

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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THE MAHATMA BUBBLE.

MRS. BESANT'S share in the great Mahatma hoax was the subject of our last week's article. We have now to deal with some other aspects of this wretched business.

In the first place, we take a little pride in pointing out that the *Freethinker* was all along on the right scent. As soon as Mrs. Besant became a Theosophist, and a spiritual slave of Madame Blavatsky, we felt quite sure—from our knowledge of her, of her tutor, and of the past history of such superstitions—that she would travel far on the road of delusion. We also saw that it would be an advantage to the Freethought party to be disembarassed of her presence. Without the slightest hesitation, though not without pain, we acted upon these perceptions; and, although at the beginning we were both misunderstood and misrepresented, we held on our course unswervingly, trusting to the future to furnish our complete vindication. Mrs. Besant, in her letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, states, and states truly, that the very Sunday before she made that oracular announcement about the Mahatma letters at the Hall of Science, Mr. Foote had been trying to prove on the same platform that Madame Blavatsky was herself the forger of the Koot Hoomi letters. Mrs. Besant met that charge, not by going into the evidence—which is a risky method when you have a bad case—but by stating that the Mahatma letters that used to be received by Madame Blavatsky were now received by herself. On hearing of this, we said that Mrs. Besant was probably the victim of a deception. Later on it was plainly stated in the *Freethinker* that the forger of these bogus letters would in all likelihood turn out to be Mr. Judge. Well, we were right. Mrs. Besant's public confession (under pressure) fully justifies our prophecy.

It may be asked how it was that we were so well informed. But there is really no mystery to be explicated. We were right simply because we kept our eyes open, which is the meaning of scepticism; and because we went upon the principles of common sense. Superstitionists may be convinced of one cheat, but they are just as ready to be taken in by the next. We, on the other hand, are prepared to find a cheat behind every mystery. We stand, like Hume, upon a broad assumption of reason and experience. If a man tells us of a miracle—even if he juggles with language and calls it supernormal instead of supernatural—we do not require to investigate the story. We can decide at once what is the matter. The man is deceived or deceiving; some would say, a fool or a liar. And as, in Mrs. Besant's case, we felt it was more likely that she was credulous than wicked, we concluded that someone was deluding her. The next thing was to hit upon the probable rascal, and we decided (on very good grounds) in favor of Mr. Judge.

It is likely that Mr. Judge is an old practitioner. He knew Madame Blavatsky much longer than Mrs. Besant did, and to know her long enough was either to leave her or to share in her methods. Mrs. Besant admits—at first she boasted—that her Mahatma letters were in the same handwriting as those which came (through the supernormal post) to Madame Blavatsky. She also admits that her

Mahatma letters were forged—or, at any rate, written—by Mr. Judge. Is it not, then, a reasonable inference that Mr. Judge was an adept in this line? Is it not a legitimate assumption that he had been Mahatma-letter-writer-in-chief to Madame Blavatsky? And is this the reason why Mrs. Besant cannot afford to press him too severely?

Madame Blavatsky's successor, the present high-priestess of Theosophy, is prudent enough to evade a pointed and dangerous question. The *Westminster Review* writer declares, and repeats the declaration, that when she made that sensational announcement at the Hall of Science she had nothing to go upon but two letters forged by Mr. Judge. He invites her to say whether she had, or ever has had, any others. But she does not reply, and her silence is significant. It is an open secret that Mrs. Besant never had any Mahatma letters but Mr. Judge's; that no other has ever been produced; and that, now the Judge fountain is closed, the Mahatma correspondence has entirely dried up. Indeed, the strength of Mr. Judge's position is precisely this: he can say to the leaders of Theosophy—"Well, if I am a forger, you are all the veriest dupes, and your occupation is utterly gone; for all your Mahatma communications have come through me. Round on me, and you round on the Mahatmas. Drive me away, and your shrine is left without an oracle."

This is truly a pretty state of things, and Mrs. Besant's present position is far from enviable. The great Mahatma bubble has burst. And what is Theosophy without Mahatmas? Why, a hook without bait. The Mahatma was the Theosophist's appeal to the bump of wonder. It was the "walk up, walk up!" of the Theosophic show. It was the web of the Theosophic fly-trap. Take away the Mahatma, and what is left? A mass of dull, pretentious, half-intelligible twaddle. There never was such a dreary literature as it puts before the world. Mrs. Besant's own writings are open to the same reproach. There is a certain charm in her platform eloquence, whether you don't understand her or know she is talking nonsense; but when you read her Theosophic utterances in cold blood, you find they have a certain measured fluency, but for the rest they are insufferably tedious, without so much as a flash of that illumination you sometimes get from "mystics" of originality, like Swedenborg.

