

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

FRIED SOULS.

WHO has not heard of fried sole? It is one of the greatest delicacies. But a great deal depends on the cooking. A heavy hand may dry it up to insipidity, or soften it with fat into nauseousness. When, however, it is cooked to a turn, and nicely sprinkled with lemon juice, it is a dish for the gods, and might be washed down with ambrosia.

Freethought readers will not blame us for this little excursion into gastronomy. It is only the asceticism of religion that makes a man ashamed of taste in eating. When the greatest and healthiest poet in the world devised a toast for a banquet, he wrote, "May good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both." We have not the slightest doubt that Shakespeare enjoyed a good dinner; it is also a thousand to one that he was a connoisseur in wines; though we imagine he knew when to refrain, and did not make the "good creature" an "enemy to steal away his brains."

Some people have no objection to good eating and drinking, but a mortal objection to puns. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "a man who would make a pun would pick a pocket." He would have modified this dictum if he had known Tom Hood. Perhaps the ponderous sage of Fleet-street—"Old Dread-Devil," as Cobbett called him—had been pestered by small punsters, always lying in wait for mere verbal analogies. Such punsters are the bane of society. They should be heavily taxed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But everyone is entitled to a certain allowance of weakness; and, for the sake of the "fried," at least, we hope our most relentless critics will pardon us for the pun in "souls." Anyhow, a bad bold editor will sacrifice his soul (there we are again, but it was an accident) for a "fetching" title. And having made this admission, we put on a brave front, and defy all our censurers.

After this classical exordium, which, if it were imitated in sermons, might help to keep congregations awake, we proceed to tackle our thesis, in the hope that we may furnish more hints to the pulpiteers of Christendom.

Human beings have been fried in this world, generally by the friends of Heaven, for the glory and honor of God. At the stake they were *roasted*, and in hot oil they were *boiled*, but on an iron frame they were *fried*. Their souls, however—presuming they had souls—were only tortured indirectly, through the agony of their bodies. Human, and even ecclesiastical, malice was incapable of reaching their "glassy essence." But the Grand Inquisitor of the universe is able to burn "both body and soul in hell." And he has sworn that he will do it, and the oath of a god, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, is irreversible. Righteous or otherwise makes no difference. It is a question of consistency. As old Shylock says—

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven!
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice.

Jehovah, the Bible god, that is, the Christian god, has a nose for a "sweet savor." He does not eat the fried souls, which are his special and registered delicacy. He only smells them, and therefore they are eternally cooked without ever being done. The steam of their cooking ascendeth for ever and ever. And all the angels in heaven share in this spiritual repast. There is a great gulf between the upper circles and the pit, the dining room and the kitchen; but the distance is not beyond vision and hearing; witness the parable of Dives and Lazarus. St. John, or the author of Revelation, being temporarily admitted into glory, held his nostrils over the reek of the damned, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Many of the old preachers, also, contended that a great part of the happiness of the saved in heaven consisted in viewing the torments of the damned in hell, and that it would be a reflection on God's justice if he deprived them of this treat, as the relish of any pleasure is always heightened by a sight of the opposite misery. It may be concluded, therefore, that while manna is "angels' food," and sustains their corporeal structure, their more ethereal part is nourished by the "sweet savor" of fried souls.

The *chef* in Jehovah's kitchen is the Devil. His wages are nothing a year, paid quarterly. He was once a member of the celestial aristocracy, but, being disaffected towards the throne, he was cast down amongst the wretched democracy, where he is doomed to preside over

that immortal fry
Of almost everybody born to die.

Lord Byron, whose verse this is, expected to join the "fry" himself, if there were any truth in the Scripture. And the reader will observe that he did not use "fry" simply through the exigency of rhyme. It was exactly the right word for the occasion. His lordship evidently had the very idea which we are seeking to convey. He is at one with us—or we are at one with him—as to the *frying*.

Robert Burns, the immortal poet and blasphemer of Scotland, whose lusty manhood offended the hypocrites as his strong intelligence frightened the godly—Robert Burns did not speak of *frying* in Hades, but he used another term of cookery. In one of his two masterpieces, he exclaims:—

O Tam, O Tam, thou'lt get thy fairin';
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'.

Yet, in this sense, the roasting is so much like frying, that we may almost regard the terms as synonymous. Burns and Byron would have shaken hands over the difference, and a chat between them on the subject would have been worth listening to. Oh the mirth, the wit, the satire, the devilish abandon of such a conversation! Jehovah himself, and all his holy angels, might have listened at the keyhole, and found a joyous relief from the horrible monotony of heaven.

Bless the poets, the true ones, whose hearts were too big for the vile absurdities of religion. How refreshing it is to turn to them after a strong dose of divinity. Happily

their tenderness has leavened the lump of humanity, and the frightful doctrine of hell-fire and everlasting torment is rapidly perishing. With it will go—it is only a question of time—all the rest of what Shelley called “the bloody faith.” It is no longer conceivable to any sane intelligence that men will be the everlasting victims of their creator. We have heard the death-knell of Jehovah, the old savage god who delighted in the smell of burnt offerings, and mocked at human calamities. And once free from the awful nightmare, we can laugh at what terrified us. Yes, the monstrous apparition has sunk into a lighted turnip, and we pelt it with stones.

G. W. FOOTE.

TITHES AND THE POOR.

OUR Established Church takes something like seven and a half millions annually from the country. Of this the major portion, close on five millions, is derived from tithes, the remainder coming from various sources, such as lands in the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the episcopal and capitular estates. Tithes, till a comparatively modern period, were always held to be, in part, for the benefit of the poor. From the time of Pope Sylvester they were divided into four parts. One went to support the diocese, one to maintain and repair the church, one to maintain the clergy, and one for the poor. After a while the bishops got land allotted to them, and tithes were divided into three, one share still being for the poor. When tithes were made compulsory by law the poor still had their share. This is legally set down in a statute of Richard III. (1391). Cobbett and Catholic writers make out that it was through the Reformation, when a portion of the tithe passed from the Church into the hands of laymen, that the poor lost their share. But this was not wholly so, for in Queen Elizabeth's time the old law still held. One of her Acts provides that, if an incumbent absents himself from his parish for more than eighty days in a year, he was to lose a year's profit of the living, which the bishop was to “distribute among the poor of the parish.” A later Act provided that, if the incumbent still kept away, “the parishioners might retain and keep their tithes”; and the churchwardens were empowered to take the profits of the glebe and other rents, to be employed for the use of the poor. It was the setting up of the poor-laws in 1601 which, putting a poor-rate upon householders, made new machinery for dealing with the poor, and enabled their share of the tithes to be gradually stolen from them, just as their right to the common-lands was gradually filched. Yet, down to the end of last century, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield decided that parsons must dwell in their parsonages, to exercise hospitality and their duties to the poor of the parish. But those duties, being legally undefined, had long been optional, or could be easily satisfied by the parson having the administration of charitable bequests and doles. The consolidation of the Poor Laws in 1834, followed, as it immediately was, by the Commutation of Tithes, further obliterated the notion of the poor having any claim, except upon the parish and the appointed “Guardians.” Yet it is quite clear that the poor have a moral claim to a share of the tithes, and when the time comes for a re-adjustment that claim will demand consideration.

Up to 1836 tithes were a first charge on the gross produce of the land. Green boughs, stuck in every tenth sheaf of corn, marked it as claimed by the parish vicar. By that time it was felt that such a method was only suited to primitive communities. Disputes between farmers' and parsons' bailiffs were bound to arise, and lead to ill-feeling. Moreover, as the *Westminster Review* economists pointed out, this divinely-appointed way of levying tithes was a serious obstacle to improvement, since one-tenth of the additional produce obtained from land by expensive improvements might amount to as much as the farmer could expect to gain from them after paying interest on the money they had cost. Improvements were thus for the benefit of the parson, as too often now for the ground landlord. As soon as the Infidel school of Bentham began to agitate the matter, the clergy saw they must compromise. The Bill for the Commutation of Tithes was the result. It

provided that, instead of payment in kind, a rent charge should be made equal to the average amount received during the seven previous years. By this arrangement those who had resisted the priestly impositions most got off easiest, and many were, for a while, satisfied. The Church gave up a little to enjoy the bulk in security and goodwill. It has not turned out quite as well for them as they expected. The rent charge, varying every seven years according to the average price of corn, has been continually declining since Free Trade gave us cheap corn. In this matter the men of God over-reached themselves. Rumors of new gold-fields were rife. They fancied gold would fall, and they would have a higher and more stable income from the average of corn.* No wonder the clergy were, almost to a man, opposed to Free Trade. As tithes threaten further to fall, the clergy beat the drum ecclesiastic for voluntary offerings, and Churchmen are now becoming so used to this call that they should be fully prepared to support their own clergy when the time comes for Disestablishment and Disendowment. Some day we may have a Chancellor of the Exchequer prepared to deal with this question. He need have no hesitation. The State has always dealt with this property as national property. It has ever retained the fee simple in its own hands. It determines, by Act of Parliament, who shall and who shall not enjoy tithes, and the conditions upon which they are held. It can order their application to other persons and other objects whenever it pleases.

No one proposes that tithes should be abolished for the benefit of the landowner; for the tenant farmer would not gain in the long run by their abolition, since, as soon as his lease expired, rents would be raised to their full enhanced market value. But tithes, as a part of national property, should be devoted, not to the support of a particular sect, but to the service of all. No more just and equitable application of them is likely to be devised than that of providing pensions for the aged poor. There is a special reason why a tax derived from the land should be devoted to these, since the wholesale confiscation of common lands has been a cause both of rural poverty and of driving the rural poor into towns. Even as late as 1790 there were a hundred and sixty thousand yeoman peasant proprietors, constituting, with their families, one-seventh of the population of England, who have now disappeared. Within the past century some eight millions of acres, once common-land paying no tithe, have been added to private property and made tithable by their confiscation. We are accustomed to hear of the private beneficence of pious ancestors in connection with Church revenue, but the facts rather warrant the assertion that it has depended on public plunder. The redistribution of Church funds would be but an act of reparation and restitution to the class of the needy and oppressed.

Various schemes of Old Age Pensions have been put forward. Of their desirability there can be little question. The only point worth considering is “ways and means.” This is very fully gone into by the Rev. Edgar Todd in his pamphlet on *The Church and the Poor*, published by the National Old Age Pensions League, Birmingham. Mr. Todd shows that the Church revenues would suffice to provide a pension of five shillings a week for all the poor over the age of sixty.

This year, on November 8 (unless some other date be appointed by the Local Government Board), for the first time in the history of the country, the workers will have an opportunity of electing, and of being elected, both to the Parish Councils and the District Councils, where they will become Guardians of the poor. If they avail themselves of the rights conferred by the Parish Councils Act, the question of the administration of the Poor Laws will soon come to the front, and the new education in parish politics may provide the machinery for eventually settling the application of the national property in tithes for the benefit of the aged poor.

J. M. WHEELER.

What forests of laurel we bring, and the tears of mankind, to those who stand firm against the opinion of their contemporaries! The measure of a master is his success in bringing all men round to his opinions twenty years later.—*Emerson.*

* This is the account of the matter given by Earl Grey.

SOCIAL EVILS AND THEIR REMEDY.

