we can never extend the domain of the known by indulging in wild flights of the imagination respecting the unknown, and to us the unknowable. As Socrates observes: "Fancies beyond the reach of understanding, and which have yet been made the objects of belief—these have been the source of all the

disputes, errors, and superstitions which have prevailed in the world. Such national mysteries cannot be made subservient to the right use of humanity."

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

FOR many years now thoughtful men have watched that mighty structure of superstition, delusion, and fraud called "the Church of Christ," slowly going to ruin; and the fact that of late the process of decay is somewhat more rapid excites no surprise in them. It is the fruition of a long-deferred hope, the slow ripening of a seed unwittingly planted by "the Church" in the plenitude of her power, when she commanded where she now entreats.

The wonder is, not that the whirligig of time should bring the revenge we now see; it is rather that the hoary criminal should have eluded justice so long. For long and weary years we have watched the mills of the gods slowly grinding at this grist—watched and waited. It is now three hundred and forty years since John Calvin illustrated Christian love on the body of Servetus. The wonder is that men have permitted themselves to be mocked so long.

It is amusing to watch the ground and lofty tumbling now going on among those of the faithful, and those outside who dance to the music set by "the Church," who are just beginning to spell out what was blazoned in the heavens when the first unbeliever dared the fire—nay, what was written between the lines when the text, "He that believeth not shall be damned," first became part of the creed of Christendom.

When "the Church" first imbrued her hands in the blood of an unbeliever she decreed her own destruction; she made it the duty of all men to wage relentless war upon her. But persecution became a necessity when the dogma was adopted that unbelief is a deadly sin. To teach that unbelievers would be damned in hell was to take upon herself the duty of slaughtering them upon earth. The wonder is, not that she is now staggering under that intolerable burden, but that she has carried it so long.

But while we laugh at these tardy seers, we welcome them. They count as kindred souls. As soon as they first consciously perceive the glimmering of the dawn they become our friends and the enemies of "the Church," even though they continue for some time to affirm that it is still dark, and that the night is eternal.

The favorite delusion just now, among those loath to accept the implications of what they see, is that there is a something called Christianity ("Christ's Christianity," some of them call it), which is separate and distinct from "the Church," and not necessarily involved in the ruin of the latter.

"Three Critics" is the heading of a recent article in the *Springfield Republican*. The three critics are, Archbishop Ireland, Roman Catholic; Dr. E. H. Hall, Unitarian; and Dr. Briggs, "Liberal Presbyterian" (how queer that sounds). They substantially agree that there is a "growing divergence between the best intelligence of the time and the Church"; that "the new knowledge of the time compels men to ask troublesome questions, and because the Christian Church has only hesitating and unsatisfactory answers to them, they are driven back into scepticism and indifference"; that "the Church must answer or lose its thoughtful disciples"; that "people no longer trust its utterances on theology, because all that it has to say, officially and formally, is mediæval and outworn"; that "the men who are trained in the thought of the age cannot think the thoughts of the Church, and will not"; that "the Church of the day does not hold up a high ethical standard of conduct as an essential part of its scheme of salvation"; and that reunion between modern civilisation and the Church "is to be accomplished, not by the time-spirit adapting itself to the Church, but by the Church accepting, in large measure, the guidance of the time-spirit, modifying its theology to the demands of the thoughtful, free-minded men and women of our day, and giving up all its positions inconsistent with science, scholarship, and logic. It is the Church that must yield."

"Undoubtedly this is true," adds the wisacre of the *Republican*, "and yet there is nothing in this truth which at all menaces the permanency of Christianity or the hold of the simple gospel of Jesus on human hearts. The Church is not Christianity or any essential part of it, nor is theology or tradition. These are all instruments or channels through which the Christian life has flowed into the world, and as such must be changed to meet changing conditions and new demands. So long as Christianity remains the highest form of religious truth the world knows, whether it have supernatural sanction or not, it has nothing to fear from any change in the machinery of its expression which new conditions and new knowledge may demand."

It is difficult to understand such language as this. If it is prompted simply by a desire to salve the hurt caused by the penetration of these new ideas into the minds of the *Republican's* readers and save the paper from loss, it is intelligible indeed. We are perfectly familiar with the fact that what the press says about Christianity is to be understood simply as what editors think the public like to read. But one likes to believe that when men undertake to discuss questions of the most solemn import to mankind, questions about life and death and doom, about "the peopled earth, the unpeopled heaven, the o'erpeopled hell," what they have to say springs from clear thought and profound conviction. And when they mock us with empty words we cannot quite repress our indignation, even though long use and custom have familiarised us with this pious mockery.

What is Christianity? The question relates, of course, to the meaning of the word "Christianity." If there were a definite, tangible, visible thing, by universal consent called by that name, the answer would be simple. It would be necessary only to point to the thing. If all, or nearly all, the Christian world used the word in a clear and definite sense, and no large number calling themselves Christians ever attached a contradictory meaning to it, it would be easy to define it. But since the state of Christendom has long been such that whatever definition is given the word by a large body of Christians is at once contradicted by other large bodies of Christians, it long ago ceased to be fit to be used at all by the defenders of Christianity. Nothing conduces so much to clearness of thought as to refuse to use a word, not only till one is both sure he knows what he means by it, and can also make his readers understand what he means by it.

The case, let me remark, presents no difficulties to the opponents of the creeds of Christendom. When they say Christianity is not true they mean that nothing ever known to the world by that name is true, and the language carries its meaning on its face. But our Christian friends would do well to drop the word from their vocabulary until its meaning is settled.

What is Christianity? I propose to prove by solid argument that there is no such thing—an argument that is as iron to tow in comparison with anything I have ever found in the Christian evidences.

The triune "Church of Christ" is divided into three great bodies—Greeks, Protestants, and Roman Catholics—the three being one, "the bride of the Lamb," for they all speak of "the Church" in the singular number; and the language of the founder clearly implies unity and indivisibility. Moreover, no Christian will admit that "the Lamb" has three brides. But millions of Christians can be brought to testify that each of these great divisions is the "bride of the Lamb" to the exclusion of the two others.

I am treading on delicate ground here, dear reader; but you will kindly bear in mind that the difficulty is not of my creating. Since, now, we have the best of evidence—the testimony, namely, of two-thirds, roughly speaking, of the Christian world—that neither of these divisions is the true "bride of the Lamb," it follows that the Lamb has no bride, and that Christianity is not.

But if we leave the three one brides (or bride) to settle the dispute among herself (or themselves) and "go to the Bible" (Christ's Christianity) to find out what Christianity is, we shall return as empty-handed. In this field of argumentation we shall knock Christianity on the head with a text—nay, with several texts, in the manner of theologians. Is there any proposition clearly proven by a text that cannot also be clearly refuted by a text?

The founder of Christianity distinctly asserts that no

rich man can be a Christian; and since no man in these days is voluntarily poor, it follows that there are no Christians and no Christianity. He commands his disciples to submit without resistance to every form of outrage and wrong; and since no man heeds that command, there are no Christians. In Mark xvi. he gives certain signs by which believers (that is, Christians) may be known. They shall cast out devils, they shall handle venomous reptiles and swallow poison without harm, and perform other miracles. And since these signs are nowhere visible, it follows that there are no Christians. Again, he says that a Christian must hate his father and his mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and his own life. Now, it is notorious that Christian hate (and there is surely enough of it) is not carried quite to that pitch of absurdity; hence there is no Christianity.

What is Christianity? The trouble with those who rush into the lists to do battle for this "lost cause" is that they will not sit down before the word and patiently stay there until it yields up its meaning, if it has any; but they at once begin to dance around it, and perform genuflections, and toss it in the air, and juggle with it; and they fool with their tricks not only their audience, but themselves also.

What is Christianity? Again I say, it behoves every Christian apologist to drop the word from his vocabulary until general usage shall have settled its meaning. It is plain that no Christian can tell us what Christianity is; for, whatever definition he may give, along comes another Christian (all Christians are equally entitled to credence) and flatly contradicts him. Moreover, an unconquerable prejudice, incapacitating them for seeing the truth, is the heritage of woe to which the children of faith are born. No man knows what Christianity is until he holds it at a distance and views it in perspective.

Day before yesterday men bold enough to proclaim their disbelief in Christian dogmas were summarily dealt with. The rack, the dungeon, the stake—through fire to fire they went, and no man dared lift his voice in their behalf. Yesterday the teeth of the man-hunting Christian tigress had been drawn and her claws pared, and she had to be content without much blood. A few years in prison, with cold, hunger, rags, and filth—all this could be endured rather than the agony of the fire through which Servetus and Bruno went to undying fame, and set their souls as pilot stars in the heavens to show men the way to duty. To-day those who have wealth, or wit, or genius, or the title "Rev." or "D.D.," can say what they please against those dogmas without much inconvenience. Those not so fortunate must be more careful. In many parts of the Christian world they must be very careful and reticent, or suffer serious annoyance and loss. The poisoned arrows of vituperation still fly and wound. The "simple gospel of Jesus" is still potent enough to trample honest, poor men under foot, and heap good things upon those willing to pretend to believe what they know they do not believe. "The Church militant" reaches a dead hand through time and touches men into silence. "Heredity, the moulding force of circumstances, the iron hold of the past upon the present"—these, and not real belief, are what sustain the tottering throne. But the silence is becoming intolerable. The muttering thunders are beginning to be heard. Men cannot much longer stifle the voice of duty.