Yes, the great Mahatma bubble is burst. And when such a bubble has burst, it is impossible to blow another like it in the same generation. We consider Theosophy the silliest delusion of the present age. It is not even a great delusion. Not a single person in it—apart from the debateable case of Mrs. Besant, whose talent seems to us entirely that of an advocate; not a single person in it, we say, has achieved, is ever likely to achieve, the slightest independent distinction. They have all been lifted into notoriety on a new wave of superstition; and as the wave retires, they are all left high and dry, with nothing to save them from present contempt and speedy oblivion.

Mrs. Besant is the only person of real popularity in this imposture, and she made her reputation as an advocate of Atheism. Freethinkers cannot help speculating as to her future. Will she become a Catholic? Oh no. Catholicism offers women nothing but suffering and silence. Will the end for her come in this way?—

Then old age and experience hand in hand
Lead her to death, and make her understand,
After a search so painful and so long,
That all her life she has been in the wrong.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.—II.

(Concluded from page 34.)

DR. PHILIP SCHAFF, in his *History of the Creeds*, while trying to argue that the baptismal creed gradually grew out of the confession of Peter (Matt. xvi. 16),* says: "It is the product of the Western Catholic Church." "It is not of primary, apostolic, but of secondary, ecclesiastical inspiration." "It assumed different shapes and forms in different congregations. Some were longer, some shorter; some declarative, some interrogative, in the form of questions and answers." "If we regard, then, the present text of the Apostles' Creed as a complete whole, we can hardly trace it beyond the sixth, certainly not beyond the close of the fifth century, and its triumph over all the other forms in the Latin Church was not completed till the eighth century, or about the time when the bishops of Rome strenuously endeavored to conform the litanies of the Western Churches to the Roman order." Dr. Lumby, as I have noticed, puts it even later.

It thus appears from the best orthodox Christian authorities that the so-called Apostles' Creed was written by no such persons as the Apostles; and with respect to the high authority which was for ages claimed for it, it is a convicted imposture and forgery, tending, from its acceptance in the Church, to cast doubt on all other productions said to be of apostolical authority.

If we turn from the history of the creed to its contents, they must be pronounced the concentrated essence of nonsense. First, a Father God, who, since he is not said to be a spirit, is presumably as much a masculine person as his Son. This son, we are to believe, was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. Of his teachings nothing is told, but the affirmation is made that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; that he descended into hell, though we are told that he said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"; that he ascended into heaven—against the laws of gravity—and sits on the right hand of an Infinite Person, without body, parts, or passions, whence he will return to judge the quick and the dead. We are further to believe in a nebulous Holy Ghost, a Holy Catholic Church—whose holiness rests in assertion—the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body after it is resolved into its elements, and the life everlasting. The Apostles' Creed, indeed, offers nothing but the driest husk of Christianity.

The desire of the High Church Party to introduce the Creed into the Board schools is not surprising, when it is noticed that the creed itself is distinctly a Romanising document. Beyond affirming the birth from the Virgin Mary, it inculcates the belief in purgatory in the statements that "He descended into hell," and the clause in regard to the communion of saints. It is true that Pearson and others point, in illustration of the doctrine of the descent into hell, to such texts as Luke xxiii. 43, Acts ii. 41, "his soul was not left in hell," or rather "in the grave," and to the much-disputed passage in 1 Peter iii. 19 about Christ speaking to the spirits in prison; but it is not easy to say why he was preaching to them, unless their prison was virtually a purgatory.

Dr. J. E. Carpenter (*Theological Review*, April, 1870) points out that, with one exception, the clause, "he descended into hell," is found in none of the Latin creeds until the doctrine of purgatory had assumed a very definite form; and it was evidently its growing importance which gained for the article insertion into the baptismal symbol. It was under the influence of similar ecclesiastical tendencies that the addition was made to the creed, "The communion of saints." This by no means meant the community of the holy, but the relation of living saints and the dead, and the power of the souls of dead saints to operate on the living. The doctrine of the communion of saints was closely allied, as it still is in the Catholic Church, with that of purgatory; and Protestants, in repeating the creed, impart to it a sense alien to that of its original

* This passage is itself a barefaced forgery to support the claim of the fisherman at Rome to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven: "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." How could a Jewish peasant make a pun in Greek and speak of a Church not in existence?

propounders. The clause, "the forgiveness of sins," also refers to priestly absolution.