To endeavor to improve the social condition of society is the highest duty inculcated by Secularism. Our moral strength or weakness, our happiness or misery, depend largely upon our social surroundings. It is true that Secularists may differ among themselves as to the precise means that should be adopted to improve the social conditions of life: but they all agree that improvement is necessary, and that it is imperative upon every member of the Secular organisation to do his or her best to secure a better environment for the people than that which has hitherto obtained. There can be no doubt that our present social system is rotten to its very core; and it is equally apparent that all remedies that have been hitherto applied to existing evils have failed as regenerating agencies. It appears to me that one of the principal causes of this failure is to be attributed to the fact that individuals have been induced to worry themselves about the alleged requirements of some other world, rather than to devote their time and energy to getting rid of the wrongs of this world. With the Secularist it is not a question of the affirmation or denial of an existence "beyond the grave," but rather the recognition of the fact that our present existence is clouded and degraded with injustice, shams, and inequalities that rob it of its intrinsic value, and also of its highest glory. To strive to remove these drawbacks from our midst, and thus endeavor to make "life worth living," Secularists regard as the greatest service that can be rendered to the commonwealth.

That it is time social reformers devised and proclaimed some new gospel for the amelioration of society is evident from the fact that every scheme that has yet been propounded for the salvation of the people has proved inadequate to achieve this desirable object. Take, for instance, Christianity, which is supposed by many to be the best remedy for the ills of life. It has been tried and found wanting as a corrective of our social wrongs. Yet it has had at its command wealth, patronage, fashion, official influence, and the willing obedience of thousands of patient adherents; and what has been the result? Why, that we have existing in "Christian England" to-day misery and starvation of the direst kind, and wealthy families prospering through imposing unjust burdens upon the poor of the land. The Christian social reformer, Mr. C. F. Aked, in a sermon preached in the City Temple, London, on Sunday, August 12, is reported by the *Daily Chronicle* of the next day as presenting the following indictment: "That slavery exists still in our green and pleasant land we are obliged to confess. Think of St. Helen's, in Lancashire, and the conditions of the chemical laborers. There, engaged in the very foulest work, men labor 112 hours one week and 56 the next, or 168 hours in the fortnight, or an average of twelve hours a day all the year round: scarred and burnt by the flying particles of caustic; their teeth destroyed by acids, and their internal organs, as revealed by post-mortem examination, blackened by the vapors. These men drink; and so would you drink, madly, till death released you from your sufferings. Turn to your own city. Are there not match-girls living on starvation wages, living on tea and cold potatoes alternating with cold potatoes and tea? Are there not shop girls enduring unbearable iniquities, handing down the scourge of an enfeebled body and an emasculated mind to other generations? You know what it is to have tramway and railway slaves working their sixteen hours a day; but you do not know what a terrible existence it is. . . . You are willing to take advantage of these evil conditions, and to reap the pecuniary rewards of this slavery, this suffering, this terrible toil. We have no right to take money by using men and women as machines for producing wealth. You have no right to a business too big for your personal supervision. You have no right to hereditary wealth, or to vast shares in concerns which are beyond your cognisance, or your sense of moral responsibility. We have gone swaggering about the earth seeking what we may devour of others, until actually a chartered company has been boomed in Westminster Abbey by a bishop who turned out to be a shareholder." This is truly a picture of the social condition of the working portion of the community that is a disgrace to our boasted civilisation.

That the so-called Christian remedy has been futile in its endeavors to administer justice to the masses, and thus enable them to have a fair opportunity of enjoying a

proper share of the bounties and joys of life, is evidenced by the fact that the Church has to give up its old method of propaganda, and to incorporate with its mission secular agencies. The social and moral diseases that have been engendered and developed on Christian cultivated soil are too firmly rooted in our modern societarian system to be eradicated by orthodox spiritual quackery: they require the application of genuine and potent remedies found in the Secular laboratory. Hence we find the more intelligent and practical minds, who, for various reasons, are still connected with the Church, abandoning their theological nostrums, and employing remedies of material compounds. There is much truth in the following remarks of the *Daily Chronicle* of August 13 upon the subject: "If the London of the poor is a trifle less outcast than it was, some of the credit must be given to these energetic religious people who have carried on the ministry of help to the helpless. We are not doing the London Congregational Union any injustice in saying that a generation ago the erecting of new mission-halls would have probably been the sole recommendation made in response to the call for aid from Slumland. The Congregationalists were not peculiar in this respect; their view at that time was shared by the entire Christian Church. There was a too limited view of man, too little sympathy with his troubles, too little practical knowledge of the dangers and difficulties by which the very poor are hedged in on every side. Now the vision of the religious world has been purified and its sympathies enlarged, and starving and stunted bodies are no longer held to be the best preparation for a higher life beyond the present."

This is so, but it has taken nearly two thousand years to purify "the vision of the religious world;" and now the purification has come, not from within the Church, but from "sympathies enlarged" through considering the claims of humanity, instead of wasting time upon the priestly-invented desires of a supposed divinity. Herein lies the utility of Secular philosophy: it relies upon natural, not upon supernatural, remedies to cure the evils of humanity. The social wrongs, which we all deplore, have been brought about by the neglect and misapplication of mundane agencies. Instead of aiming to improve man and to secure for him his rights, the Church has inculcated the fatal lesson that men should seek to please God, and to obey the behests of kings and priests. Thus Secular duty has been ignored, personal independence has been destroyed, and false notions of life have been produced. Fortunately, the world is awakening to the fact that the welfare of humanity does not depend upon the alliance with any church, or upon the belief in any theology. "The proper study of mankind is man," and if any religion is to be accepted in the future, it must be one in which the good of all faiths shall be retained, and from which their errors shall be eliminated; a religion based, not upon supernatural figments and allegories, but upon the eternal laws of nature and the laws of that great kingdom of human nature, whose only monarchs and subjects shall be men and women, who shall be permitted to illuminate their lives with mental freedom, and who shall have a fair opportunity to share the advantages of an existence free from the injustice, monopoly, and artificial class distinctions which now cast a gloom upon the great drama of life.

In these days of Anarchism, State Socialism, and perverted ideas of Individualism, it is more than ever necessary to well study our social evils, their nature, and what is most fitted to prove a remedy for the wrongs justly complained of. Although Secularism does not commit itself to either one of the above systems, it does, in its "Immediate Practical Objects," recommend a course of action which would, if adopted, remove many existing impediments to social reform. Among other things, it demands the abolition of all fetters to the free expression of opinion; it advocates the equalisation of the legal status of men and women; the removal of all hereditary distinctions; the improvement of sanitary conditions; the right and duty of Labor organisation; the reformation rather than the mere punishment of criminals, and the substitution of Arbitration for War in the settlement of international disputes. I am not aware of any one scheme that is before the public which is calculated to prove a panacea for all our social wrongs; but the carrying out of the method advocated in the "objects" of the National Secular Society would undoubtedly remove many obstacles that now retard social reform, and would thus prepare the way for

a more successful plan of reformation, which, it is to be hoped, will in time emanate from the brains of the many social reformers who are now striving to assist in the emancipation of a too long down-trodden and apathetic people.

Personally, I have faith in some features of the State Socialist movement; but its advocacy involves that which, to my mind, renders it quite impracticable as a remedial force in the present state of society. Individualism, when properly understood, contains, in my opinion, the promise of success as a reforming agency. But, unfortunately, there has become associated with the philosophy of Individualism a class of men who are opposed to all Government aid. This I shall endeavor to prove, in a future article in these columns, to be a mistake. To that kind of Anarchism which advocates and countenances violent and brutal attacks upon persons and the rights of the community I am thoroughly opposed. And next week I hope to convince the readers of the *Freethinker* that Secularism is quite distinct from Anarchism.

CHARLES WATTS.

RELIGION AND ETHICS.

THE relation of Christian doctrines and morals continues a fruitful and interesting theme of discussion. The audacious persistence of those free lances of the Church, who are never so happily engaged as when probing the slimy bottom of the Christian fabric, and the piercing attacks of outward criticism, have caused the explosion of the idea that rendered religion the motherhood of morality. One of the logical deductions of such an acknowledged circumstance is a possible absence of the essentials of either one in the other. At this point, however, even reckless theologians hold fast, for, although having resigned the prior claim of Christianity to the foundation of ethics, they assert that its doctrines are more calculated to foster morality than any other combination of influences or forces. It would be unwise and eminently unkind to gauge this thesis by ascertaining to what extent the existence of religious faith effects human conduct, being aware of the divergence there may be between an ideal system of morals and its exemplification. Moreover, human nature is very frail, and religious nature especially so. Nor would it be hardly satisfactory to attest the ethical value of those passages in the gospels which were once supposed to regulate the actions of all true Christians, seeing that one of the foremost of their number has been honest enough to admit that the rigid observance of New Testament precepts would immediately precipitate a community into a hopeless imbroglio. Religious controversialists are such shuffling antagonists that it is frequently really difficult to discover on what ground for the nonce they are championing their creed; but in the consideration of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, and only those upon which there is something approaching unanimity in the fold, it will perhaps be found possible to place these alleged props of virtue on their trial.

In attempting the ethical exposition of the doctrines of faith, of God, of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, of the atonement, and of eternal life, which none will deny are the cornerstones of the Christian religion, we can determine their moral potentiality, and thus comprehend the utility which is advocated of them. It is obvious that their individual significance is absorbed in their dependence on the first named, the doctrine of faith. When the spirit of investigation and the privilege of judgment are discarded, and faith reigns in their stead, a thoroughfare to the mind is at once created for the passage of all possible ideas and beliefs. If the inculcation of faith were but a preparatory process for the exclusive reception of that which is conducive to human happiness and contentment, it would unquestionably be an invaluable ally of morality; but the conditions of faith are arbitrary; they paralyse the perceptive functions; they open no channel through which may only pass the good, and to which the bad is refused admittance. Faith enslaves the mind, so that the dogmas which follow in its wake may enjoy a sure habitation. How foreign, then, is faith to the first principles of morality. In matters which concern the well-being of mankind, in customs which direct the peace and usefulness of social life, and in laws which ensure personal protection and

preservation, faith in Christian doctrines is an unknown factor. Morals in their relation to the conditions of society possess no connection with faith, whose special business, on the other hand, is to draw attention from this world and concentrate all hopes and endeavors in another, created by active imaginations. Faith, says the theologian, is our brightest faculty. Well, that may be the impression of two classes of people, priests and conjurers. Their objects are identical; they endeavor to mystify; their success lives on credulity. It is this same faith which aids the manufacture of Atheist shoemakers by Christian snobs; faith—i.e., uncorroborated belief—produces gullibility, and gullibility swallows unattested stories. But morality looks not to such a source for help, and rather has it an open enemy in every device which perverts the intellect, and in every allurement which tends to reckon as of secondary importance the present state of man.