To-morrow many will be saying boldly what a few are now saying timidly, that among the evils remediable by man, that have devastated the world, Christianity stands pre-eminent,

By merit raised to that bad eminence;

an evil to be warred upon by all good men until it shall be finally destroyed out of the world. The next day "the Church" will have become a hated memory.

Lo, the foul phantoms, silent in the gloom
Of the flown ages, part to yield thee room.

And with one voice men will hasten to say they never believed her horrible dogmas, never supported or defended her, always opposed and denounced her.

Liberty, freedom to think and speak one's honest thought, now the high privilege of a few, will then have become the heritage of the many.

I count it immortal honor to be part of a

Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day,
proclaiming news of good to men. A. F. HAMILTON.
Truthseeker (New York).

PERVERSIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

To instance a tithe of the perversions of God's holy word found in our English translation, appointed to be read in churches, would take an entire number of the *Freethinker*. All the alleged Messianic prophecies are perversions of the Hebrew, as can be seen for the most part from the Revised Version or from Benisch's Jewish School and Family Bible. For the present I confine myself to but one class of perversions—that of proper names. The Revised Version made a stride towards exactness in allowing some of these to remain untranslated. Thus the misleading "grove" of the Authorised Version is now "Asherah," and known to pertain to the worship of the Assyrian goddess. The revisers ought to have gone much farther in this direction. Jahveh should be substituted in every place where we now find the Lord; Elohim should be in place of God; Elyon for most High; Psalm l. 1 should read El-Elohim Jahveh;* Shaddai for Almighty; Kadosh for Holy one; and Kadoshim for holy ones. The god of truth, Isaiah lxxv. 16, should appear as Amen. Sheol should have appeared in the passages rendered the pit, the grave, and hell; while the hell of the New Testament should have been Gehenna, or Hades, as it appears in the Greek.

The misrendering of personal names and personifications leads often to an entirely wrong conception. For instance, the word rendered "scapegoat" in Leviticus xvi. is Azazel, and Azazel was a personal spirit of evil. This is seen in the Revised Version of Leviticus xvi. 8, "And Aaron shall cast lots upon two goats, the one lot for the Lord (Jahveh) and the other lot for Azazel," the one being as much a personal spirit as the other.

The "screech-owl" of our Isaiah xxxiv. 14 ought to be Lilith, the spirit of the night, who was fabled to be the wife of Adam, his nightly consort. The Vulgate renders the term לילית by Lamia, the name of the Libyan queen, who was said to prey on children, and whose name became an equivalent for *witch*. To this day Russian Jews believe in and attempt to propitiate Lilith. In the curious passage in Proverbs xxx. 15, "The horse-leach hath two daughters crying, Give, Give," again it should be "Alukah hath two daughters." Alukah was another name of an evil spirit—a sort of nemesis or vampire supposed to hover o'er the sinner like an evil fate. So in Psalms xci. 6, for "the pestilence which walketh in darkness," we should read "Debher who stalketh in darkness"—Debher being related to the Babylonian plague-demon, Dibbara; and in the latter part of the verse we should read "from Ketch"—that is, the demon destroys at noon-day; for so the Targum renders it. In all these cases the Authorised Version conceals the evidence that the Bible writers believed in demons.

It may be said that the Hebrew terms, if untranslated, are meaningless; whereas the rendering of the Authorised Version gives some meaning. But this is my objection—that the meaning given is a wrong one. The fact that the Hebrew term is meaningless at once suggests inquiry, while the other puts it aside by a perversion. The person who reads that "he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord" (2 Kings xxiii. 6) may wonder how the dence a grove got into Solomon's shanty. But the person who reads in the Revised Version that it was the Asherah he brought out will be prepared to read the essay on "Phallic Worship among the Jews," in *Bible Studies*.

A prime necessity for the right understanding of old faiths is, that personifications should remain personifications. What a jumble we should make of Vedic religion if for "Agni" we always read "fire," or of Greek if for "Hera" we read "air." Rationalisers would have us read "the accuser," instead of "Satan," and turn the story of the temptation of Christ into an allegory. The only rational result of such interpretation is to make God and Christ just as much an allegory as Satan.

A deliberate perversion of a proper name, amounting to forgery, is the insertion of *n* in Judges xviii. 30, changing Moses into Mannasseh in order to destroy the damning evidence that the descendants of Moses were idolaters "until the day of the captivity of the land." So in Jeremiah xxxi. 6, for the "watchmen" on Mount Ephraim we should read the "Nazirim" or Nazarenes. In the famous Jacob's blessing (Genesis xlix. 10) they have made a person

* I would even give Exodus iii. 14 in the original, Ehyeh Ashur Ehyeh, since "I am that I am" is a misrendering.

of a place. "Until Shiloh come" should be "until he come to Shiloh." So, in Micah i. 10, Aphrah, instead of the name of a person, is the name of a village. In 1 Chronicles ix. 15, Bakhbakkar, Heresh, probably should be one person, Bakhbakkar the carpenter. Amos v. 26 confuses names and things. It should read, "You bear Succoth your sheik, Chiun (? Saturn) your images, your star gods which ye made to yourselves." Isaiah lxx. 11, instead of reading, "But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number," should read, "But ye that forsake Jahveh, that forget my sacred hill, that array a table for Gad and mix drink for Meni." The Revised Version has, "that prepare a table for Fortune and that fill up mingled wine into Destiny." Verse 16 of the same chapter, instead of "the god of truth," should be "the god Amen," the Egyptian God, whose worship was established in Palestine by Ramses II., who is declared in the Harris papyrus to have erected in Philistia a Rammesseeum to Amen in the city of Canaan. This god has found his way into all Christian liturgies.

There is another kind of perversion, which consists in putting sense and beauty where there are none in the original. Now, both the Hebrew and Greek are replete with verbal faults and illogicalities, which are usually respectably covered over by our beautiful English translation. Sometimes they peep out, as in the jumble of Ecclesiastes iv. 16 and Job xxviii. 3, 4, or the illogicalities of "Ye shall all be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you" (Deut. xxviii. 68), or the famous bull of 2 Kings xix. 35 and Isaiah xxxvii. 36, "And when they arose early in the morning behold they were all dead corpses." Our translators have been more decent than the Holy Ghost, substituting "abominations" for "dungy gods" (Deut. xxix. 17), and toning down some of the purple passages in Ezekiel and the Song of Songs which is not Solomon's. UNCLE BENJAMIN.

ACID DROPS.

A MEMBER of the Executive of the London Society of Compositors informs us that he has glanced over the new annual report of the West London Mission, which bears the signature of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, as well as the portraits of himself and his better half. As the reverend gentleman is a famous talker about Trade Unions, the living wage, and the claims of the workers, our correspondent was naturally surprised to find the Report bearing the imprint of a firm which is not included in the Society's list of "Fair Houses." But perhaps the head of this firm is a very good Methodist, and even a liberal subscriber to the cause of Christ—which must be counted unto him for righteousness.

"Bishop Ryle has left Liverpool for his annual holiday, which he intends to spend at Lowestoft, where he will stay for two months." This interesting announcement is taken from a London newspaper. It is pleasant to know that a poor bishop can take two months' holiday. Perhaps, if he made it twelve months, Liverpool would not be heartbroken.

Lights and Shadows, by the Rev. F. G. Lee, seems a curious book, if we may judge by a review of it in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The author tells a story of John Brown, a negro physician, who publicly denied his Maker (capital, please). "These frightful utterances—coarser than those of the American 'leaders of thought' and the 'advanced thinkers'—had no soon passed his lips when (*sic*) the man, suddenly seized by a terrible spasm, shrieking out 'O God!' fell suddenly off his chair, writhing on the floor, paralysed, and, for some minutes, apparently dead. He was removed to an adjacent room, where, stiff with pain and racked with agony, he continued to breathe till the morning."

Was there ever a more extraordinary jumble of nonsense? A blasphemer is *paralysed*, at the same time he *writhes*, and also at the same time he appears to be *dead*! A wonderful blasphemer, indeed.

"An inquest was held," Mr. Lee continues, "the whole facts were set forth, including a detailed statement of his many blasphemous and faithless words; but the jury returned a verdict of death from apoplexy." Many negroes "shook their heads at this bold verdict," and Mr. Lee shakes his too. It must be easy for Mr. Lee to shake his head. It cannot be very heavy.

"R. B. R." writes to the *Church Times* as follows: "In consequence of the growth of—shall I say criticism or knowledge?—I feel that I can no longer accept the old traditional views of the Old Testament in their entirety. For instance, I find it extremely difficult to believe that the Pentateuch came from Moses in its present form; that the Book of Isaiah is the work of one author; that the Book of Daniel is, as it stands, the work of that prophet." He wants to know whether he should be expelled from the English Church Union or the Anglican Church. As it is clear that he no longer holds by the old standard of the faith, he should move out of his own accord.

The discussion of the New Criticism, by the E. C. U., has only led to the increased circulation of *Law Mundi*, the book attacked by the Rev. Mr. Baker.

Bradford has almost as many children attending its evening schools as London. While, in proportion to the other large towns, the metropolis ought to have 100,000 children attending evening schools, the official record shows that the average attendance in 1892-3 was only some 11,000. Our clerical thwarters of education will not abolish the fees, although they amount to only a little over £4,000, and the Board gained £60,000 through the increased grants consequent upon freeing the day schools.