The Apostles' Creed is thus seen to be distinctly an inheritance from the Roman Catholic Church; and, like so many other documents derived from the same source, it is neither more nor less than a forgery. The proof is amply sufficient in the silence of the Apostolic Fathers, and in the fact that this so-called Apostles' Creed never had any currency in the East, where the Nicene Creed occupies its place. It is the product of the Roman Church, and was imposed on the people in the Dark Ages, remaining unquestioned until the revival of criticism by Valla and Erasmus. Since criticism has been applied to it hardly any scholar has ventured to uphold the apostolic authorship, though Gruntvig, the erratic Lutheran bishop of Denmark, of whom Mr. Maagaard has told us, thought it was as much to be attributed to Jesus Christ as the Lord's Prayer itself, and that its composition is to be referred back to the period between the Ascension and Pentecost!

The fact that the Apostles' Creed is a forgery is one which throws suspicion on all early Christian literature; and the anxiety of the clergy to have infant minds recite their belief in such spurious nonsense in the public schools shows that their aim is to stultify them at the outset. "How do you get people to swallow such an absurdity as transubstantiation?" was once asked by a Protestant of Talleyrand. "Oh, we first teach them the doctrine of the Trinity," replied the prince-bishop. A mind that has once gulped the Apostles' Creed need never strain at that of Saint Athanasius; and the children taught to believe this rubbish in their early days will be little likely to question the privileges and pretensions of the priests. Those who care for the development of rational manhood will fight with all their might against the imposition of such creeds on the plastic mind of childhood.

J. M. WHEELER.

WAS CHRIST A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REFORMER?

(Continued from page 35.)

THAT the political views held by Jesus were exceedingly crude is evident from the circumstance recorded in Matthew xxii. It is there stated that, on finding a coin of the realm bearing the superscription of Cæsar, Jesus declared that both Cæsar and God were to have their due. The very pertinent question put by the disciples afforded a good opportunity for some sound advice to be given upon the political subjection in which the people to whom Christ was talking were living. They were in bondage to a foreign power, and were anxious to know if it were "lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not." Instead of returning a clear and intelligible answer, Jesus replied in words which were evasive and meaningless, so far as the information sought for was concerned. If he had any desire to alter the then existing political relations, or to suggest any improvement, he might have given a practical lesson upon the duties and obligations of the ruled to the rulers. Another opportunity was lost when, Pilate having asked Christ an important question, "Jesus gave him no answer" (John xix. 9).

Subsequently, however, Jesus recognised the "divine government," for he said: "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). He also, having stated, "My kingdom is not of this world," added: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Christ's notions of government were similar to those of St. Paul, who said: "The powers that be are ordained of God. . . . and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans xiii. 1, 2; Timothy ii. 1, 2).

Now, in the very face of these scriptural utterances, we have men to-day who allege that Christ is their hero of democracy. The belief that he ever intended to improve the government of this world by secular means is utterly groundless. His negligence in this particular cannot be explained away by saying that society was not ripe for reform, and that Jesus lacked the power to revolutionise the institutions of his time. There is truth, no doubt, in

the latter allegation, for the power of Christ for all practical work seems to have been very limited indeed. He did not attempt any political reform, as other men in all ages have done; he did not make honest endeavors to inaugurate improvements which, under happier circumstances, might have been carried out. There is no evidence that Christ ever concerned himself with such reforms as civil and religious liberty, the freedom of the slaves, the equality of human rights, the emancipation of women, the spread of science and of education, the proper use of the land, and the fostering of the fundamental elements of human progress. His language was: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Christ's declaration that his kingdom was not of this world may be taken as a reason why he made no adequate provision for secular government; but those who worship him assert that his plan is the only one that can be successfully adopted to secure the desired reforms, and that he really did contemplate a better state of society on earth than the one that then obtained. Where is the evidence that this was so? Not in the New Testament, for it is nowhere recorded therein that such was his mission. With him the question was: "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Even Renan, who is so frequently quoted by Christian advocates as extolling Jesus, admits that he lacked the qualities of a great political and social reformer. In his *Life of Jesus* Renan says that Christ had "no knowledge of the general condition of the world" (p. 78); he was unacquainted with science, "believed in the devil, and that diseases were the work of demons" (pp. 79, 80); he was "harsh" towards his family, and was "no philosopher" (pp. 81-83); he "went to excess" (p. 174); he "aimed less at logical conviction than at enthusiasm"; "sometimes his intolerance of all opposition led him to acts inexplicable and apparently absurd" (pp. 274, 275); and "bitterness and reproach became more and more manifest in his heart" (p. 278.)