How belief in the Bible God, in salvation by the death of Jesus Christ, and in eternal life, can be holden in face of the prohibition against the application of the search-light of reason to their validity, is incomprehensible; and of what service unproven doctrines may be to morals it is yet more difficult to realise. For what are their particular implications? The first teaches the existence of a supreme and infinite being (which in itself is inconceivable) whom man should worship, adore, and obey, and who—it is evident from his own literary work—is more a horrible fiend than anything else. In what manner will faith in him increase the righteousness of human conduct—in him who, on the great occasion of what is termed the redemption of man, at this the most vital time of human history, failed to manifest his beneficence in a way other than in the transgression of the elementary laws of sexual morality? The next doctrine, that of the Atonement, offers, as has been so ably pointed out before time, a direct incentive to sin and immorality; it places a premium on vice; it makes a ridiculous suggestion that the unalterable sequence of cause and effect can be set at naught, and it threatens the very foundations of ethics. The other doctrine, that of eternal life, upon which Christian controversialists rely as the great bulwark of morals, has evidently received its coloring from a remote time, and under circumstances when morality was compelled to feast on the crumbs of selfishness. The idea of future reward for present good deeds robs noble actions of their moral essence, and renders humanity void of any sterling impulse. It is also in direct opposition to the essential nature of morality, which only deals with present conduct and its effect in the production of comfort and happiness in this world, having no care or concern as to probable or improbable consequences in some fancied sphere hereafter. These, then, are the main guarantees which a religious system offered to mankind some few hundred years ago for the nourishment of progress and the stimulation of virtue. For centuries previous men had contrived to exist, and their civilisation was an advanced one towards an ideal state. And in later times the secular arm has wrought wonderful changes and made vast improvements; humanity has been elevated; the moral code has been raised higher and higher; crime and many kinds of vice have been diminished, and all has been accomplished without the inspiring aid, sometimes in spite of the antagonism, of Christian doctrines. But there, religion must have credit for something, and its history has been marked by a proclivity for assimilating that to which it has not been entitled.

It is well to reiterate the truth of the complete independence—nay, the non-relation—of ethics and religion. The tendency towards a morality of some code or another is innate in human nature, for in its absence communal life would be an impossibility. As the human race evolves to a higher plane, so will its morals become more refined, and better able to maintain honor and prosperity. What is the virtue of one age may be the vice of another. A savage cannot correctly be termed immoral on account of his ideas of right and wrong being dissimilar to the accepted ethical laws of a civilised nation, for they are in accordance with his intellectual qualities, and his conception of human rights, liberties, and comforts. Morality finds birth in utility; it is regulated by environment, and effected largely by natural laws. The modelling hands of experience have directed its course, and nothing is so certain that no priestly systems, no doctrines, and no creeds are to be found in the elements of ethics.

FRED WILSON.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

(Continued from page 541.)

Commandment the Third.—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus xx. 7; Deut. v. 11). It is difficult to understand why this commandment was given; because, virtually, it is included in the commandments already considered. But it is still more difficult to imagine how it can be broken; because, to be so, it must be knowingly and wilfully broken by a believer in the God. No sane man would knowingly and wilfully traduce his own god; to "take in vain" the "name" of another man's god is quite a different matter. Christians themselves are not at all chary as to how they speak of other men's gods, although they bitterly resent any apparent disrespect of their own God. The men who most frequently invoke the Deity, or make use of his name, are almost invariably mere "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Josh. ix. 21). They are men who have but the vaguest and most opaque notion of God; men to whom God-like thoughts are mere hieroglyphs, and to whom thinking is unknown. And such men, when they err in this respect, err *ignorantly*, as St. Paul did; and God, we are expressly told, "winks at ignorance" (Acts xvii. 10). Even the Jewish God can, at times, according to one of his prophets, act justly and mercifully. Thus we read: "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?" (Jon. iv. 11). But no penalty is attached to the commandment; therefore no punishable offence can be committed.

Commandment the Fourth.—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus xx. 8) "Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it" (Deut. v. 12). These two sentences mean much the same thing, but still it is worthy of observation that Moses should not have quoted the commandment correctly. Now, the heinousness of an offence is usually indicated by the penalty that is attached to its commission. Consequently, this commandment should be one of the most important and most serious of all the commandments, because the penalty attached to the breaking of it by the Levitical law was "death." "Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death" (Exodus xxxv. 2). But St. Paul—who was not only a Jew, but a Pharisee, and who "for two whole years in his own hired house" (Acts xxvii. 30) was continuously engaged in teaching "both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets" (Acts xxviii. 23)—looked upon this commandment in a very different light, for has he not written, "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days" (Col. ii. 16)? And surely this interpretation of the commandment must be that which has been adopted by those preachers of "The Word" who, every Sabbath day, are bodily carried to the scenes of their pulpit labors in luxurious coaches!

Commandment the Fifth.—"Honor thy father and thy mother" (Exodus xx. 5; Deut. v. 16). The Jewish race must indeed have been bad for Moses to have thought it necessary to give such a commandment as this. Good parents generally have good children, for parental affection must precede filial affection; brutal parents cannot expect their children to grow up kind and loving. This truth is recognised by the Jewish proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii. 6).

But, strange to say, a reason is given why this commandment should be obeyed. The reason is, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus xx. 5). "That thy days may be prolonged, and that it may be well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deut. v. 16). The penalty, therefore, for not honoring one's father and mother is simply that one's days may be few and not many upon the earth—a penalty which is, in reality, no penalty at all; for no man can tell what the number of his days, or the days of any other man, will be.

There is grave irony in the phrase, "The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." These words, of course, apply only to the Jewish race, and to the land of Canaan. They cannot apply—they do not apply—to these nineteenth-century days; for, of the hundreds of millions of human beings who are now upon the earth, but few, comparatively

speaking, will ever possess more "land" than is sufficient for those "narrow beds" in which they will take their last sleep.

Moreover, in this matter, the Jewish God and the Christian God are at variance; for hath not Christ declared: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26)?

Commandment the Sixth.—"Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus xx. 13; Deut. v. 17). To kill here means to murder. Therefore, men should not murder one another. And yet the very God who is said to have given this commandment commanded the Israelites to murder, in cold blood, even women and children! "Go and smite Amalek," said he, "and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Samuel xv. 3). To say that this destroying and slaying was excusable and justifiable homicide—that it was lawful and legal, as is the execution of a criminal to-day—is not only to beg the question, but also to state that which is notoriously untrue. The inhabitants of Canaan had in nowise injured or offended the Israelites; yet the latter, at the command of their God, seized the possessions of the former, and mercilessly put men, women, and children to the sword. Every natural and civil right was trodden under foot by the conquerors. The commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill"—that is, murder; and yet here was warfare of the most savage and barbarous description—the warfare of wild beasts rather than of human beings. And if the killing in cold blood of innocent and defenceless women and children was not murder, what was it? There can be no excuse for such wanton, such atrocious barbarity; and yet we are told it was done by the command of a God! And this same God, we are told by another of his prophets, some nine hundred years afterwards, issued a similar command, though, strange to say, in the latter case, the atrocities were to be committed upon, and not by, the Jews. "Go ye," said the Jewish God, "through the city, and smite. Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maidens, and little children, and women" (Ezekiel ix. 5, 6). What a picture!—a picture that is a libel on the God who "created the heaven and the earth."

Commandment the Seventh.—"Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus xx. 14; Deut. v. 18). And by the Levitical law the penalty attaching to the breaking of this commandment was "death" (Lev. xx. 10). Nevertheless, the Jewish God gave the Israelites permission to ravish any captive women they pleased, and then to turn them adrift in the wide world; the only restriction on the ravisher being this: "Thou shalt not sell her at all for money, because thou hast humbled her" (Deut. xxi. 14).

This paraphrase of the passage in question is said by "orthodox Christians"—are there any others who are not orthodox?—to be a gross misrepresentation of it. Is it so? Let us see in what respect, if any, it is a misrepresentation. Here is the passage *in extenso*: "When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to wife; then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month; and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her" (Deut. xxi. 10-14).

Now, there is no need to read between the lines to see what all this means; the hideous transaction stands out in all its nakedness and horror. The woman was a captive and a slave, and, *volens volens*—no matter whether she were maid, wife, or widow—she had to permit her master to "humble her." And after he had "humbled her"—that is, when he had satisfied his lust, and she had become distasteful to him, he might let her go whither she would—that is, he might turn her out of doors, for she had no choice in the matter; but must *not sell her*. To veil such a one-sided, cold-blooded transaction by the use of the expressions "husband" and

"wife" is grossly to prostitute those words. In what way, then, can this paraphrastic version of the passage be said to be a "gross misrepresentation of it"?

But—*mirabile dictu!*—another Jewish prophet declares that the god of Israel has said, "I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery" (Hosea iv. 14). What a changeable god this Jewish god must have been!

N. M. X.

(To be concluded.)

CHRIST OR CIVILISATION?

THE Christian who stoutly maintains
That hospitals owe their promotion
To Jesus, admits that our *drains*
Are purely a *secular* notion.

A *hospital's* work is to *cure*—
A fact that we gratefully mention;
But vastly more useful, we're sure,
Is *drainage*, whose work is *prevention*.

"*Prevention* is better than *cure*,"
And *soundness* is better than *patching*;
The "anti-snake-bite" that is *sure*
Is smashing the eggs before hatching.

Implicitly Jesus condemned
All hospitals, doctors, and science;
All prudence and thrift he contemned;
On prayer was all his reliance.

Of course! and his reasons were clear—
He acted on valid deduction;
He thought that the Judgment was near,
With blazes and total destruction.

He thought that the earth would be burned
Ere ended his own generation,
And, therefore, consistently spurned
The factors of civilisation.

If Jesus had only foreseen
What cleanliness does for a city,
His cardinal doctrine had been,
Not *prayer*, but *drains*—what a pity!

If he from the grave were to rise,
And travel by rail and by steamer,
The journey would make him despise
His foolish old trade of Redeemer.

'Tis well that Christ's methods are dead!
'Tis well that we live in a sane age,
Which wisely promotes in their stead
Arts, Hospitals, Freethought, and Drainage.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Crowded Out.

It is a fact demonstrated by science that the sum-total of all existence cannot be increased or decreased to the amount of a single atom. What exists, its elementary constituents, will exist forever. All forms of matter have no existence *per se*, hence are transient, ever-changing; but their components exist forever. From nothing nothing can come. So all thinking minds, who have discarded miracles and a blind faith in the traditions and myths of the dark ages, must concede that the universe existing to-day is absolute proof in itself, utterly indisputable, that in its elementary form it is eternal, *never was not*, never was designed or created, and never was without law, order, harmony, and all-sufficient powers and potencies to produce, unaided by outside agencies (which do not exist), at remotest periods of time, as well as now, precisely the same phenomena it produces and evolves to-day. Also that, if at any time in the past it had not existed, it would, positively, not exist now, as even a God cannot create something from nothing.

The universe is infinite and eternal, here and there and everywhere; hence a god is necessarily crowded out. And such a factor in nature is superfluous. All we know is natural; nothing supernatural.—O. Wettstein.

"Mamma," said Flossie, "when I was a baby did I come from heaven?" "Yes, dear." "And will I go to heaven when I die?" "Yes, I hope so." "Well," said Flossie, admiring herself in the mirror, "I guess they won't know me when I get back."

ACID DROPS.

WILLIAM COBBETT is not much read now-a-days, though no one since Swift has wielded the English language with such vigor, directness, and perspicuity. We have just been reading his *Northern Tour* again, and in this as in other of his later writings the old Radical's hatred of parsons crops up frequently. He had never been in Scotland before the visit which was the occasion of this volume, and he was apparently surprised to find the *tithe* system north of the Tweed, in connection with an established Presbyterian Church. The local name for these tithes was *Tiends*. "They are an annual allowance," wrote Cobbett, "of a certain quantity of corn from each estate. This is not rendered in kind, however, but in money, according to the market-price at the time when the payment becomes due. For instance, the priest is to be paid for so many boles of wheat, on account of such an estate, on a certain day of the year; so on throughout his parish. This mode of payment renders it a great stretch of disinterestedness to induce the priest sincerely to pray for plenty; for the scantier the crop, the higher the price; and the higher the price, the higher is his pay. This is putting disinterestedness and piety to a very severe trial."