Father Anderdon, of the Society of Jesus, has been writing on Luther. Of course, he easily shows that the reformer was coarse—"a glutton and a drunkard"—he quotes from Alzog, and he cites several of his utterances which the most devoted Lutheran would hardly approve. But blackguarding Luther does not exonerate the Church. Coarse men are needed as sweeps and scavengers. Moreover, Father Anderdon reminds us that the reformer had the advantage of a cloistral training.

According to our spiritist friends, there is such a thing as the ghosts of clothes, the denizens of the next world having a disposition to array themselves in similar garments to those worn on earth. They have no information as to the manufacture and price of ghostly toggery.

The *Chicago Ledger* reports that a young newspaper man of Washington has been investigating the subject of the wearing apparel in which the spirits array themselves. He was up in the police-court to answer a charge of disturbing public worship, or something of that sort, and it transpired that he had been having a tussle with a spook at a spiritualists' *seance*. When the materialisation appeared, he made a rush for it. The spirit fled, and he pursued; and, being a better sprinter than the spirit, hampered as it was by its materialisation, he overtook it, and they had a very lively bout for about one minute, when the spirit sought refuge in a bedroom. The reporter brought away a garter and a pair of corsets, which he submitted to the examination of the court. He says that he thinks the ghost was about twenty-six years of age, and was a very well-developed figure.

If a wife in India is abandoned by her husband, she waits eight years if he has gone on a pilgrimage, six if he went to study, and three if he travelled for pleasure, and then is legally divorced, and may re-marry at her pleasure. Husbands who intend desertion usually go on religious pilgrimages. Evidently this custom was established by the Brahmins.

There is a story told of an excellent missionary who went converting. He gathered a lot of red men, and talked and talked about the "plan of salvation," and all that. The savage is by nature stoical, and by the way they sat quiet and listened, the clergyman thought a good work was being done. He went on to tell them of the brevity of life, beseeching them to redeem the time of which there was so little. Then quietly up rose the chief sachem of that tribe, and remarked that he couldn't see but the pale face and the red man were both alike as to time—both had all there was going.

The inefficacy of faith, prayer, and resignation to the will of God is illustrated by the Moslem pilgrims who every year die from cholera in large numbers. Mr. E. Franklin obtained, through the India office, a sample of the water in the holy well of Zem-Zem, used by the Moslem pilgrims at Mecca. It was full of dead microbes, and contained, in an equal volume, considerably more animal matter than is found in average London sewage. In addition, it afforded evidence of previous pollution with an amount of such matter at least six times as great as that contained in an equal volume of average London sewage. The water has been again recently analysed by Colonel Bonkowski Bey, consulting chemist to His Majesty the Sultan of Turkey. His results confirm Mr. Franklin's analysis. These devout worshippers of God only spread contagion

through the East, which, in the hot season, drifts towards Europe.

Oscar Wilde is a Pagan, but he is said to boast of a cousin, Miss Romola Tinyte, who sat to Poynter for a head of Christ, a female best suiting the artist's idea of the Christian idol. Poynter's figure is known as the Tynted Christ.

Paul said he did not suffer women to speak in the churches, but some of the Unitarians have got beyond Paul, and at Unity Church, Cleveland, Ohio, there are, as pastors, two women. They are the Rev. Marion Murdoch and the Rev. Florence Bock. They are highly educated women, having finished their education at Oxford University.

The Rev. Dr. J. S. Dennis, of the Christian mission at Beyrout, is unsparing in his denunciation of the ministers of other faiths than his own. In a new work on *Foreign Missions after a Century* he says of the priests of Oriental faiths, that they are, with some exceptions, "unfathomably base and defiled. They teach formality and superstition in their speech, hypocrisy and deception in their ecclesiastical service, immorality and covetousness in their lives, and pride and self-complacency in their official lordship. They hold the souls of men in darkness, terror, and abject dependence." By the way, the Rev. Mr. Dennis's own faith is an Oriental one.

The Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, enjoys a high reputation in Nonconformist circles, but his latest volume of sermons is described by a reviewer in a leading London evening journal as "windy, ill-considered platitudes."

Ought good Christians to play cards? The Rev. S. F. Smith answers the conundrum in this way: "How would it strike you to see the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle John sitting for a few hours over a card table playing poker or progressive euchre?" But the Rev. Austin Phelps says he knew an excellent church officer, who died insane, whose physician thought that life and reason might have been saved if his conscience had permitted him to cheer his hours of convalescence with whist and backgammon.

The American Catholic papers still show their vexation at the publication of Zola's *Louderes* in the Sunday *New York Herald*. The *Milwaukee Catholic Citizen* amusingly complains that "Zola looks upon the miracles of Lourdes as mere phenomena."

As a set off to Zola's novel, the *New York Herald* is now giving pious editorials, headed with a Bible text, in its Sunday edition. The one before us (July 22) is entitled "Seeking after God," and is as rare twaddle as if it emanated from a pulpit. The old design argument is trotted out. The editor is recommended to read Dr. Knight's *Aspects of Theism*.

Writing on Tammany in the *New York Herald*, the Rev. R. S. Macarthur says: "The fact is that the liquor saloon and the Roman Church practically dominate New York city. Whether Rome or alcohol is king it is not easy to determine, as they are in such close fellowship." As a consequence, corruption abounds. From the mayor to the street-sweepers, every official is a Catholic, and "the result is that we have one of the worst governed cities on the globe." The rev. gentleman goes on to say: "Divine Providence clearly decreed that there should be a great city on Manhattan Island." Did it also decree that it should be filled with corruption?

Mr. Judge, we believe, is accused of having disseminated, for Theosophical campaign purposes, certain literature purporting to issue from the astral and astute intellectuals of some Mahatmas, whereas, as a matter of fact, it emanated from the carnal hand of Mr. Judge himself, says one of our dailies. If this is the charge upon which the vice-president and general secretary is arraigned, his defence will be simple and conclusive. He need simply say: "It's true I wrote it; but the Mahatmas gave me leave to. If you wish to disprove it, fetch on your Mahatmas." There is the great beauty of the Mahatma, as Madame Blavatsky and others discovered; you can say anything you like of him, and nobody can disprove it.—*Religio-Philosophical Journal*.

Mr. Maskelyne has now a skit on "The Messages of the Mahatmas" at the Egyptian Hall. According to this version, they are occasioned by a political plot for overthrowing British rule in India. Professor Zooroster and the Countess Blarni conspire to hoodwink Mrs. Martha Toogood, a woman with a mission. There is an astral appearance of Koot Hoomi, who informs the lady that she has been Joan of Arc in a former incarnation, and in future shall be called Anna Bai, and devote herself to the re-uniting of the Brahmins, the Parsees, the Mohammedans, and the Buddhists into one great nation capable of resisting European civilisation, and repulsing the British lion with the help of Russia. Wondrous

tricks and illusions are mixed with the fun; but the ridicule is likely to be resented by the Theosophists, who regard joking as a sacrilege against their mysteries.

James Copeland, a high-toned, professional Theosophist, has a special Mahatma in tow, by whose assistance he has "precipitated" an astral picture at the house of a wealthy devotee—Mr. Kase, 161 North Fifteenth-street, Philadelphia. The canvas was placed in a cabinet, the spirits were invoked, and after five unsuccessful efforts "the masters relented." The picture represents a young lady in the costume of Eve before the Fall; only a gauzy scarf, "possibly a detached fragment of cloud," is about her "shapely loins."

"Mahatma" the ladies as much as you will.

The trick of the fig-leaf will cling to them still.

But what does Mrs. Kase say?

Professor S. S. Baldwin, the conjuror, whom Stead treated as a spiritist, despite his protestations to the contrary, is now in America. He has been to Thibet, and is engaged on a book to be called *Life in Mahatma Land*. He says that in the East he was known as the White Mahatma, and could duplicate the tricks of most of the fakirs he met. The *New York Herald* says: "He flatly refuses to believe in the suggestion of such a thing as the supernatural, and his eye, to penetrate the tricks and frauds of the Eastern magicians, was, apparently, quite as keen as when one after another he revealed the shams and hollow trickeries of Slade, Frank Foster, Mrs. Fox, and dozens of others who took advantage of the spiritualistic *furor* which swept over the country some ten or fifteen year ago."

It was, by the way, in the *New York Herald* September, 1888, that the two Fox sisters, the founders of modern spiritism, Margaret Fox Kane, and Kate Fox Jencken, confessed their joint fraud in their rapping manifestations. They admitted the raps were produced by the joints of the feet. They found, as children, that they could make their joints crack without lifting them from the floor, and alleged that they were led into the fraud by their elder sister, Leah Fox Underhill. On October 15, 1888, they authorized Mr. R. B. Davenport to write their confession, and it was published as *A Death-blow to Spiritualism*. But the medium business was too well established for this to kill it, and after an interview with Mr. Newton, the millionaire spiritist, the Fox sisters, who were, like Slade, confirmed inebriates, recanted their confession.

Baldwin tells some stiff tales of the illusions produced by the Indian Yogis, which he believes depend on their mesmeric powers, as while he was watching their performances his assistant was also photographing them. But what he saw, or thought he saw, did not appear in the camera. He says: "It was exactly the same with my endeavor to photograph the big mango trees, and all of this kind of manifestations. If I had failed merely upon one expedition after a few trials, I might attribute my failure to the lack of expertness on the part of my attendant, or the camera, or the light. But my attempts were conducted on a dozen different expeditions with different cameras, and by a man who took some of the finest photographs which I ever saw brought out of India."