But let us further consider what it is said that he taught in reference to life's social requirements, and also what was his estimate of the world and the things of the world. Under any system conducted upon rational principles the first social requirement is to provide for sufficient food, clothes, and shelter; for to talk of comfort and progress without these requisites is absurd. Now, it was about these very things that Jesus, as it has already been shown, taught that we should take no thought. In Matthew (c. vi.) special reference is made to the Gentiles who *did* take thought as to the necessities of life; but other people were not to be anxious upon the subject, "for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," and a promise is given that he will provide them as he "feedeth" "the fowls of the air." Poverty and idleness were essentials to Christ's idea of a social state, as is proved by his advice to the rich young man, to whom he said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matthew xix. 21). In John (vi. 27) it is also said: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." What wealthy Christian will sell what he has and give to the poor, and thus carry out Christ's idea of social duties? And if the toiling millions did not labor for their meat, they would get but little of it. It is not overlooked that Jesus said to the young man, "and follow me"; which meant, I presume, that he was to join the Christian society in which they had "all things in common" (Acts iv.). But this state of existence could only be maintained by giving up all one's possessions and adding them to the general stock. If all did this, the stock would be soon exhausted. And the point here to be noted is, that in Christ's scheme no provision is made to provide for a permanent mode of living, except by prayer or miracle.

Surely it must be obvious to most people that a communion of saints, fed directly by God, could not be any solution of the social problem for those outside such communities. Besides, there is little prospect of outsiders

being made partakers with the saints, unless God the Father draws them unto Christ (John vi. 44); but no one can go to the Father except by Christ (John xiv. 6). Thus our chances of admission into the Christian fold are very remote, for if we are admitted it must be through Christ, to whom we cannot go unless the Father draws us; but then we cannot go to the Father except by Christ. This is a theological puzzle, which must be left for a "Christian Socialist" to unravel if he can.

The belief that a social condition of society is sustained by an invisible power, where no labor is performed, and where no interest is taken in its progress, or in the dignity and personal independence of its members, is the height of folly. It implies the destruction of all human institutions, and the substitution of a "divinely ordered state of things," such as some of Christ's followers allege they are now hourly expecting. Well might the late Bishop of Peterborough say: "It is not possible for the State to carry out all the precepts of Christ. A State that attempted to do so could not exist for a week. If there be any person who maintains the contrary, his proper place is in a lunatic asylum" (*Fortnightly*, January, 1890).

The Sermon on the Mount, or "in the plain," as stated by Luke (vi. 17), has been called the Magna Charta of the kingdom of God, proclaimed by Christ, although it has never been made the basis of any human government. Its injunctions are so impracticable and antagonistic to the requirements of modern civilisation that no serious attempt has ever been made to put them in practice. It may be mentioned that the genuineness of the "Sermon" has been boldly questioned. Professor Huxley writes: "I am of opinion that there is the gravest reason for doubting whether the Sermon on the Mount was ever preached, and whether the so-called Lord's Prayer was ever prayed by Jesus of Nazareth" (*Controverted Questions*, p. 415). The Professor then gives his reasons for arriving at this conclusion.

The Rev. Dr. Giles, in his *Christian Records*, speaking of the Sermon on the Mount, says: "There is good ground for believing that such a collective body of maxims was never, at any time, delivered from the lips of our Lord"; and Milman declares that scarcely any passage is more perplexing to the harmonist of the Gospels than this sermon, which appears to be inserted at two different places by Matthew and Luke.

Mr. Charles B. Cooper, a very able American writer, aptly observes: "If this discourse is so important, as Christians profess to believe—the sum of all the teachings of Jesus, and the sufficient source of all morality—it is curious that Mark and John knew nothing about it, and that Luke should dismiss it with such a short report. Luke, omitting the larger part of the matter, takes only one page to tell what occupies three pages in Matthew; and to find any parallel to much of Matthew we have to go to other chapters of Luke and to other occasions. In addition to which, they disagree as to whether it was given on a mountain or in a plain."