"Parsons," wrote Cobbett on the very next page, "have noses as keen as that of a crow; they smell danger at a greater distance than any part of God's creation. It is said that the Bald-Eagles, in North America, they being in Canada, will smell a dead horse upon the borders of the Gulf of Mexico; but, wonderful as this may appear, my belief is that the noses of parsons are still finer than those of the Bald-Eagles."

Cobbett being a great enemy of Church establishments, the ministers of the established Presbyterian Church in Scotland not only shut their doors against him, but gave out that he was an *infidel*. This excited his indignation, and caused him to indulge in some very racy denunciation of these "fine-nosed gentry."

"Many are cold, but few are frozen," is a joke that has appeared in the *Freethinker*. One of our friends, at a certain seaside resort, tried it on a local Christian who has done a little exhorting. It took. The local Christian remembered it somewhere in the New Testament, he couldn't say exactly where.

Parson Ballance, of St. Faith's, Norfolk, has remonstrated with Farmer Warren for speaking at a Sunday meeting in support of the raising of funds for the legal defence of some laborers awaiting trial for strike "rioting." The honest and generous farmer is reminded that he has committed "an offence against God." It would be more modest if the parson waited to let God say so.

Floods and hailstorms doing great damage in France and Belgium are, with more earthquakes in Sicily, among recent illustrations of providence. Some rationalistic Christians have come to believe that God has nothing to do with them. But this only shows the spread of infidelity. Whenever the Bible mentions such phenomena it always ascribes them to God. See, for instance, Deut. xi. 6-14; Lev. xxvi. 4; Is. xxix. 6; Ps. cxlvii. 8; etc.

The "Stone of Job," shown near the Sea of Tiberias, is another Bible antiquity which has to be given up. Till lately the stone was surrounded by a Moslem shrine; but a recent examination has revealed that, instead of having any connection with Job, it is really an inscription of Rameses II., the famous King of Egypt, who is usually considered as the Pharaoh of the Jewish oppression.

Important consequences flow from this. The inscription proves that at that time Canaan, instead of being held by a number of Canaanite tribes driven out by the Israelites, was really in the hands of the most powerful monarch in the world, and corroborates the Harris papyrus, which declares that Rameses set up the worship of Amen in Canaan.

It had previously been known that the Egyptian armies had penetrated Palestine, and that they had garrisons in the Sinaitic peninsular. For this reason the Rev. A. H. Sayce proposed to make the Mount Sinai of Moses some distance away, for it was ridiculous to suppose the Jews, without arms, would march to the quarters of the enemy. The Stone of Job in the North of Palestine, inscribed with the name of Rameses II., however, shows that the Egyptians held the whole of the country. This is quite incompatible with the Bible legends.

It should be noticed that the Siloam inscription is not in Hebrew, but in Phœnician. It was the opinion of Professor A. L. Rawson, who went on Palestine Exploration, that

there was next to no evidence to prove that the Jews had been in Palestine.

"Archdeacon Farrar," says the *Echo*, "has been silent since his *Life of Christ*." Gods, angels, and fishes! Can anybody fancy Archdeacon Farrar silent?

The *Chicago Herald* reports a spiritist camp meeting near that city as celebrating an Indian pow-wow. A bonfire was built in the woods, and the mediums, fifty in number, dressed in Indian garb and painted after the fashion of savages, sat around in a circle until controlled by their Indian spirits. In half an hour all were under control. Then followed an Indian war dance. The mediums conversed with each other in the Indian language. The dance lasted for half an hour.

A medium from Portland, Ind., says the report, while under control, danced into the big fire and fell, and, before those who were witnesses of the mishap could get him out, he was severely burned. A young girl from Muncie, named Howe, became so excited that she leaped upon the shoulders of men and women, and at last had to be held down until she came to her senses.

The methods of the early Methodists, and of the howling dervishes, seem to be resorted to by the Spiritists to obtain "the spirit." Insanity and inspiration are closely allied. When Saul took off his clothes and feigned to be mad, he was considered a prophet.

Colonel Ingersoll's letter on Suicide (see "Sugar Plums") has caused quite a flutter in America. All sorts of persons are replying to him, including Catholic dignitaries and professional humorists. The *Boston Sunday Globe* calls him "the Apostle of Suicide," simply because he pleads for more tenderness and humanity. It also refers to him as "that omniscient Atheist, that dogmatic Agnostic, that oracular doubter, that doctrinarian sceptic, that believing unbeliever, that merciless scrutiniser of the inscrutable, that rotund rhetorician," etc., etc. We suppose this is meant as a substitute for argument.

The *Finsbury Park Journal* wants to know why the Government cuts off the grant from King's College on account of its denominational character, and at the same time promises to consider a grant to the Christian Brothers Schools in Ireland, which "pride themselves on being absolutely denominational, and will receive grants solely on the condition that they remain so, with their sacred emblems always in the schools." We are unable to solve this conundrum.

His Holiness Pope Pecci has expressed his approval of a new Scapular of St. Joseph, which, if purchased and worn by the faithful, is to bring them untold spiritual and material blessings.

Miss Kate Marsden, the Catholic missionary to the lepers in Siberia, threatens an action against the Rev. Alexander Francis, pastor of the British American church in St. Petersburg, who reports adversely to her mission.

Scotland is particularly godly; but Dr. Cramond, reporting on the religious condition of the people, says that illegitimacy is far higher than in England, and that in Banffshire over three times the number of illegitimate children are born. Perhaps the Bothie system and the practice of courting at night, have something to do with it; but, anyway, the efficacy of religion is not displayed by the report.

The Rev. Mr. Fowke, Vicar of Billesden, has been visiting Scotland, where his father-in-law, Bishop Douglas, is a leading light of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, a bishop unrecognised by the people, and disestablished by the State. Mr. Fowke writes from Scotland to his parishioners a letter published in his parish magazine. "Many of you in Billesden," he says, "may not know that the Christian Church is not the religion upheld and supported by the State, as in England."

"The Church of Christ," he goes on to say, "which had been the only religion in this country since its first introduction some 1,600 years before, was, in 1690, formally, though wrongfully, disestablished and disendowed, and a Christian dissenting sect called 'the Presbyterians' established in her place. This form of Christianity, unlike the Church, was not originated by our Lord and His Apostles, but by two men, Andrew Melville and John Knox, about 1570."

In all this Mr. Fowke only voices the usually unexpressed sentiments of the whole of the High Church party. They one and all hold that the wrong church, no church at all, or

at best a schismatical one, is established in Scotland, and yet they object to its disestablishment, fearing that it may pave the way towards the disendowment of their own.

Another bitter pill for High Churchmen who believe in the divine establishment of Episcopacy, the apostolic succession, and the unlawfulness of sacraments, unless taken from the hands of episcopally ordained priests, is the fact that the Queen, the head of their own Church, recognised by their Articles, spends so much of her time in Scotland, and then attends the Presbyterian Church and partakes of the precious fluid from Presbyterian hands.

The godliness of Glasgow is declining, and a visitor complains in the *English Churchman* that the old Scotch Sabbath is departing. Corporation tramways run on Sundays, and the G.P.O. sells stamps. Failing the interference of Providence, the writer suggests that a hundred Jenny Geddeses are wanted "to break the pates of a hundred unfaithful ministers, with the possibility that the rest might take warning."

The question of Sunday Observance has been discussed in the *Liverpool Daily Post*. A semi-rationalistic letter by B.A. (Oxon), has evoked a rejoinder from B.A. (Lond.), who observes that he has never been able to understand "how any Christian, in face of the clear words of Jesus and Paul, can yet pretend any obligation to keep one day specially holy. This is but one among many instances of how people read their own preconceived opinions into the Bible. The Puritan must find his Sabbatarianism in the Bible, and if he cannot get it from Jesus and Paul, he will go to Moses. I am reminded of the story of the old Scotch-woman, who said she knew that Jesus walked in the cornfields on Sunday, and probably went fishing also. 'But let me tell you,' she added, 'I don't think any the better even of him for doing so.'"

The inhabitants of Hong Kong are afraid that the plague will return unless they are completely isolated from the Chinese continent. Over three thousand were killed, and eighty thousand fled. The outlay was not less than a million dollars, and, coming on top of the fall in silver and trade-killing troubles in Siam and Corea, the plague has shattered the prosperity of the colony.

The poorer clergy in Hungary are asking for a redistribution of the ecclesiastical revenues. The bishops and archbishops have estates of from £20,000 to £50,000 in value. Of course the sympathies of the people are with the inferior clergy; but the wrangling over the loaves and fishes, combined with the opposition to civil marriage, is aiding the cause of Freethought in Hungary.

Catholics and Protestants are at daggers drawn in Madagascar, and the visit of the Queen to a Protestant church has exasperated the French Catholics, who regard the Protestantism of the Queen as a challenge to French supremacy in the island.

We must be in the thick of the silly season, for here is the *Times* inserting letters from Earl Grimthorpe and others on the rhymes to hymns. Without judging these compositions by their jingle, it may be fairly said that rhyme and reason are usually about on a par in these compositions. God rhymed with road or abroad; join with thine; bliss, less; glory, adore thee; Ghost, Pentecost; ever, reliever; beneath, breathe; heaven, riven; again, amen, are among the gems adduced in the correspondence.

Canon Moyes writes to the papers denying that Catholics believe in "Papal impeccability." Why, of course. The crimes of the Popes were a little too glaring for that. But because no responsible person defends the doctrine, it does not follow that the ignorant and credulous do not believe it. Uninstructed Catholics would almost as soon think of ascribing sin to Jesus Christ as to the Holy Father.

The writer of an article on "Wonderful Cloud Forms," in the *Evening Standard*, says: "It is stated that, on the eve of the battle of Culloden, King George II. and his family at Windsor beheld in the clouds the thistles of Scotland reversed, and the outline of a Highlander armed with claymore and targe falling backwards. The famous cloud-emblem of the Emperor Constantine is not so well authenticated." The superstition the writer alludes to is satirised in Hamlet, who makes Polonius say the cloud-form is "very like a whale."

According to the Vienna correspondent of the *Daily News*, the parish priest of a village near Kornenburg was arrested, charged with embezzlement to the amount of more than three thousand florins from the poor fund of his parish, A worthy follower of the apostle Judas.

"The Greatest Need in the World," according to the

Methodist Times, is international peace. We think so too, and we should like our pious contemporary to explain why Christianity has not produced it. God Almighty, if he founded the Christian religion, is a dreadfully long time in making it of any real use to mankind.

Lord Rosebery has received a curious memorial from a number of Christian Churches in Great Britain and Ireland. Although "the Lord is a man of war," these his worshippers are in favor of peace; which is a reflection on the deity's character, unless it is a sign of their impertinence. They ask Lord Rosebery to ask the Government to ask the Queen to ask the other Powers to take "some practical step designed to promote the international reduction of armaments and the establishment of some permanent system of international arbitration." This is an excellent object, but the memorialists pursue a very roundabout policy. If they are in favor of peace, on moral grounds, they would raise their voices against Great Britain's butchery and expropriation of weaker races. What they appear to desire is, that Europe shall have armies, not big enough for internecine war, but big enough to oppress and rob the "heathen."

The Lord's Day Rest Association publish a document lamenting that Sunday excursions are run this August and September to over one hundred places. They want the law to put it down; but, first of all, they want subscriptions from the faithful.