According to the *Natal Weekly Mercury*, in the Transvaal Native War, Lieutenant Schroeder, under cover of a flag of truce, went with a party of six men to find a good place in which to operate with dynamite against the enemy. Such is Christian warfare employed against Kafirs.

Sabbath breaking is to be put down in Toronto. Mayor Kennedy woke up the other Sunday morning with a resolution to put the law in force. He telephoned for a conveyance, and drove to the police headquarters, to see that the arrangements were all complete for preventing the use of hired vehicles. Although the report does not say so, we should imagine it possible that the Mayor afterwards listened to a sermon on the text, "Physician, heal thyself."

We also learn from *Secular Thought* that the pious people of North-west Toronto are excited over the spread of infidelity in their neighborhood. They have decided to pray against this spiritual plague. About two hundred are engaged in the operation. They expect to convert all Toronto in a month. There are some sanguine people in north-west Toronto.

Further particulars are to hand respecting the case of Mr. J. B. Wise, an American Freethinker, who was arrested and lodged in Leavenworth Gaol for quoting an objectionable text of Scripture in a correspondence with the Rev. H. B. Vennum, who himself set the police in motion. Mr. Wise gives an account of the affair in the *New York Truth-seeker*. He was kept in gaol for four weeks before he was liberated on bail, the police being apparently too busy about other matters to attend to him. He has to appear for trial

on October 8, and we hope to give an early report of the proceedings.

American freedom must be a fine thing when a man can lie in prison for four weeks, although he has bail ready, simply because the police are "too busy." Was it for this that the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock? If so, would it not have been better—as a wag said—if Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers?

The objectionable verse quoted by Mr. Wise was Isaiah xxxvi. 13. In the Bible it is God's Word—clean, sweet, and divine. Anywhere else it is sheer filthiness. Still, it is not by any means one of the worst texts in Holy Writ. We shudder to think how many months the Christians might give Mr. Wise in Leavenworth Gaol if he quoted *some* verses from their "blessed book."

Bon-Accord, a satirical Aberdeen journal, is down upon the "Rev. Mr. Smith, of Free Greyfriars Church," whose silly remarks on Sabbath cycling were criticised in last week's *Freethinker*. Our Aberdonian contemporary gives a picture of the "Rev. Mr. Smith" as the Devil, taking up with a pitchfork the Sabbath cyclist who has come to grief, preparatory to tossing him into the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire.

Says the Rev. Stewart Headlam: "The *Daily Chronicle*, commenting on a controversy between Mr. Benjamin Kidd and Mr. Karl Pearson, questions whether the zeal for social service would survive a general disappearance of the belief in immortality, and of a transcendental basis of morals. We doubt, however, whether such belief or basis has had much to do with zeal for social service in the past." Mr. Headlam has a good opportunity of witnessing the zeal for social service on the part of the religious members of the London School Board.

The extent of the Romanising movement is indicated by Archdeacon Sinclair in an article in the *Review of the Churches*. It appears that there are now 5,037 Anglican Churches which adopt the eastward position, 2,707 that use altar lights when they swallow the Savior, 1,370 using eucharistic toggery, and 250 that offer incense to the nostrils of the Almighty. We are getting on.

The Rev. Dr. Marrable, D.D., writes from Dublin to the *English Churchman*, urging that Romanists should not be styled "Christian brethren." He says: "Surely such language is too fraternal to use of those whom God describes as, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great,' etc., Revelation xvii. 5, and whose doom He predicts in the sixteenth verse of the same chapter." How they love one another!

On the other hand, here is the Catholic *Universe* gibing Archdeacon Sinclair for holding a Masonic service in St. Paul's, and asking: "Will Dr. Sinclair let us know whether he has any connection with this conspiracy of irreligion?"

It does not appear from the statistics that Catholicism is making progress in Germany. Between 1880 and 1890 the changes of faith were in favor of Protestantism, 24,000 leaving the Roman Church, whilst only 4,700 Protestants became Romanists. The *Church Times* says: "When it is remembered what is the tendency of Protestantism in Germany, these figures reveal a sad state of affairs."

Jeremiah Hacker, a New Jersey infidel, over eighty years of age, writes: "For sixty years I have considered the clergy on a lower plane than the tricky horse-jockey or quack medicine vendor, though they have a more genteel appearance. If you trade with a jockey, you will, at least, get an old, spavined horse, whose hide may be worth a trifle; if you buy quack medicine, you may, perhaps, get something that will kill rats or bugs; but if you give your money to the clergy, all you get is a bare promise of a faint possibility that, if you can live after you are dead, you may get a harp, crown, and mansion in a paved city of gold streets that not one of them knows anything about, and, if they did, have no right to traffic in it."

The site of All-hallows' Church, Thames-street, was sold last week for £13,000 to the City of London Brewery Company. What will that staunch teetotaler—with good wine in his cellars—the Bishop of London, say to this? He may console himself with the reflection that the consecrated ground is still dedicated to the spirit.

At the inquest on Mabel Tingay, daughter of one of the Peculiar People, held last week at the Poplar Town Hall, Dr. Edmund King Houchin was requested by the jury to severely censure the parents. They had strictly followed the injunctions of the New Testament, and anointed the child with oil and called on the elders to pray for her. The jury ought to have been told that they were virtually censuring Saint James.

The Rev. W. R. Paterson complains in the *Church Times* that at a certain London School Board "centre," at which the younger teachers meet for instruction, the teachers were practically told that "Christianity was merely one of many religions." Well, this is an incontrovertible fact, and one which not teachers only, but every scholar, ought to know if they are in any way concerned with religion. They ought, moreover, to know that it is neither the oldest, the most numerous, nor the most devoutly believed of religions.

President Carnot's assassin is doomed to death. The trial brought out the fact that he had received a strong religious training in his boyhood; and, as the *Daily News* remarked, his case does not tell against "the secular system."

Says the *Sporting Chronicle*: "It was only the other Sunday some tourists from Manchester were tramping about the highlands in search of the beautiful, when, becoming thirsty, they made their way to a farm, and asked the old lady to sell them some milk. But Mrs. McGregor, deeply religious, felt shocked, and exclaimed: 'Whit did ye say? Sell mulk on the Saubath day? Na, na! I couldna dae that, but ye talk so decent I'll just gae ye thripence worth for naething, an' ye can jist make me a present o' a shullin'.'"

We see that they have to resort to entertainments at St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town. The *Cape Times* advertises a Grand Recital in aid of the Church fund, violin and organ. Admission by leaflet only, price one shilling. The same paper says that the Dean, in his sermon, referred to the condition of the Cathedral finances. He said it was necessary to borrow money in order to pay the stipends of the clergy for the last month.

The Boers are strict Sabbatharians, but the secular spirit is too strong for them, and in the Transvaal the Raad has legalised "classical and sacred concerts" on Sunday and necessary work, which is supposed to include producing Monday's paper and pumping out the mines.

The Lord's lightning damaged the Lord's house at Norton, near Yeovil, the other Sunday. The beams on which the bells were hung were ignited, and the wooden floor and the tower were destroyed. The damage is estimated at £1,000. The flames were prevented from extending to the nave of the church, but the service was held in the schoolroom.

W. Hardy, a well-known local preacher at Cassop, was brought before the Durham County Police Court for assaulting his wife. He had sold up the house and left her penniless. He was fined, and bound over to keep the peace. The village turned out to tin-pan the man of God.

The Rev. H. N. Brown, M.A., late headmaster of Ipswich Grammar School, committed suicide by cutting his throat. His relation with the school governors had been strained of late, and he was asked to resign his appointment.

Italian silver coins are now withdrawn from circulation in France. A lady was rather surprised the other day to be told at a Catholic church of all places, the Eglise de la Trinité in Paris, that a 50-centime piece with the Pope's head, which she put in the plate, was "no god."

The Rev. Walter Walsh, writing in the August number of the *Westminster Review* on "Religion and Reform," urges that religion must become more ethical—that is, more secular. When secularism enters into religion it will turn out the old idols.

Our holy fathers-in-God particularly obey the apostles' injunction to look after the members of their own household; and, judging by the number of Bickersteths, Wilberforces, Sumners, etc., in good livings, we should think our bishops regard the plums of the Church as a family perquisite. Even in the *Church Times* a writer makes his protest. He says: "We naturally expect bishops, at least, would be just in dispensing their patronage, and that claims of seniority, years, experience, and results of work would attract their sympathy. Yet over and over again they put young men into livings, and wholly disregard the services, and even existence, of considerably older priests, who ought to be their first consideration. This procedure ranks in no other profession; it would be scouted as absolutely immoral. Yet it is tolerated and practised by the rulers in the Church." The writer proceeds to point out that the Bishop of Winchester has appointed out of his own household a young man to the vicarage of Hale, Farnham. "What possible justice," he asks, "can uphold the preferment of the Rev. G. E. Hitchcock to this living, as announced last week?" He has been domestic chaplain to the Bishop for perhaps two years. He has held no cure in the diocese, nor in any way earned a public right to supersede those older curates who have done long service and yet are unpromoted.

SPECIAL.

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

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, August 12, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London, E.C.: 7.30, "Is Immortality a Blessing?" (Admission free; reserved seats, 3d. and 6d.)

August 26, Hall of Science, London.

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.
- A. ADDY.—Lecture Notices should be addressed to the Editor. Postcards will do.
- F. S. PAUL.—Better let the case stand as it is. It would be an endless task to follow the reverend gentleman through all his tortuosities.
- R. O. SMITH, treasurer, London Secular Federation, acknowledges: E. A. Dunn, 10s. 6d.
- J. D. POTTAGE.—Thanks for circulating the "show up" in the reverend gentleman's locality.
- J. BALLARD.—Our best regards to all the Cape Town "saints," especially to those on whose behalf you write. See "Sugar Plums."
- H. PECK.—Faringdon was a sixteenth-century preacher. If what he says in the passage you send us were true, we should hardly think it amusing. No doubt you think it is not true. Hypocrites have all the best of it in the Churches.
- J. CHERRY.—(1) Glad to hear you find the Second Series of *Flowers of Freethought*, like the first, to be "not only interesting, but valuable for reference." (2) We have not the religious statistics of criminals for 1893. (3) We may write as you suggest on Garibaldi.
- J. ROBERTS.—You shall have some copies of the pamphlet when ready. We have not time to tabulate the pious rascalities that are recorded in the *Freethinker*. You must remember, too, that we only print what falls under our own notice, and is at the same time a subject for especial remark.
- C. H.—We do not know of any newsagent who supplies the *Freethinker* at Hastings. Perhaps one of our friends there may be able to inform you. Our old friend, J. Brumage, has been living at Hastings for some months; and we guess he has been hunting round the town for a newsagent to supply him with his weekly dose of Freethought.
- F. ABLAND.—Thanks for cuttings. Mr. Forder will attend to your order. Perhaps a budget of good jokes in pamphlet form would be acceptable to many readers.
- W. PACE.—See paragraph.
- J. H. SUMMERFIELD.—We insert your request, but fear it will be too late to be thoroughly effective.
- G. BILLING.—There is not so much in it as you fancy. The word "book" was in use before the invention of printing. "Bible" itself only means "book."
- WELL-WISHER.—We hope to meet a large number of the Chatham friends next Sunday (August 19) at the excursion.
- JOHN NELSON.—Charles Bradlaugh's remains were not cremated, but buried at Woking Cemetery, by the grave of his elder daughter, Alice.
- T. MILLAR.—Shall appear.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Liberator—Western Figaro—Ironclad Age—Truthseeker—La Verité—Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Freedom—Für Unsere Jugend—Crescent—Secular Thought—Isle of Man Times—Islamic World—Echo—Cape Times—Church Reformer—Natal Weekly Mercury—Aberdeen Evening Gazette—Sussex Daily News—North Star—Glasgow Weekly Herald—New York Herald—Whitby Times—Hull Daily News—Newcastle Chronicle—Morning—Twentieth Century—Sphinx—Christchurch Times—Illustrated American—Charleston Courier—Labor Prophet—Bon-Accord.
- 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.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.
- The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

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.

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 tropical weather, there was a good audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote criticised Mr. Gladstone's article on Heresy and Schism. The applause at the finish of the lecture was very enthusiastic. This evening (August 12) Mr. Foote lectures from the same platform again, his subject being "Is Immortality a Blessing?"

With fine weather next Sunday (August 19) the London Secular Federation's annual excursion to Margate, Broadstairs, and Ramsgate should be a thorough success. We hope the London Branches will all join heartily in this outing. It will be a sort of test of how far they can be relied upon to work together during next winter in a spirit of comradeship as well as enthusiasm. Mr. Foote sacrifices his Sunday at the Hall of Science in order to join the excursionists, and he expects every one else to do his or her share in filling the special train, which starts in two divisions from Holborn Viaduct and Victoria. (Fuller particulars will be found in our advertising columns.) No doubt there are many sympathisers with our movement, who are not yet members, but who would be glad to join this excursion; and it will be a very good opportunity to bring them into actual contact with us. The tickets are very cheap—only four shillings for adults, and half-price for children.

A common tea will be provided for the excursionists at 5.30 at Munn's Hotel, on the front, near the Margate pier. Mr. Foote will preside at this function, and he expects to see a large muster of London "saints." East Kent Freethinkers who can manage to attend will, of course, be heartily welcome; in fact, the Londoners will all be delighted to meet them.

Mr. Charles Watts will take Mr. Foote's place at the Hall of Science on this occasion, and as it is some time since he lectured there, he will doubtless have a good meeting, despite the absence of so many from London.

A generous friend has placed £5 at our disposal in connection with this excursion to Margate. He prefers it to be spent on fifty free tickets for the children of members who have bought tickets themselves, though he leaves it to a certain extent at our discretion. Applications for these free children's tickets should be sent at once to Miss Brown, 22 Penbridge-road, Notting Hill Gate, W.

Mr. Charles Watts is making arrangements for his School Board candidature in Finsbury, details of which will be given in our next issue. Meanwhile we earnestly invite all our readers in Finsbury to hold their votes in reserve for him. It is none of our business to assist or oppose the so-called Progressive candidates, who are all running on the "Compromise" ticket. Mr. Watts will run on the "Secular" ticket, being, of course, opposed to all religious teaching in public schools. His candidature is the only one that Secularists can conscientiously support.

The annual services of the Failsforth Secular Sunday-school will be held at Pole-lane to-day, when Mr. A. B. Moss will deliver two addresses in the afternoon and evening. The Failsforth string band will accompany the choir.

On Saturday evening, August 4, it was decided to form a Rochdale and District Secular Society, to be affiliated to the N.S.S. Mr. Sam Standing has accepted the invitation to live in Rochdale and commence work there on August 19.

"Another Sunday School Teacher" sends to *Mona's Herald* our paragraphs on a recent letter in that journal, calling on the local clergy to "stem the tide of infidelity." Much to our surprise, the paragraphs are printed in their integrity. We stated, in the last of them, that Mr. Foote would be happy to visit the Isle of Man again to debate with a Christian representative, with a charge for admission, and the proceeds to go to the Douglas Hospital. "Surely," says the *Mona's Herald* correspondent, "the interests of religion and morality demand from our clergy and ministers an immediate and decisive answer to this challenge"—although,

by the way, it is not a *challenge*, but an *offer*, on Mr. Foote's part. That offer remains open, but we do not think it will be accepted. The clergy like almost anything before discussion.

Mr. Alfred W. Benn, reviewing Mr. R. H. Hutton's *Criticism of Contemporary Thought and Thinkers* in the *Academy*, cites him as saying that "Darwin certainly held that God is the great fountain of plastic art and biological action." Mr. Benn remarks: "The great naturalist preferred to call himself an Agnostic, to calling himself an Atheist. That is all. I. Mr. Hutton ignorant of this notorious fact, or does he knowingly allow sentences to stand which convey an impression which is the reverse of true?"

In East Griqualand, South Africa, they have established a Branch of the National Secular Society, and issue a cyclostyle gazette entitled *Progress*. No doubt there is a wide field for Freethought in South Africa, and we hope other places will follow the example set in East Griqualand.

Five Freethinkers at Cape Town send between them a subscription of £2 to the Foote Testimonial. In doing so, they express their thanks to Mr. Foote for his "thorough exposure of the Atheist Shoemaker story," and they hope he will be spared "till the battering-ram of Freethought has knocked down the last rampart of Superstition."

The N. E. Secular Federation is having a second excursion to Marsden Rock near South Shields to-day (Aug. 12). The Chester-le-Street Branch is to bring a String Band to accommodate those who would like a dance. Members and friends of the Federation Branches are expected to muster in full strength at 2.30. Secretaries would oblige by informing Mr. J. H. Summerfield, 22 Yorkshire-street, Newcastle, how many are likely to come from their respective localities.

Signor Bovio is a leading Italian Freethinker and a councillor of Naples. He has written a drama, entitled *Christ at the Festival of Purim*, which is now making a great stir throughout the peninsula. Produced at Naples, the drama, in which Christ is not introduced on the stage, though his apostles are, was denounced by Cardinal San Felice, who prohibited Catholics from being either actors or spectators. From Naples the drama has gone to Florence, Leghorn, Pisa, Ferrara, Perugia, and Padua; everywhere being prohibited by the bishops, and received with acclamations by the unfaithful. The Italian correspondent of the Catholic *Tablet* calls the drama "a tissue of blasphemies, all the more insidious from being clothed in decorous language."

Labor Partnership is the title of a new journal "established to advocate Co-operative Production based on the Co-partnership of the Workers." The first number contains letters of encouragement from G. J. Holyoake and E. O. Greening. Among the promised contributors are Hodgson Pratt, Tom Mann, Clem Edwards, and J. M. Ludlow. The price of this new venture is one penny, and we wish it success amongst the workers.

THE FOOTE TESTIMONIAL FUND.

[Twelfth List.]