At Chicago the International Sunday Observance League got an injunction against a Sunday foot-ball match; but, on appeal, the injunction was dissolved. The same question was recently brought before Justice Raynor, of Brooklyn, a number of boys having been arrested by officious persons for playing ball on Sunday. According to the *Truthseeker*, the judge rebuked the officer who brought them into court. He says there is no law against Sunday base-ball, and that its suppression is an infringement of the rights of citizens.

The *English Churchman* inserts a number of letters from ministers on the peril of using Professor Drummond's works owing to his having adopted "the evolution theories of Agnostics, Deists, and Atheists." One writer opines that the Spiritualistic Professor is "perilously near the brink of Materialistic Atheism."

At the Birmingham Police Court the Rev. Dr. Burrow, vicar of St. Andrew's, whose conduct is to form the subject of a bishop's inquiry shortly, summoned Mr. Vivian, a parishioner, for being guilty of "riotous, violent, and indecent conduct during divine service." Finding his pew-door fastened by order of the vicar, the defendant climbed over it. The vicar made numerous charges against the defendant, but ultimately the summons was dismissed, the vicar to pay all costs.

Riot and disorder attend the preaching of Protestants in Ireland. Two hundred policemen had to protect the Rev. J. Harrison and the Rev. Mr. Hallowes at Galway, and, despite such a large force, they were wounded with missiles, besides being pelted with mud and rotten eggs. There is nothing that leads to such sweet urbanity as difference of religion.

Charitable people are often the dupes of the undeserving. Mary Townsend, a sister of mercy "of the Order of St. Charles," stands charged, at the South-Western Police Court, with obtaining money by false pretences. With a little girl, eight years of age, she collected subscriptions for an orphanage, dedicated to St. Peter, at Herne Bay. Full descriptions of the institution and the work done by it were given. The Rev. C. J. Wall, late curate of St. John's, East Dulwich, whose offer of bail was refused on the ground that his licence has been revoked by the Bishop of Rochester, testified that there had been some negotiations for the purchase of ground, but they had never been completed. As the lease of the "home" occupied by the prisoner is in the name of the Rev. C. J. Wall, the father superior of the Order of St. Charles, there are some people who think his proceedings ought to be included in the investigation.

Another sky-pilot, the Rev. W. Shipley, of Limpley Stoke, has been running a private asylum without a licence from the Lunacy Commissioners. An escaped inmate, a Plymouth lady named Bale, complained before the Bath magistrates of having been ill-treated at the establishment.

The *British Weekly* is engaged in the dangerous task of compiling a list of the best hundred religious books. The roots of every modern religion are found in Paganism, and the Old Testament itself is a vast storehouse of selections and adaptations, describing heathen practices from heathen sources. Scholars have shown us that the Therapeuts taught similar doctrines to Christianity long before Christ, and religious myths which excited the emotions of the Egyptians, Persians, and Hindoos survive to this day. Our

learned Orientalists have proved that the doctrines of the Trinity, the miraculous conception, the cross and crucifixion, atonement, judgment, and resurrection were common to the prominent religions thousands of years before Christianity. So much was Tertullian, one of the Christian fathers, struck with this that he declared the contrasts between Christianity and the earlier Paganism could only be explained by assuming that the Devil, knowing beforehand of the ceremonies of Christianity which had not yet come into the world, inspired the Pagans to forestall the Christians and thus injure the Almighty. These are some of the things set forth by the best religious books.—*Reynolds*.

The *Church Times* writes on the Appeal for the Churches for Christian Reunion, under the title of "The Grindelwald Assumption." The assumption is, that there is more than one church. It says: "The Church of England has neither right nor power to acknowledge any English separate bodies to be churches." It does not want reunion, because it will not allow there is disunion. This looks very like the policy of the ostrich sticking its head in the sand to escape pursuit. A rude awakening may be looked forward to.

Father Bernard Vaughan, of the Society of Jesus, has been giving the Middlesborough people the Catholic view of education, which is that it should be subservient to religion. "Board schools," he declared, "were mere manufactories turning out calculating, and writing, and pleasure-hunting machines," and he instanced the Anarchists as the result of their training. This was Jesuitism with a vengeance, considering that the most notorious criminals have not only had a religious, but a Catholic, training.

We look for fiction in the *Family Herald*, but expected something more novel than our old friend the Atheist Shoemaker. He turns up, however, in "Five Old Maids" (Aug. 25). "He used to give the last vicar a deal of trouble talking heathenism in the inn parlor, at Perival." But the new vicar, the Rev. James Champyon, is of the right sort, and when he began "vaporizing about his unbelief" he said: "It was not good breeding to say anything offensive about any one else's religious opinions, and invited him to the rectory to smoke a pipe and talk things over quietly. And now he sends his kids to the Sunday-school." Very instructive. But could we not have an Atheist carpenter for a change?

Christian and liar have too often been convertible terms. A certain Christian Evidence journal speaks of the President of the Ryhope Branch of the National Secular Society as "denouncing Bradlaugh and Foote." Mr. G. Hutchinson, the president in question, says of this statement: "It is a wilful untruth; I spoke of both of them in terms of the highest praise and admiration."

Mr. Hutchinson will perhaps listen to our advice. The best way to guard against the misrepresentations of these reckless Christians is not to go near their meetings. There is nothing to be gained by opposing, or coming into any sort of contact with, a mere savage, accidentally born in a civilised country.

Parson Robertson, of St. Clement's, Notting-hill, London, laid an information against the landlord of a local public-house for supplying a pot of beer to a man who had imbibed enough already. The summons was dismissed, as the parson was unable to prove his case. It came out in hearing that the publican was not a liberal subscriber to the man of God's charities. "Would you take his money for a school-treat?" asked counsel. "I would take anybody's money," answered the man of God; and the people in court burst out into laughter before he could add "for a good purpose."

Salisbury J. M. Price, vicar of St. Ives, Hunts, writing to the London *Standard* with respect to "the raffling for Bibles in the church of this parish," says that "the raffling does not take place upon the altar, but upon an ordinary table, which has been used for this purpose for some years, in the nave of the church." This is a very fine distinction, seeing that all parts of a church are equally consecrated. The reverend gentleman does not explain the raffling, which is next door to gambling.

The Rev. J. Gamble, manager of a Liverpool lodging-house carried on on philanthropic principles, was charged with permitting over-crowding. A medical officer said that forty persons were crowded into a room which only afforded space for seventeen. The house, he added, was a nuisance and a danger to the public health. For the defence it was contended that the Public Health Act did not apply to a philanthropic institution. If it does not, it ought to.

"Wasn't that a finished sermon, Bulfinch?" "Yes; but I thought for a while it never would be."

SPECIAL.

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

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 2, City Assembly Rooms, Dundee:—11, "How the Bible Stands Now"; 2.15, "Mr. Gladstone and Heresy"; 6.30, "Lord Salisbury on Evolution, Design, and God."

September 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool; 30, Plymouth.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 2, 9, and 16, Hall of Science, London; 28, York; 30, Dundee. October 3, 4, and 5, Aberdeen; 7, Edinburgh; 14, Glasgow; 21, Bradford; 28, Hall of Science, London. November 4, Hall of Science; 11, Hall of Science, London; 18, Liverpool. December 2, Newcastle-on-Tyne (Sunday Society); 9, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

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

J. SCHRAM (Berlin).—We know no French paper similar to our own, but you might try *La Verité*, 17 Rue F. St. Honoré, Paris; and *La Raison*, 26 Rue Sens, Bruxelles.

A. LA HOOPER (Dundee).—Comte's *General View of Positivism* is published by Reeves and Turner. Price, we think, 2s. 6d. Mr. Forder can procure it for you.

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear you have returned from your holiday in the best of health and spirits.

A. F. HINDLEY.—You will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. Foote at Birmingham on November 11, when he lectures in the Town Hall. Pleased to know that you are delighted with the *Freethinker*. Mr. Watts's "Questions for Theists," which you praise so highly, are now published as a pamphlet.

G. HUTCHINSON.—It is encouraging to learn that Freethought is steadily progressing at Ryhope. On the other matter, see "Acid Drops."

GOTTHEL.—Cuttings are always welcome.

SAMUEL HALE, ex-chairman, Camberwell and Peckham C.E.S., says that G. Standing is mistaken in his account of the Society's expenditure. Mr. Engström's stipend is only £100 a year; Mr. Waterman's is £315. He gets twice as much as all the lecturers put together.

G. W. B.—The cutting was not accompanied by the name of the paper from which it was taken.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—We do not know enough about the Church Extension trading to be able to write about it. No doubt the Church will resort to any and every means to rake in cash, even if it has to compete with the second-hand dealers of Houndsditch.

INQUIRER.—Mr. Forder could probably supply you with a copy of Charles Bradlaugh's pamphlet on the Laws relating to Heresy and Blasphemy. Mr. Foote intends to prepare a fresh statement at an early opportunity. Mr. Forder can also supply you with a copy of Mr. Storey's Bill. Professor Drummond, we believe, belongs to the Free Church of Scotland.

J. TULLIN.—We are very sorry to hear that Joseph Brown is still unwell. After all his work for the Secular cause in general, and for the N.E. Secular Federation in particular, it would be a graceful thing to raise a little money for the purpose of giving him a time of rest and recuperation. We shall be glad to hear that a local committee has been formed for this object.

W. ROBERTSON.—No doubt some weak or obscure Freethinkers, in the course of fifty years, have "found Christ" or something equivalent. But no real "leader" of Freethought has been captured. On the other hand, the leaders of Freethought have all been converted from Christianity. This is a fact which our opponents lose sight of.

BEELEZBUR.—Thanks. Such discourses are very common now-a-days in Christian pulpits. There was an article recently in the *Freethinker* on Christian Socialism. The verse you mark is from a poem by old George Herbert.

E. P. SCHOFIELD.—Why waste your time in writing to such men? Wilkinson's is the book on Ancient Egypt, but it is very expensive. Get Prof. Rhys Davids' little half-crown book on Buddhism, and also, if you can obtain it, his Hibbert Lectures.

J. BURRELL.—Sorry we cannot oblige. The Christian opponent in the debate has conducted himself so infamously that we decline to give him any kind of advertisement.

J. WOOD.—See paragraph. Kindly let us know the result.

H. JONES.—(1) The Aztecs inhabited Mexico. (2) No. (3) There may have been communication in ancient times between Asia and America, but it is rather improbable. (4) Neither the gorilla nor the chimpanzee builds huts. If they did, they would be superior to our primitive ancestors who lived in caves.

D. F. GLOAK.—Always glad to hear from you. Mr. Foote will talk over all the matters referred to with you at Dundee. Your zeal and energy are evidently bearing fruit.

T. MILLAR.—Not up to your best level.

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—Liverpool Post—Westminster Gazette—New York World—Boston Globe—Evening Standard—Middlesex Chronicle—Paddington Chronicle—Pioneer—Open Court—Twentieth Century.

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.

THE splendid weather and the Hyde Park demonstration were expected to thin the audience at the London Hall of Science. But they did not have this effect. There was an excellent gathering, and Mr. Foote's voice was only a trifle affected by his exertions in the Park. His lecture on "Is Immortality a Blessing?" was highly appreciated and very warmly applauded.