Daniel Baker, £5; R. Davison, £1; E. S., £1; E. N., 10s.; A. Hallam, 7s. 6d.; W. Calder and family, 6s. 6d.; W. Heaford, 5s.; A. J. Lovell, 5s.; Amicus, 5s.; J. D. Pottage, 5s.; J. W. D., 5s.; A. Anderson, 5s.; J. Hayes, 2s. 6d.; L. W. W., 2s. 6d.; J. Rule, 2s. 6d.; R. Gowling, 2s. 6d.; C. Smith, 2s. 6d.; J. Sanderson, 2s. 6d.; W. Hopper, 2s. 6d.; W. Thomson, 2s. 6d.; "Holloway," 2s.; F. M. G., 2s.; J. Bowey, junr, 1s. 6d.; H. Duncan, 1s. 6d.; A Friend, 1s. 6d.; G. Dickenson, 1s.; R. Leers, 1s.; R. Weightman, 1s.; J. Lee, 1s.; R. Smith, 1s.; R. Axelby, 1s.; A Member of the N.S.S., 1s.; J. H., 1s.; R. Maitland, 1s.; J. L., 1s.; R. K., 1s.; D. C. Mc., 1s.; J. Ross, 1s.; J. Hall, 6d.

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.

Shakespeare is as far above the Bible as is the sea above an orchestra or the song of the mocking-bird above the pipes of Pan. A purer, nobler, deeper philosophy fell from the lips of Shakespeare's clowns than is to be found in the whole of the Old Testament. If Shakespeare had been read as the Bible has been read, the people of this great world would be twice as wise as they are now—may be three times.—*Ingersoll*.

CHRIST AND SOCIALISM.

THE August number of *The Thinker*—which is a review of Christian thought from a Christian standpoint—in writing of a book by a Swiss author, named *Was Socialism Taught by Christ?* says: "Social or political economy is a science which Jesus not only ignored, but to which he was entirely indifferent. He who said, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' did not concern himself with the redistribution of wealth in equal shares, or with the relations between labor and capital. A man came to him one day and said, 'Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.' Jesus replied, 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? Beware of covetousness. A man's life consisteth not of the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'" A strange way this of stating and solving a social problem!

This is precisely the Freethinker's view of the case, stated in language as free from ambiguity as could be desired. Of what benefit, we would ask, can the study of the words of one so lost to a sense of common justice be to us in dealing with practical social and economical questions?

"Nothing is more prominent in his discourses," continues the article, "than the contrast between poverty and riches; and as he was severe to the rich as he was merciful to the poor, those among us who preach the war of class against class are able to adorn their harangues by quoting words of his. But Jesus goes farther than do the Socialists. In his eyes wealth is an evil in itself; it is the Mammon of unrighteousness. As the product or the instrument of selfishness, it deserves to be condemned. Our Socialists are not troubled by this thought." To all of this we agree. But what sane man should desire to found his opinions upon so narrow and one-sided a conception of the matter as this of Christ's? A man who apparently would not conceive that wealth might and should be made the instrument for promoting peace, comfort, and virtue, that it might as readily be the root of all good as the root of all evil, is hardly the man upon whose teachings to found a Socialistic Brotherhood. An unbiassed reading of the New Testament proves that Christ was not a Socialist, and that his ideas of our economic subjects, when he did express them, were rude and barbarous to the last degree. T.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

MONTHLY Executive Meeting held at the Hall of Science, July 26. The President being unavoidably detained, Mr. Charles Watts took the chair.

Present: Messrs. S. Hartmann, G. Standing, J. M. Wheeler, J. Samson, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, W. Callow, E. Johnson, G. J. Warren, G. Ward, E. Bate, F. A. Davis, E. Quay, C. Thomas, G. G. Steel, G. H. Baker, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement received. Minutes of Organisation Committee discussed at some length and confirmed. Permission was given for the formation of a new Branch at Kokstad, East Griqualand.

The usual cheque for office money was drawn, and the printing account and the affiliation fee to the Hall of Science Club were ordered to be paid.

E. M. VANCE, Assist. Sec.

Religion has taught what despots chose—the inborn degradation of human nature and its incapacity for any good in its own right. But when man is recognised in his true divine character, the halo around the heads of the oppressors and gods of this world must fade away.—*Hegel*.

I am just and honest, not because I expect to live in another world, but because, having felt the pain of injustice and dishonesty towards myself, I have a fellow feeling with other men who would suffer the same pains if I were unjust or dishonest towards them. Why should I give my neighbor short weight in this world because there is not another world in which I should have nothing to weigh out to him. I am honest because I don't like to inflict evil on others in this life, not because I am afraid of evil to myself in another. It is a pang to me to witness the suffering of a fellow being, and I feel his suffering the more because he is mortal, because his life is so short, and I would have it, if possible, filled with happiness, and not misery.—*George Eliot*.

THE PROPHET THOM.

THE interesting articles by Mr. Wheeler on Babism remind me of relatively recent occurrences in our own history, which may be fresh and interesting to some of your readers. I give for reference the rather voluminous title of the work from which they are extracted, *The Comprehensive History of England: Civil and Military, Religious, Intellectual, and Social*, by Charles Macfarlane and the Rev. Thomas Thompson. The whole revised and edited by the Rev. Thomas Thompson. The following is from vol. iv., p. 550:—

“About a month before the coronation some astounding and almost incredible occurrences took place in the neighborhood of Canterbury, where a madman had set himself up as a saint and prophet, and more. John Nicholls Thom, a respectable yeoman and maltster and cornfactor, of Cornwall, had become deranged in his intellect. Some years before he had abruptly left his home, and made his appearance in the county of Kent, under the style and title of Sir William Courtenay, Knight of Malta. He had a tall, advantageous person, which he set off by a rich and unusual costume; his countenance was strikingly handsome; he had received a tolerable education, and his insanity and frenzy made him eloquent. He soon became famous among the men of Kent; the populace, attracted at first by his romantic appearance, flocked round him with enthusiasm, and even the superior classes of society furnished him occasionally with partisans. In the year 1833 he became a candidate for the representation of the city of Canterbury, and actually found plenty of people mad enough, or thoughtless enough, to support him, for he polled three hundred and fifty votes in the Conservative interest. Shortly after this he was convicted of perjury, and sentenced to six years' transportation. Thom reappeared in Kent in the spring of the present year (1838), where his conduct was far more extravagant than before; and the infatuation of the peasantry kept pace with it. To his political pretensions he now added others of a religious character; and his claims to a divine mission, and even to divine attributes, were implicitly recognised by some of the poor Kentish boors, so that he was acknowledged as another Messiah; and to the farm laborers he made very inflammatory speeches, representing to them that they were oppressed by the laws in general, but more particularly by the new poor law. He told them that, if they would place themselves under his command, he would soon be King of Kent, and they should sit on his right hand on the day of his coronation. A farmer, having had his men seduced from their employment, at this time made an application for their apprehension; and a constable, of the name of Mears, assisted by two others, proceeded on Thursday morning (the 31st) to execute his mission. After a little parley Courtenay inquired which was the constable, and, on Mears replying that he was, he immediately produced a pistol and shot him, after which he inflicted a wound upon him with a dagger, and then, with the assistance of some of the excited laborers, he threw the body into a ditch. The two other constables rode hastily back to the magistrate, who deemed it expedient to send off to Canterbury for military aid. A party of soldiers soon arrived, accompanied by several magistrates. But by this time the whole body of rioters had retreated into the depths of Bossenden Wood, where the pseudo prophet was shouting and encouraging his followers to behave like men. On perceiving the soldiers coming up through the glades he advanced to meet them, and deliberately shot the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Bennett, of the 45th regiment, who was a few paces in advance of his party; whereupon the soldiers fired and killed his murderer. As Thom fell to the earth he exclaimed: ‘I have Jesus in my heart!’ In a few seconds ten lives were lost, and several of the sisters badly wounded. After the maniac had fallen a woman was seen kneeling over him, washing his face, and endeavoring to pour water through his hard-closed lips. She said she had followed him with a pail of water, because he had told her that, if he fell, and she put water between his lips, he would rise again in a month. One of the prisoners told Major Armstrong that they would have attacked two thousand soldiers, having been persuaded by the prophet that, while following him, they could not be shot. Some of his followers affirmed that they had seen the prophet shoot a star in the heavens and hit it, and that they had seen the star fall plump into the sea. He had told them that he had come to the earth on a cloud, and that on a cloud he should some day be removed from them.

“Dense must have been the cloud of ignorance which overhung those fair rural districts scarcely fifty miles from our capital, and barely four from Canterbury, the metropolis of the Anglican Church! The delusion of those Kentish peasants was so great that, for some time after the poor madman's death and burial, they expected to see him rise again, and place himself at their head. Further tumults were apprehended, but none took place. The peasants retired quietly to their wonted labors, and soon began to wonder why they had quitted them. It is said, however, that even now (about 1865), after the lapse of more than

twenty years, a few enthusiasts make pilgrimages to the green sward, in Herne Hill Churchyard, which covers the mortal remains of their reputed saint.”

It is hardly necessary to comment on the hold which superstition has on the human mind in certain stages of its evolution. With these Englishmen, the substratum, in which their Christianity was planked, was equally receptive of any other form of delusion. When Christians boast of the wide and rapid spread of their creed, they overlook the fact that other creeds, which they deem false, have the same grounds for boasting. The probabilities are enormous that any other speculations, even if possibly more foolish, concerning the problem of the infinite, if similarly conditioned as Christianity, would have spread as rapidly and taken as firm a root. It is the fertility of the soil to all forms of delusion which accounts for the rapidity of spread and persistence, much more than the form of the delusion itself.

A. LEWIS.

A PLEA FOR THE BABES.

(Respectfully Dedicated to Parents, and Teachers of the Young.)

THE battle o'er the schools now being fought
Twixt factions seeking each their selfish ends,
May lead to the young scholars being taught
To cry in terror, “Save us from our friends!”
For here the mask of friendliness is worn
To cover canting selfishness and scorn.

O, for some ground of general assent,
Where, undisturbed by sects, or partisans,
The guardians of the young might meet and vent,
For childhood's benefit, such honest plans
As from emancipated minds would spring,
And bounteous happiness in future bring.

Come now, my Christian fellow-man, a truce
To odium, and gibes, and bitter sneers;
And let us think how we may best conduce
Towards safely starting on forearmed careers,
Our children, whose concerns absorb our zeal,
And unto all our better selves appeal.

Awhile you watch the little ones at play,
Bedecking dolls, or drilling tiny hosts,
Put one straight question to yourself, and say
If infant innocence needs gods or ghosts
To make it purer, or if childhood's dream
Can find in lurid hell a wholesome theme.

Just pause beside your infant daughter's cot,
And watch the baby-bosom rise and fall
In tranquil sleep: then tell me fairly what
Good purpose it can serve to spread the pall
Of morbid “revelation” o'er that bed;
And fill with vague alarm that guileless head.

Will children grow less morally inclined
Through ignorance of David and of Lot?
Will youths be crafty, cruel, and unrefined,
Because the deeds of Moses they know not?
Can justice only live in breasts unshamed
To cast all sin on Christ, and pass unblamed?

While priests and creeds at variance remain,
Why may we not our young keep undefiled?
Dark tangled doctrines which none can explain,
Should not be forced upon a little child.
Must youthful brains for ever be befogged,
And adolescent progress thus be clogged?

Fond mothers, in whose arms lie nestled warm,
The cherished bonds with husband, earth, and life:
True men, with hearts which midst the strife and storm,
Throb full of hope for home, and bairns, and wife:
From you the world awaits a verdict sure!
Shall Science lead?—or Mystery allure?

C. DEANE.

How to Help Us.

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

BOOK CHAT.

The Case Against Diggleism is a shilling book published for the Progressive School Board Election Council by Alexander and Shephard, Furnival-street, Holborn. The case is a strong one. Statistics are given, showing how the policy of the clerical majority of the London School Board has been to thwart the purposes of education, by refusal to build, understaffing, inadequate provision for evening schools, and neglect of the higher grade schools. Their policy is justly styled one of "extravagant economy," and compared to that of a great railway company, spending immense sums on its rolling stock and permanent way, yet ruining its efficiency by refusing to supply grease for the carriage wheels. The indictment of Diggleism is complete, but no case is offered for the retention of the compromise.

In Georgia, Asia Minor, they name their traditional stories *The Book of Wisdom and Lies*. The title would fit the traditional stories of the Jews. The Georgian book has been translated by Mr. Oliver Wardrop, and the Kelmscott Press publish an issue limited to 250 copies.

An English translation of Count Goblet d'Alviella's *Migration of Symbols* is shortly to be published by Messrs. Archibald Constable. Sir George Birchwood, an authority on symbolism, has written an exhaustive introduction for the translation. Nearly two hundred illustrations, some of them very quaint, will be given.

Mr. Benjamin Kidd, noticing Mr. A. J. Dadson's book on *Evolution and Religion* in the July number of the *International Journal of Ethics*, betrays his ignorance by saying: "The Christian, and the Christian religion, and the Christian's God are in particular subjected to a style of criticism which reminds one of the debates at the Hall of Science, Islington, in the early days of the late Mr. Bradlaugh." This is supposed to be very scathing, but the mention of the locality shows that the author of *Social Evolution* knows as much about the Hall of Science as he does of many other topics with which he undertakes to deal.

Professor Huxley supplies a chapter to the forthcoming life of Professor Owen by his grandson, the Rev. Richard Owen.

The late Dr. Dollinger, in his *Addresses on Historical and Literary Subjects*, now being translated by Margaret Warre, concerns himself, among other matters, with the much-debated question of the destruction of the order of Knight Templars, adjusting the various shades of guilt between Philippe le Bel and Pope Clement.

Mr. Truelove informs us that the memoir of *James Watson*, by W. J. Linton, about which a correspondent recently inquired, is still in print, and, together with all the rest of his publications, can be obtained from Mr. Forder.

In Mr. J. Theodore Bent's book on *The Sacred City of the Ethiopians* he brings out the fact that Abyssinia was much more civilised in its old Pagan days by Arabian Sabceans, than now that it is Christian; further, that Paganism continued to a much later epoch than is generally supposed, and thus the story of a Christian mission to Abyssinia in the days of Constantine is probably a legend. From Aksum, the sacred city, Mr. Bent procured some interesting squeezes of early inscriptions.

The publication, by Macmillan, of another big *History of the Christian Church During the First Six Centuries*, by Archdeacon Cheetham, only reminds us of the fatuity of repeating, time after time, the old legends. It is with Church histories as with the lives of Jesus. Nothing new of value can be said until there is a more critical examination of the sources. A repetition of the old stories in new words may meet a demand for the latest Church history, or the newest Life of Jesus; but the latest is as untrustworthy as Eusebius himself, for the simple reason that the historian does nothing but repeat the stories of other writers as little trustworthy.

Irish Character: Mr. Gladstone's Character: Notes for the Times by a Democratic Physiologist (price 6d.; Simpkin, Marshall, & Co.).—This is a pamphlet by a strong believer in the force of race and heredity. His description of the Celtic character is hardly likely to commend itself to Celts. He urges that Celtic Ireland has not the deliberative. Parliamentary instinct, is not democratic, but biassed for the leading of the few and the following of the many, and is not Liberal in religion. He favors Carlylean methods of dealing

with Ireland. The study of Mr. Gladstone's character shows an acute judgment, and is well worth reading. He thinks Mr. Gladstone would have made a great ecclesiastic.

The *Labor Prophet* for August contains a portrait and notice of the late Francis Adams, author of *Songs of the Army of the Night*.

Sphinx, formerly the organ of German Spiritists, is now the organ of the German Theosophists. It is still edited by Dr. Hübbe Schleiden, who, in the August number, writes on "Karma." D. Th. von Schaek writes vindicating that strange, mad genius, F. Nietzsche. The chief item is a translation of Mabel Collins's "Idyll of the White Lotus"; and Mabel Collins is, we believe, no longer a Theosophist, but an exposé of Madame Blavatsky.

We notice that Dr. L. Kuhlenbeck has made a German translation of *Lo Spaccio Della Bestia Trionfante*, by Giordano Bruno. It is published by C. A. Schwetsehke & Son, Brunswick. An English translation, by W. Morehead, appeared in 1713. Only fifty copies were printed, and it is exceedingly rare.

THE PRIESTESS OF ATHOR.

WHERE Egypt's holy river
Flows through the haunted nights
Stood once the city of Memphis,
Full of lutes and lights.

And there a child of Athor,
A priestess pure and fair,
Lost in the temple garden
In the aloe-scented air,

Found love in the moonlit roses,
Whose perfume told her this—
That the gods would leave all heaven
For one warm human kiss;

Found love in the wandering breezes,
Whose music told her this—
That the gods are dying in heaven
For the want of a human kiss;

Found love in the hallowed waters,
And love in the stars above;
And learnt that the gods are lonely,
And jealous of human love.

E. DOUGLAS.

The Religion of the Savage.

In the confused crowd of his impressions the savage perceives chiefly that he is beset on every side. He feels the blows dealt him by the invisible. He sees ghosts in the visions of the night. Slain animals, no less than slaughtered men, inhabit the places to which his spirit wanders during sleep. It does not, for a long while, occur to him that these multitude of influences may be summed up in a few grand poetical abstractions, any more than it occurs to a child now-a-days to strike out a theology for himself. The most ancient idols are without shape, not even human, nor even bestial; and such, too, are the conceptions they body forth. Men worshipped the fire in the tree, which their own hands had kindled, ages before they rose to the idea of a supreme, all-seeing sun-god. They adored the animals, tame or wild, in their neighborhood, by no means symbolically, but with a deep reverence for the wisdom, strength, and power of evil possessed by these other shaped mortals who disputed the world with them. In vegetation they recognised gods many and lords many, born with the spring, dying at harvest, and needing to be helped by the solemn magic ritual which made things flourish or turned aside mischief. The animal, the tree, and the god were all bound up together, incarnate in king and priest, liable to injury and even to death, so that a continued succession must be provided lest their life should fail.—"Quarterly Review," July, pp. 206, 207.

RELIGION AND HYSTERIA.—Religious revivals, spiritual séances, and Romish pilgrimages seldom fail to result in epidemics of sexual impropriety. The lives of saints, priests, ecstasies, devotees, and media are so many records of sexual derangement. St. Theresa and St. Catherine de Siene, who, in nightly trances, believed themselves folded in the arms of Jesus, were nymphomaniacs; and the love festivals, holy loves, and seraphim kisses are believed by physiologists to have indicated points of union between religion and sexual erethism.—Dr. F. R. Marmin, "Pathology and Treatment of Mediomania," p. 54.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"TWO REVELATIONS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In Mr. Moss's interesting article upon above, in your issue of the 29th ult., he falls into two very common errors regarding the Bible and science. First, with regard to the creation, as recorded in Genesis, he appears to believe that there is some great contradiction between the statement there intimated, that "God created the world out of nothing," and what science has to say regarding the origin of the world. I submit there is no contradiction, but full and perfect harmony between them; in fact, the statement in Genesis is a scientific truth, for the simple meaning of making the world out of no-thing clearly proves that it became matter or substance from a state of ethereality—that is, became *things* from *no-thing*; and this, by the process of evolution, is the same to-day as it was in the long past, whether six thousand or six million years since. So much, very briefly, on that one point.