Freethinkers were well to the front in Sunday's demonstration in Hyde Park against the House of Lords. Mr. C. J. Hunt, the chairman, and Mr. J. F. Henley, the secretary of the organising committee, are both members of the N.S.S. West London Branch, the former being also a vice-president and member of the Central Executive. Miss E. M. Vance presided at the Women's Liberal Federation platform. Mr. A. B. Moss spoke at No. 7 platform. Mr. Foote spoke from three platforms, there being a lack of speakers who could be heard at a distance. At No. 7 he had a fine reception; then he was pressed to visit No. 6; having done there he had enough of it, but he was again pressed to visit the Women's platform (No. 5), and he did not know how to refuse that invitation.

The demonstration was favored with fine weather, but it was not so large as some other gatherings we have seen in Hyde Park. It must be remembered, however, that it was what they call in war "a soldiers' battle." The "leaders" of Liberalism were conspicuous by their absence. Mr. Labouchere himself, the president of the League for the Abolition of the House of Lords, was not present. All this, of course, only gave the demonstration a greater significance as a spontaneous expression of feeling on the part of the rank and file. As to the number of the demonstrators, one Unionist paper had the silly audacity to put it down as fifteen hundred. The *Chronicle* estimate was 60,000, while the *Daily News* gave something between 100,000 and 200,000.

Mr. Charles Watts will commence the winter session of lectures at the Hall of Science, London, this evening, September 2, his subject being "Secularism: Its Relation to Social Progress." Mr. Watts intends dealing with Socialism, Individualism, and Anarchism. As these various "isms" are engaging much attention just now, we have no doubt that the lecture will be more than usually interesting, and that it will call forth some discussion.

On Wednesday evening, August 22, Mr. Watts met his friends in the minor Hall of Science, and formed a committee to conduct his contest for a seat on the London School Board. Mr. Watts is the officially-appointed candidate of the National Secular Society to represent purely Secular education on the Board. His address to the electors will shortly be published. In the meantime friends willing to serve on the committee will oblige by sending their names and addresses to Mr. Watts, 81 Effra-road, Brixton, S.W.

London Branches of the N.S.S. should bear in mind that

to-day (September 2) is Collection Sunday for the Secular Federation. The chairmen, and also the lecturers, at the open-air stations should make a special appeal on this occasion. All the officers of the Federation do their work gratuitously, and every penny of the Federation's income is spent in promoting the interest of the Branches. The printing of a common lecture-program for the Branches saves them a good deal of expenditure, and the least they can do in return is to make as handsome a collection as possible once a year.

Colonel Ingersoll contributes a long and eloquent letter to the *New York World* on "Is Suicide a Sin?" which we are reprinting in pamphlet form, together with a reply by Monsignor Ducey. This dignitary of the Romish Church pays a high tribute to Ingersoll's character. "I know," he says, "that Colonel Ingersoll is a man of large sympathies, and that he is most kindly disposed to relieve generously the afflicted whose suffering is brought to his notice. I know this, not from hearsay, but from numerous cases where I have been called, and to the relief of which cases Colonel Ingersoll has contributed with his mind, his heart, and most generously from his pocket."

Mr. J. Wood, secretary of the Wood Green Branch, will be at Southend next Sunday (September 9) with a lecturer, his intention being to hold a meeting on the sea front. He would like to hear from local Freethinkers who can attend and assist in the arrangements. Address—71 Gladstone-avenue, Wood Green, London, N.

Mr. Sam Standring reports a debate at Rochdale with Mr. Loughton, of the Wesleyan Joyful News Mission, at which three thousand persons were present. Mr. Standring says that the local Secular Society is making excellent progress.

Mr. Charles Watts has just issued a twopenny pamphlet on *The Existence of God, or Questions for Theists*. Our readers are already acquainted with the matter, and will doubtless be glad to have it in this form to hand to enquirers, for which purpose Mr. Watts's questions will be found eminently suitable.

Our Chicago contemporary, the *Open Court*, says that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's "pious fraud," the Atheist Shoemaker story, "boomeranged back with disastrous effectiveness," and doubts whether "all the oratorical efforts of Charles Bradlaugh have done as much to promote the cause of Freethought in Old England" as Mr. Hughes has done by a single fraudulent volume. The *Open Court* compliments Mr. Foote on his exposure of this "fiction of the St. Jerome and St. Gregory type."

The indoor lectures of the Battersea Branch start this Sunday evening (September 2) at 7.30. Mr. Pease (Fabian) opens with a lecture on "The Coming School Board Election." Admission is free. On Thursday, September 6, at 8 p.m., the Social Reform Wing meets to discuss rules and program. All members of the N.S.S. favorable to the movement are particularly invited, also ex-members who will rejoice now that it is intended to take part in social reforms.

The children of the Battersea Branch had a splendid day for their trip by brake to Riddlesdown, where they roamed the hills and woods, gathering nuts and wild flowers, and otherwise enjoying themselves. Punctually at five they partook of an excellent tea, and after another ramble they were driven home, singing secular ditties to their hearts' content.

A Secular park has been donated to the Oregon Secular Union, and now they want to erect a Secular university therein. This year 355 new members have joined the Oregon Secular Union.

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.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE DAMNED?

SALVATION is always dubious. Many are called, but few chosen. Narrow is the way that leads to eternal life, and few there be that find it. Even the most self-conceited of mortals, who may flatter himself that he is fully entitled to eternal bliss, with a front seat in the mansions of the blest, must pause when he reflects upon all the conditions of salvation. Is he, indeed, a true believer? Has doubt never risen upon any of the verities of Holy Scripture? Has he never questioned, for a single moment, the Creation, the stopping of the sun, the virgin birth, the turning water into wine, or the story of the devils and the pigs? Has he complied with all the necessary observances of religion? Is he circumcised, like his blessed Savior, and has he ever abstained from blood and things strangled in compliance with Acts xv. 29? Remember that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James ii. 10), and that "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8); and that he saith to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured, with long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Romans ix. 13, 18, 22). Who can be secure that his calling and election is sure? One may feel he is saved, but what is so ductile and deceptive as feelings? Even Jesus Christ cried with his last breath: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And if God forsook his only begotten son in his dire extremity, we can imagine many a saintly sky-pilot may find he has to take a back seat, while the golden harps and halos are, perhaps, bestowed on Infidels.

I have really no ardent desire for a halo, and I don't play the harp. As I should feel out of my element in sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom which appears to admit only fools and villains, while it excludes the intelligent and honest, I was very pleased to have put in my hand No. 1 of "The Seek and Save Leaflets," entitled "What must I do to be Lost?" The perusal of this leaflet gave me great comfort and consolation. It appears that the way of damnation is so simple that a wayfaring man, though a fool, can understand it. It says: "Some people think you must commit very glaring sins to be lost for ever." It is a relief to have the authority of the tract-writer that this is not so. Nothing glaring is necessary. You need not even play cards on a Sunday. To neglect the writer's message is enough. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3). Again, he says: "Others think it is not the kind of sins, but the number, and that you must commit a great number of sins to be lost for ever. Scripture says: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' You need only to continue living a life of carelessness and indifference, neglecting (not your duties, but) this great salvation, and how can you escape?"

Many persons must have desired to commit the mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost, which hath never forgiveness (Mark iii. 29), just to have the blessed assurance that one is quietly and safely damned for ever. Well, here it is, or its equivalent. If you desire to be lost, says this leaflet, all you have to do is to neglect the Christian message. "You may do anything, be anything, say anything: only continue to neglect this great salvation, and your doom is certain."

Certainty is the great desideratum in religion. I have already shown there can be no certainty about salvation. The next best thing is certainty about damnation. You may make your calling and election sure by simply neglecting the message of salvation; and since there are many messages, it is evident the writer means his own. Here, then, is a safe and easy method of escaping the perils of Christian salvation. There are many other ways of attaining the same desirable end. You may use your reason. You may question the Bible. You may live a good life without godliness. But, after all, there is nothing so easy as to neglect a gospel tract, and I only trust I have not endangered my chances and yours, dear reader, by giving it thus much attention. But to avoid all further peril, I would seriously recommend you, should fortune

put any of the "Seek and Save Leaflets" in your way, to at once make pipe-lights of them. You may thus make your calling and damnation sure, and have a chance of meeting in the happy hunting grounds, not Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

HEAVENLY DIVERSIONS.

(*A Rêverie à la Swedenborg.*)

AFTER studying the *Arcana Celestia*, I pondered and wondered how the sage paid a visit to the heavenly regions. I sat up late and read the Old Testament, of which the turnip-headed old Swede has made such a hash, trying to correct some of his awful blunders; but soon gave it up in despair. The verse of Psalm ii. occurred to me: "Wherefore do non-Jews assemble tumultuously, and people meditate upon nothingness?"—a literal translation of the first verse. I could not help smiling at this fitting quotation, which stultified my meditations, and I fell asleep. I dreamt. Suddenly light seemed to issue from every pore of my body. I was internally illuminated, and the torso resembled a hollow pumpkin in which boys put a rushlight on festive occasions. Wonder of wonders! The "ego," the self, the soul, slipped out of its fleshy envelope. I regained consciousness, and found myself tossed heavenward. The movement was like that of a shell fired spherically. Although the distance was quintillions of miles, I landed in five seconds (celestial time) on an open plateau. The approaches to heaven are flat. I knew I was near Elysium, for I recognised the old traitor, Peter, fast asleep before an enormous two-winged gate (*Æneis* vi. 894) studded with copper nails. He clutched his rusty old key. An empty pewter pot stood by his side. Above his head hung a stuffed cock of ominous memory. Over the portals I read the words, "Beth-Elohim—Dwelling of the gods" (plural, *vile* Genesis xxviii. 17). The ground swarmed with tiny insects, which I took for glow-worms. I could hear them murmur, and watched their antics, which were of a solemn, devotional kind. Several crept up the polished gate and disappeared through the keyhole. Whither did they go? One puny thing said to another: "Follow the leader." "Stop," said I, "what are you?" "Don't you know? We are the souls of the departed waiting for admission to heaven" (*Stabant orantes*, *Æneis* vi. 313). Peter being as wakeful as his stuffed cock, I spied my opportunity, and slipped in after them. To my great amazement, I found myself before Yaveh's awful throne, which is about the size of a curule chair. There sat old Thunder-and-Blazes, a long clay pipe in his mouth. On the top of his head perched the strictly neutral Pigeon; in his lap lay the Agnus Dei asleep, watched over by Mary, who seemed astonished at the metamorphosis. On the chair-back perched Peter's live cock (*gallus redivivus*). Before the throne stood Balaam's she-ass, and half-hidden behind the family group, ashamed of being seen in *such* company, lingered a swarthy individual resembling the much-voyaged Ulysses. He gave me a knowing wink. Being a celestial flea, *pro tem.*, clad in a spiritual body, I hopped to the rear and sought information from the mysterious stranger. I noticed a cloven foot, and fancied it must be my friend Old Nick. "Sar shan, pal?" (How are you, brother?) inquired his Satanic Majesty. "Tatcho parikarova tooti, Komelo Beng" (Well, thank you, kind Devil). "Why do you address me in Gypsy? It is the only language not understood here. Gypsies, true children of nature, decline to go to heaven, and cling to mother earth (Dei-pooov). Do not be afraid; let us 'rooker Romanes'" (speak Gypsy).