Now for the second. Mr. Moss appears to believe that science is something ascertainable or knowledgeable, apart from self or individual knowledge. I submit there is no such thing as authority so called; to believe so is superstitious freethought, and to be guarded against. What is science? The word is from *scientia*, to know; hence, every man's science or knowledge is a variable quantity and quality. Mr. Moss's science is not mine, and my science is not another man's. Even professors of science, like professors of religion, are at utter variance upon all phenomena. For instance, of what is the sun, its nature and constitution, and its distance from the earth? No one knows; and in two centuries its distance has been variously given. Or again, why is the moon white? Science knows not; some say its light is reflected from the sun; others that it is due to snow. This is further denied; for how can snow fall where there is no vapor or atmosphere? Others deny this, and declare the moon has an atmosphere, but highly rarefied. So who shall decide when professors differ on these and myriads of the commonest incidents of every-day experience?

THOMAS MAY.

THE REASON WHY.

The parson sat in his easy chair,
By the fire in his study dim.
On his face was a look of dull despair,
And his brow was seamed and furrowed with care,
As uneasy he sat in his easy chair;
While he swore with exceeding vim.

For his flock hadn't paid him the usual sum
That was due at the quarter's end,
And he therefore was looking both grave and glum,
For he wasn't too anxious to spoil a good plum
In order to swoop in that usual sum,
For fractures are hard to mend.

Be it known that this happened but once before,
And that time he bent the knee.
And prayed till he'd reckoned he'd done his score,
But he found it no use, and this time he swore.
He'd be damned if he'd do what he did before—
They wouldn't have him up a tree.

So he sat himself down to think out a plan
To make his flock tip him his screw.
Then he winked a big wink did this excellent man,
And he laughed till the tears down his cheeks fairly ran.
For his thinking had hatched quite an excellent plan,
Though it wasn't exactly new.

He called in the doctor, who told him that he
Was sorely in need of a rest;
And that he would have to go down by the sea,
And spend a few weeks where the ozone blows free.
This suited the parson—there was nothing that he
Could have done with more infinite zest.

This wily old parson by saying he was ill
Knew that he was doing the best,
For his anxious flock fairly emptied the till
And ran a subscription to total the bill,
To give him a holiday 'cause he was ill—
And they too were needing a rest.

THE GABERLUNZIE.

Your manners will depend very much upon the quality of what you frequently think on; for the soul is tinged and colored with the complexion of thought.—*Marcus Aurelius.*

GHOSTS AND CREMATION.

SUPERSTITION holds an all-powerful sway over a large part of the human race, and ghosts, uncanny apparitions, are regarded as realities, especially by children and those who never die—the fools.

The country people take especially good care that the belief in ghosts shall not vanish. They tell of the appearance of the dead, and even the most courageous are frightened at the howling of the winds, the cry of a bird, or the uncertain shadows of the moon. Although we may laugh at this fear, because we know that no ghost ever was proof against a thorough investigation, we quite understand it. The churchyard explains it all—the churchyard with its uncanny solitude, its unsavory contents; and it is natural for the ignorant to believe that the dead come forth from their graves.

Those whom we once saw in the beauty of vigorous life are here given over to a mode of destruction which causes undefinable horror to the ignorant. As long as the body is slowly wasting away in the ground, it will be difficult to overcome the fear of ghosts, for there is a belief that the body may assist the spirit or ghost in appearing to us.

The bright and cheerful columbarium, with its urns open to view, is materially opposed to the churchyard. There is nothing to mystify us in the columbarium, nothing dark, nothing sinister. Those pure ashes do, indeed, speak to us of the shortness of life, but not accompanied by those horrors which are associated with decomposition in the grave. We may imagine hundreds of thousands of urns around us, containing the last unchanged and unchangeable vestige of our departed friends; these artistic vessels cannot be made to force horrid apparitions upon our imagination. Even the most ignorant understands that fire is purifying, and it will not be difficult to create the belief that everything wicked has been destroyed by the cleansing flame.

Superstitious persons are able to imagine an apparition of a horrid skeleton half-clothed in flesh, shrouded in a tattered, moulding cloth, because this corresponds with the actual state and appearance of the body in the grave. But it is impossible to conjure up such an apparition from the little heap of ashes caused by fire.—*Die Flamme* (Berlin).

PROFANE JOKES.

Clara—"Your new minister is very much younger than the old one, isn't he?" Maude—"Yes; what makes you ask?" Clara—"Heard you had applied for a front pew?"

A curate, who was reproached by his bishop for not believing as much as himself, replied, "Consider the difference of remuneration. I am sure that, pound for pound, I believe as much as your lordship."

Gentle Lady—"I hope you go to church, sometimes." Good Boy—"Yes'm." "To what church?" "I used to be a Presbyterian, but I've been a Methodist ever since the last treat. They give the most cake."

"Do you believe that all flesh is grass, Mrs. Small?" asked Mr. Hunker of his landlady, who requested him to carve. "Yes, sir; that is what the good book says." "Then I'll trouble you to have the lawn-mower brought in, instead of this carving-knife."

Boy—"Say, Pap, what has giraffes got such long necks for?" Parent—"God gave them their long necks so that they could reach the leaves of the palm and other tall trees which they could not otherwise reach. That's the only way they can get at them." Boy, after a spell of thinking—"Say, Pap, couldn't he have made the leaves grow lower down?"

I have just heard a good, innocent, true child-story, which is worth repeating. A little girl was taken to a strange church by her mother recently, in which the collection was made in the pews. On the way home she asked: "What did you get in the lucky-bag, Ma?" "Nothing," replied the mother in astonishment; and she was about to ask the child what on earth she meant, when the little one opened her extended hand, and exclaimed, with evident pride, "I got sixpence!"

A couple of tourists staying at Loch Ness had a fancy, one fine Sunday, to go for a row on the Loch. They met the boatman just leaving his house, dressed in a suit of glossy black, and with an extra large Bible under his arm. "We want to go for a row," said one of the tourists. "Dae ye not know it's the Sawbath?" was the reply. "Ye'll no get a boat frae me the day; forbye, I'll hae ye to know I'm an elder of the kirk. No; I'll not let ye the boat, but I'll tell ye what I'll do for ye. Dae ye see yon green boatie doon among the rushes?" "Yes." "Weel, she's ready, with the oars inside. Jist row out to the middle, an' I'll come doon to the bank an' swear at ye; but never mind, jist row on, an' I'll ca' for the money on Monday."

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, "Is Immortality a Blessing?" (Admission free; reserved seats, 3d. and 6d.)

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 8.30, social gathering. Monday, at 8, musical and dramatic entertainment (tickets 3d. and 6d.). Tuesday, at 8.30, dancing. Thursday at 8.30, members' special meeting to discuss "The Branch and Social Reforms."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, H. Snell, "Social Evolution."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile-end-road, E.): 8, W. C. Lyons, "Some Zoological Fables."

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-street, Notting-hill-gate, W.): Monday, at 8.30, business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Was Christ a Socialist?"

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, H. Snell, "Under which Lord?" CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, C. Cohen, "What the Universe Teaches." Members' meeting after lecture.

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, F. Haslam, "The Miracles of the Bible." Thursday, at 8, Sam Standring, "Religious Instruction in Board Schools."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Exodus from Egypt"; 3.30, "The Bible and Modern Science." Wednesday, at 8, W. J. Ramsey will lecture.

ISLINGTON (Prebend-street, Packington-street): 11.30, A. Guest, "Divine Example: should it be Followed?"

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, St. John, "Belief and Unbelief."

LAMBETH (Kennington-green, near Vestry Hall): 6.30, W. Heaford, "Secularism and Christianity."

LEYTON (High-road, near Vicarage-road): 11.30, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

MILE-END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Bible in the Board Schools."

REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester-gate): 3, W. Heaford, "Christian Evidences."

TOTTENHAM (corner of West Green-road): 3.30, Sam Standring, "Faith, Hope, and Charity." (Farewell address.)

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 11.15, Stanley Jones will lecture; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.

WALTHAMSTOW (Markhouse-road): 6.30, C. James, "Christ: a Criticism."

WESTMINSTER (Old Pimlico Pier): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Sam Standring, "How they Made the Bible"; 7 Stanley Jones will lecture. Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen, "Miracles."

COUNTRY.

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

FALSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY-SCHOOL: 2.30, A. B. Moss, "Secularism, the Religion of Daily Life"; 6.30, "Saviors of Mankind."

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Sketchley, "The Present State of the Labor Question."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Ann-street): 11, Tontine Society: 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "William Kingdon Clifford" Committee meeting after lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, C. Doeg, "The Coming Revolution."

PORTSMOUTH (Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea): 7, a meeting. Wednesday and Saturday, at 8, dancing class for members and friends.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS: Federation picnic at Marsden, Durham division; trains leave Westoe-lane Station at 2 and 3 p.m.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside): 11, R. Mitchell, "The Agnostic's Position, and Christian Ideas of Creation."

BARNSELY (Mayday-green): 11, James Hooper, "Why I am an Atheist"; 6.30, "Thirty Years of Freethought Work."

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