Old Nick told me that every ten thousand years a *levée* is held aloft, when he puts in an appearance, his *entrée* being sanctioned from times immemorial (Job i.). He informed me that the old man in the chair had altered very much, neglected business, and no longer attended to earthly matters ("God does nothing now-a-days"—CARLYLE.). I found that out long ago. Yaveh noticed him speaking to me in an unknown tongue. "Who's that?" roared the boss. "Laporte, from Holloway," said Old Nick. "Take him to hellaway," retorted the head of the firm. (They always send opponents there.) "Not so, divine punster," replied Old Nick. "Listen! He is converted (*sic*) has given Foote the kick, and joined Booth's." Yaveh smiled

an idiotic smile, put his big index to his pimpled nose, and grunted, "All right!"

Old Nick seized a fiddle, *à la* Tartini, and opened the ball by playing the famous "Devil's Trill," which was not appreciated by the heavenly host. He then called upon the celestials to perform. A program, nailed to the glittering wall, announced the performers: Yaveh, basso profundo; Lamb, tenor; Pigeon, falsetto; Virgin Mary, soprano; Peter's cock, counter tenor; Balaam's ass, bray obligato; Satan, conductor. (Virtuosi all.) Chorus, the heavenly host and Salvation Army. Special choir, converted English murderers. Truly a formidable array of talent. My friend raised his *bâton*, but a hitch occurred. The Pigeon had dropped something on Yaveh's beard, and, trying to wipe it off, the old man threw hot ashes from his pipe on the Lamb's nose. There arose a smell of burnt wool. Flunkey Gabriel hurried up, and, with a flap of his wing, whisked off the offensive matter, and put the fire out with holy water fresh from Jordan. After this contretemps the music (etymon, "mew-sick") began in earnest. Old Nick called out, "Yaveh, solo!" (Loud cheers.) The old one sang, "Mary has a little lamb." The cock, hearing the word *lamb*, crowed inopportunistly, and was called to order by Satan. Yaveh made another attempt, but, his voice being cracked, he gave it up, and, grinning idiotically, resumed his pipe charged with incense. (Loud cheers from the heavenly host.) Next came the Lamb, who sang, "Oh, Johnnie brewed a peck of maut," in honor of his great feat performed at Cana. The cheers redoubled. Mary now came forward. The Pigeon, in dulcet tones, cooed out, "Not for Joseph," followed by roars of laughter. To save appearances, the virgin, upon whom all eyes were concentrated, sang with much archness "Barney O'Hea," getting a well-merited encore. The Cock then performed various antics, *à la* Stead, the "Perfect Cure"—not the one of *Pall Mall* fame—crowing aloud and flapping his wings furiously. This performance brought Peter upon the scene, who rushed at him with his big latch-key, cursing lustily. He was turned out by Satan, who told him to mind his business *outside*. Balaam's donkey next gave a musical illustration of the "Trinity," by braying the Chaldaic letters, י י י, ia-i-i, meaning "*Eternity of Eternities*." This display of asinine erudition fairly brought down the heavenly host. An encore followed; chorus, "For she is a jolly good donkey." The conductor assured me that this kind of fun is most appreciated in heaven. I might have enjoyed the entertainment much longer if a band of Salvationists had not turned up with their discordant brasses and lasses, howling, "House on fire!" "Where? where?" shouted the celestials. "Our Bethel, Victoria-street, London." Yaveh at once ordered the windows of heaven to be opened, to let down a sufficient quantity of moisture; but the hinges had got rusty since the great flood, and would not turn. Salvationists in despair. Old Nick then called upon the celestial Sextett to intone the Hallelujah chorus. The performers made a false start. Yaveh two bars late, the Lamb ditto, the Virgin too low, the Cock too high; Balaam's ass, in excellent tune, brayed quaint fifths, and the Salvationists bawled, accompanied by their noisy instruments. In vain did Satan, who has an ear for music, try to stop the din. Flinging his *bâton* at the head of the Trinity, he rushed out, and I quickly followed. "Kooshto Beng!" (good Devil). "Such horrid music, sanctioned by Yaveh and Co.!" quoth I. "Avo Komelo gairo" (Yes, dear man), retorted the indignant Chevalier; "the old one suffers from softening of the brain. The strain of ruling so many worlds proved too much for him. A kind of pious anarchy obtains in heaven." "Well," said I, "that accounts for things going wrong below." "Precisely," said Satan, "I have pointed out to the celestials that, if their religion is to prevail, it will be absolutely necessary for one of the Trinity to put in an appearance on earth forthwith. The Pigeon's moulting, which takes about ten thousand years. The Lamb fights shy of the job, and shows ugly scars on his body. He has evidently been roughly handled before. I respect *his* scruples." "Then," said I, "mankind expects you to seize the reins of government. When you have rid us of monarchs, parsons, aristocrats, *et hoc genus omne*, we shall enjoy peace and plenty." "Hum," said Old Nick, "I will consider." He then vanished, to my regret, and I awoke.

Nothing will make me approach heaven again, even in a dream. My route lies in the opposite direction.

CHARLES KROLL LAPORTE.

CURING BY CHARMS.

THE whooping-cough epidemic that is careering through this region, says the Allentown *Leader*, brings with it other evils besides its baleful whoops. It carries a cartload of superstition in its train. And the credulity of the sufferers and their readiness to trust in all sorts of potions and charms are rather more pathetic to the intelligent observer than the frogs in their throats.

Round about Bath they essay to cure their whopping children by cutting a lock of hair from the head of an individual who has never seen his or her father, and hanging it by a string about the neck of the whoopers. This is thought to be a sure cure.

The Bucks County remedy is to have medicine—it matters little of what sort—administered by a married woman who never changed her maiden name. The patient is sure to recover if this custom is observed.

In Lowhill they say that a goose's egg, laid on the first Friday of the new moon and eaten raw, will drive off the dread cough in terror.

It is absurd that people should cling to such stuff, but they do it, and most tenaciously too. The best physician in the State could not dissuade them from their faith. Their weird hexa's charm has more weight with them than the wisest word from a modern *Æsculapius*.

This dense ignorance may be laughed at, but it should be still more pitied. There is actually a pathos in these stupid superstitions that dulls one's foreign missionary enthusiasm, and makes him eager to enlighten the eyes of his foolish neighbors. The barbarism of Hottentot and Kaffir seems insignificant beside the heathenish creed of such believers as these. And yet they are not the only heathen.

Superstition permeates every station of society. The silly schoolgirl who will not sit with a dozen others at the tea-table, and the business man who will not start upon a journey on a Friday, are but samples. By clinging to their ridiculous notions they encourage simpler folk to go much further. The untutored can scarcely be blamed for their whooping-cough theories so long as the wise cherish pet foibles about spilled salt.—*N. Y. (Monthly) "World," August.*

Judge Blackstone on Witchcraft.

In the 4th book, article 60, of *Blackstone's Commentaries* we read as follows: "A sixth species of offence against God and Religion, of which our ancient books are full, is a crime of which one knows not what account to give. I mean the offence of *witchcraft, conjuration, enchantment, or sorcery*. To deny the possibility—nay, actual existence—of witchcraft and sorcery is at once flatly to contradict the revealed Word of God in various passages of both the Old and New Testaments, and the thing is itself a truth to which every nation in the world hath borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws which, at least, suppose the possibility of commerce with evil spirits. The civil law punishes with death, not only the sorcerers themselves, but also those who consult them, imitating, in the former, the express law of God, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.'"

We wonder how many of her Majesty's judges, at this day, believe in the possibility of such offences, and whether they do not really prefer to deny the revealed Word of God than to believe in these exploded crimes.

Paine on Priests.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to qualify himself for that trade he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?—*Age of Reason.*

Black Faith.

Uncle Silas had recently joined the church, and he needed it if anybody did. One day he stopped to ask about the cook's health, and I questioned him about it.

"I've done done it," he replied, proudly.

"How about having religion and chickens at the same time?"

"De good Lawd will pervide, honey," he answered, piously.

"Religion, possibly. Surely not chickens?" I ventured.

His eyes twinkled as he replied: "Yes, honey, de good Lawd is gwine ter help dem dat he'ps derselves, and I've able-bodied yit, t'ank de Lawd."

THE FREETHINKER'S ARGUMENTS.

On Saturday, the 18th ult., on the pier at Silloth, I was reading the *Freethinker*, when a lady and gentleman took a seat near me, the lady placing herself next to me. As though they had found refuge on that seat from a fearful sea journey, they immediately commenced to sing. I continued reading till the gentleman interrupted me saying, "Will you accept a small book?"

I took it into my hand with thanks, saying, "What is it?"—though I supposed it was a tract.

"It's the gospel of Jesus Christ," he replied.

"Then in that case I need not take it," I said, "for I've got the gospel at home in the New Testament." I placed the book in his hand again.

On Saturday there is a cheap excursion to Silloth, some twenty miles to the Solway. As I had gone in the same dress that I use in the factory, I would appear to this gentleman in humble clothing, and as an individual on whom he might exercise his talents.

I thought that there was a look of disappointment in his face when I put the book back into his hand, and he said, "But have you got it in your heart?"

I hope that I am generally respectful and civil to my fellow creatures, but when I am attacked by a forward, inquisitive individual about my religion, I feel very much tempted to be irritated or to trifle with him.

"Got it in my heart?" I said. "If I had that book in my heart, I should need a surgical operation."

"Then I will vary the phrase. Have you got it in your affections?"

"O, that's different. I am not certain that I've got any affections. I am often led to believe that affections are as rarely met with as gratitude and honor."

"I fear you are on the wrong road."

"How do you know I'm on the wrong road?"

He then set off with the usual string of assertions about God's Book—Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners—heaven, hell, etc.

In this he was going on, repeating the gamut of his doctrine, when I interrupted him saying, "How do you know I am going to hell? There is the same hell for you as for me, and there is the same heaven for me as for you."

"God's word tells me that you are going to hell, and I believe it."

"For anything you know," I said, "your belief is all false, all a delusion. You have no knowledge in support of your belief."

"Knowledge puffeth up," he replied.

"You're wrong there," I said; "the more knowledge a man gets the more he sees himself in want of. It is hollow belief and ignorance that puff up. Your belief puffed you up with the vain thought that you were a superior individual, mentally, to me, and you take this opportunity to show yourself off."

I have not the least idea who or what the gentleman was. As far as I can judge, however, he spoke good English. There was one of his phrases that may give one an idea to his nationality, which is, when, with a shake of his head, he said, "You'll wake up in hell some morning."

SKINNER.

Ruskin on Angels.

When I was a child I used to be satisfied by hearing that angels had always two wings and sometimes six; but now nothing dissatisfies me so much as hearing that; for my business compels me continually into close drawing of wings; and now they never give me the notion of anything but a swift or a gannet. And, worse still, when I see a picture of an angel, I know positively where he got his wings from—not at all from any heavenly vision, but from the worshipped hawk and ibis, down through Assyrian flying bulls, and Greek flying horses, and Byzantine flying evangelists, till we get a brass eagle (of all creatures in the world to choose!) to have the gospel of peace read from the back of it. Therefore do the best I can; no idea of an angel is possible to me.—*Fors Clavigera.*

Theology of the old stamp, so far from encouraging us to love nature, teaches us that it is under a curse. It teaches us to look upon the animal creation with shuddering disgust; upon the whole race of man outside our narrow sect as delivered over to the Devil, and upon the laws of nature at large as a temporary mechanism, in which we have been caught, but from which we are to expect a joyful deliverance. It is science, not theology, which has changed all this; it is the Atheists, Infidels, and Rationalists, as they are kindly called, who have taught us to take fresh interest in our poor fellow denizens of the world, and not to despise them because almighty benevolence could not be expected to admit them to heaven.—*Leslie Stephen.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BIBLE AND MODERN SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to Mr. May's comments on my article entitled "Two Revelations," it is quite obvious that he gives to the declarations of the Bible an interpretation which the text does not warrant, and which is certainly opposed to the historic teachings of the orthodox party, whose views I was discussing in my article. Indeed, I said plainly enough that the Bible, in my judgment, taught that God, by a mere fiat, called the universe (not this world alone) into existence; but if, as Mr. May thinks, the Bible teaches that God only manipulated pre-existing matter, and moulded it from shapelessness into form, then this explanation simply evades the question of the origin of substance altogether. Now, either substance is eternal or it began to be. If it began to be, it must have been created; and if it was created, out of what was it created—something or nothing? Mr. May says "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-things; 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." But the question is, who created matter or substance when it was in a state of ethereality? The Bible represents that God did. Science, on the other hand, teaches that matter, substance in all its manifold forms, has existed from eternity; that creation, in the sense of the origination of substance, is impossible. This is what I said in my article, and I fail to see that I have fallen into any error on this point.

Now to the second point. Mr. May says that I "appear to" believe that science is something ascertainable or knowable apart from self or individual knowledge. In this, however, Mr. May is mistaken. Indeed, I concluded my article by the declaration that "if we turn our attention from the narrow and puerile view of the Bible to the large and comprehensive view of science, we shall find that the universe is, in reality, the one great open book—a revelation to man up to the measure of his capability of reading and understanding it." This surely does not look as though I regard the science of to-day as fixed and final, but rather that I regard human knowledge of nature as susceptible of growth.

However, I thank Mr. May for his letter, and ask him to consider whether, after all, it is not possible that he has fallen into two palpable errors, and not—Yours very truly,
ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A DEFENCE OF DEITY.

I NOTICE that more than one writer in the *Freethinker* takes God to task in a spirit akin to that of Alfonso X., surnamed the Wise, king of Castille and Leon, who declared that, if he had been present at the creation of the world, he would have suggested some improvements. Now, I do not say the world is perfect. If it is true that, after ages of uprooting forests and draining marshes, three-fourths of the earth's surface is unfit for cultivation on account of mountain-ranges, deserts, swamps, and barren ground, it hardly looks as if it was made solely for the benefit of man. There are some ugly facts in nature: the long crushing out of the many for the benefit of the few, of which Mr. Wheeler speaks; the same infliction for ignorant error as for deliberate crime, adverted to by Mr. Symes; the many contrivances for inflicting pain and death, and the undeserved sufferings of the world may well give a Theist pause.

But there are a few considerations which deserve attention on the other side. God may have been a little precipitate in creating the universe, but then he merits some indulgence on the score that it was his first attempt. We learn by our mistakes. Why may not God be learning also? The idea suggested by the poet Burns, and applied by him to Nature, I apply to God.

Her prentice hand she tried on man,
And then she made the lassies oh!

God evidently could not make a man at first. Long ages of monsters tearing each other in their slime had to precede him. He could not make an inhabitable world at first. Volcanoes and earthquakes still show in a small way what he used to do on a large scale. God is learning. Why not? It is only the idiot whose mind is at a standstill. Evolution is universal. I apply it to God. He is growing. He has learnt how to put a new leg on a crab when it has had its old one knocked off; and some day he may do as much for a child. As for the evil which we think he might, could, would, and should prevent, how do we know that he knows of it? After six days' work, Jehovah took a rest. The God

who took such a long period to evolve man may have, after having done so, felt himself entitled to a good long sleep; possibly he is sleeping still.
ELIOENAI.

Ingersoll on Christ.

I pointed out some things that Christ did not teach—among others, that he said nothing with regard to the family relation, nothing against slavery, nothing about education, nothing as to the right and duties of nations, nothing as to any scientific truth. And this is answered by saying that "I am quite able to point out the way in which the Savior of the world might have been much greater as a teacher than he actually was."

Is this an answer, or is it simply taking refuge behind a name? Would it not have been better if Christ had told his disciples that they must not persecute; that they had no right to destroy their fellow men; that they must not put heretics in dungeons, or destroy them with flames; that they must not invent and use instruments of torture; that they must not appeal to brutality, nor endeavor to sow with bloody hands the seeds of peace? Would it not have been far better had he said, "I come not to bring a sword, but peace"? Would not this have saved countless cruelties and countless lives?

Who Go to Hell?

"Do you know the nature of an oath?" asked police justice Potts of eleven-year-old Ida Meisner in the Gregory-street police-court, Jersey city.

"No, sir," the child replied.

"Do you know where children go who tell lies?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever hear of heaven?"

"No, sir, but I heard of hell."

The judge had been getting discouraged, but the last answer inspired him to ask another.

"Well, tell me now," he said, with an encouraging smile, "who go to hell?"

"Protestants," answered the child, promptly.

Justice Potts decided to omit the formality of administering an oath to the witness.—*New York Sun*.

Uncle Zephaniah.

Aunt Susan—"I wants yer ter talk to dis chile, Uncle Zephaniah." Uncle Zephaniah—"What's de matter wid der chile?" Aunt Susan—"Pse afeard he am gwinter be an acrostic. He says he don't bleeve hit tuck Jonah free days ter swaller de whale." "Pse afeard I ain't equal ter dis emergency, Aunt Susan. Dis heah am a case for Masser Vulcan."

Uncle Zephaniah (to his sable congregation)—"My deah brederen, dere will be a meetin' in dis yer house to-morrer night, de lawd willin'; next night, wedder or no."

Pastor Zephaniah—"I hope yo' carry yo' religion into yo' business, Bre'r Pennington." Barber Pennington (new convert)—"Yes, 'r, do. Is'e bin usin' de tracts fo' shabin paper ebber since I jined de chu'eh."

Uncle Zephaniah (woefully worsted in a pious but vain attempt to enquire into the spiritual welfare of a deaf sister of his flock)—"Sho' now; my tongue's jes' tired out talkin'; 'n' she ain' nebber ketched a holt onto a salutary word! Oh, Lawdy! Massa Gabr'el's gwine ter bust hisself fer sho' wen he blow fer dis hyah ol' sister!"

"Sambo, what did de childer of Israyel do when dey crossed de Red Sea?" "Dunno; specks dey dried demselves."

Uncle Zephaniah—"You needn't luff. All you wicked white sceptics will go to dat ere place where der am weeping and wailing and gnashing ob teeth, and you dat have got no teeth will hab to gum it. We will now gib out de hymn:—

"We's be nearer to de Lord
Den de white folks, and dey knows it;
See de glory gate unbarred,
Walk in, darkeys, past de guard;
Bet yer dollar he won't close it.

"Walk in, darkeys, troo de gate;
Hark! de kullered angels holler,
'Go 'way, white folks, you're too late;
We's de winnin' kuller! Wait
Till de trumpit blows to follow!"

"Hallelooyah! tanks to praise!
Long enuff we've born our crosses;
Now we's de sooperior race,
And, with Gorrainighty's grace,
We's gwine to hebben afore de bosses."

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.) : 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Secularism: its Relation to Social Progress." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.)

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station) : 7.30, E. R. Pease (Fabian), "The Coming School Board Election." (Free.) Tuesday, at 8, dancing. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic club. Thursday, at 8, meeting of Social Reform Wing.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 161 New Church-road) : 7.30, A. B. Moss, "The Creeds of Christendom."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Mansions in the Sky."

CAMBERWELL (Station-road) : 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Popular Delusions." CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Exodus from Egypt." Members' meeting after lecture.

FINSBURY PARK (near the band-stand) : 11. J. Rowney will lecture; 3, F. Ha-lam, "The Miracles of the Bible: are they True?"

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side) : 7, Stanley Jones, "Character and Conduct." Thursday, at 8, St. John, "Christianity and Slavery."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch) : 11.30, H. Snell, "What is the Word of God?"; 3.30, Stanley Jones, "The Miracles of Moses." Wednesday, at 8, F. Haslam, "Modern Science and Revelation."

ISLINGTON (Prebend-street, Packington-street) : 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Now the Birth of Jesus was in this Wise."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction) : 11.30, a lecture.

LAMBETH (Kennington-green, near Vestry Hall) : 6.30, a lecture.

Lewisham (Deptford, Broadway) : 7, A. G. Herzfeld, "The Roots of Christianity."

LEYTON (High-road, near Vicarage-road) : 11.30, C. James, "The Bible: a Candid Criticism."

MILE-END WASTE: 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "The Thirty-Nine Articles."

REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester-gate) : 3, a lecture.

TOTTENHAM GREEN: 3.30, S. E. Easton, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain) : 11.15 and 3.15, St. John will lecture.

WALTHAMSTOW (Markhouse-road) : 6.30, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

WESTMINSTER (Old Pimlico Pier) : 11.30, Stanley Jones, "God, Man, Design."

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill) : 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Some Real Saviors of the World" (part ii.); 7, S. R. Thompson, "The Holy Bible." Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen will lecture.

COUNTRY.

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

BLACKBURN: 3, members' meeting at Secretary's house.

BRIGHTON (Assembly Rooms, 6 Whitecross-street) : 7.30, social evening. Wednesdays, at 8, lectures, songs, recitations, etc.

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, Nelson-road, New Brompton) : 2.45, Sunday school; 7, W. Heaford, "The Enigma of Evil."

DUNDEE (City Assembly Rooms) : 11, G. W. Foote, "How the Bible Stands Now"; 2.15, "Mr. Gladstone and Heresy"; 6.30, "Lord Salisbury on Evolution, Design, and God."

IPSWICH (Co-operative Room, Cox-lane) : 7.33, members' meeting.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Ann-street) : 11, Tontine Society; 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "The Wastes of our Civilisation."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints) : 11, Dr. Edward Aveling, "Radicals and the Independent Labor Party"; 3, "Charles Darwin and Karl Marx"; 6.30, "Secularism and Socialism."

PORTSMOUTH (Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea) : 11, C. Cohen, "How to Civilise the Sunday"; 7, "Difficulties of Theism." Wednesday and Saturday, at 8, dancing class.

ROCHDALE: 3.30, Saturday, Sept. 8, pilgrimage to Owen's College Museum.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street) : 11, meet in Norfolk-street, corner of Arundel-street, for excursion by wagonette to Stony Middleton, via Fox House and Padley Wood; return, after tea, via Froggatt Edge. (Postponed from last week owing to rain.)

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King-street) : 7.30, business meeting.

SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street) : 7, Hall Nicholson, "Hell."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CHATHAM (corner of New Brompton-road, High-street) : 11, Wm. Heaford, "The Meaning of Secularism"

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside) : 11, R. Mitchell, "The Life of Noah."

ROCHDALE (Town Hall-square) : 11, Sam Standing, "Co-operation and Collectivism"; 3, "Creation Visualised—Day II."; 6.30, "Faith, Hope, and Charity."

SOUTHSEA COMMON: 3, C. Cohen will lecture.

SUNDERLAND (near the Miners' Hall, Silkworth) : 11, Hall Nicholson, "The Established Church and National Progress."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—September 2 to 10, Portsmouth; 13, Wood Green; 16, m. Finsbury Park, a. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 20, Wood Green; 23, m. and a., Victoria Park; 27, Wood Green; 30, Manchester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Sept. 2, m. and e., Camberwell; 16, Clerkenwell Green; 23, Westminster. October 14, Camberwell.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—September 23, Hall of Science, London.

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