Taking a broad view of the teachings as ascribed to Christ, I should describe most of them as being the result of emotion rather than the outcome of matured reflection. They are based upon faith, not upon knowledge, trust in Providence being the cornerstone of his system, so far as his fragmentary utterances can be systematised. In my opinion, the idea of his being a political and social reformer rests upon an entirely mistaken view of the union of what are termed temporal and spiritual things. Examples of this may be seen in such injunctions as "Love one another" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." The first was clearly applicable to the followers of Christ, for he expressly states, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples" (John xiii. 35); and the second command applied only to the Jewish community, not to strangers who lived outside. These injunctions did not mean that those who heard them were to love all mankind. Christ himself divided those who were for him from those who were against him. To the first he said, "Come, ye blessed of my father"; to the other, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be continued.)

Mental power cannot be got from ill-fed brains.—*Herbert Spencer.*

ON BERNARD SHAW AND OTHER THINGS.

MR. BERNARD SHAW, it has been said, carries more heresies than any man in London. He positively revels in heresy. He is also, besides being an Atheist, a Socialist, a Vegetarian, and several other things, a brilliant man of letters; and he is, in addition, an art critic, a musical critic, a dramatist, a dramatic critic, and an expounder of Socialist economics. And knowing his capacity for saying fine, delightful, irritating things, I journeyed down to Camberwell the other Sunday to hear him give his views on "The Religion of the Twentieth Century." At least such ran the legend in the papers. But then the newspapers often know more than human intelligence could acquire. For, be it said, an ordinary individual would never have suspected after he came out, unless he were told, that he had been listening to a lecture on the religion of the twentieth century. Hence I say newspapers are useful things.

The cosy hall of the Camberwell Branch was well filled with an appreciative and not too docile audience. At least some people had a good deal to say afterwards. Mr. Shaw began by telling us, characteristically, that he had a curious knack of taking the opposite view always to that of his audience. If he were in a chapel that night, he would in all probability be very impious; as he was in a Secular hall, the chances were that he would deliver a very pious discourse. Among other things, he said that Secularists were often liable to fall into the error of thinking that all the truth was on their side, and all the falsehood on the religionist's. Mr. Shaw seemed to be generously of opinion that it was a case [of six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, or, at most, seven of one and five of the other. He also had a little word to say about Secularist work in the past being concerned principally with demolishing superstitions and absurdities, without trying to get behind them and comprehend their origin. And he proceeded to gaily tell us that, for instance, the Trinity presented no mystery whatever to him. To the Camberwell chapel-goer, he said, the Trinity was simply an arithmetical absurdity—"three times one are one"—there it is, a mystery; the poor chapel-goer could make nothing of it, and he thought he believed he believed it. To the Camberwell Secularist, on the other hand, it was merely an arithmetical absurdity, and there was an end of the matter. But the brilliant G. B. S. could see it perfectly. And he gave an illustration: Many a lady is a mother and a daughter and a wife—three relationships in the one person. A man can be a father and a son, and he has a relation to his fellow-men, which typifies the H. G. in him. Then take the Immaculate Conception too. Mr. Shaw understood it. I don't know if I can convey, or, indeed, that Mr. Shaw could, his idea. It was the embodiment of the sinlessness of motherhood in the mind of the woman, or something to that effect; there you have the "poetic fancy" at the base of the doctrine. And Mr. Shaw would extract a "poetic fancy" from a cart-wheel.

And then the Atonement, that too was as simple as A B C. The martyr suffered for the shortcomings of others. Charles Bradlaugh, for instance, had raised and benefitted his country at the expense of his own life; and at the thought of what he did—as even one orthodox reviewer admitted—the pulse beat quicker and the blood ran faster. That was the "poetic fancy" at the base of the Atonement doctrine.

Now I do solemnly aver that at much of this Shawian talk hardly a ripple passed over the faces of the listeners. All this surpassing satire was more or less lost. And so at the end several gentlemen got up to righteously protest against galvanising a dead superstition into life, by extracting "poetic fancies" from falsehoods. Freethinkers have something better to do than spend themselves in propping up old and mischievous shams by delving for some possible support on which there is a shade of a chance the sham can rest. And it was shown that the Shawian formula would equally demonstrate a "quaternity," or any other like monstrosity. For a man can be father, son, husband, uncle, nephew, cousin, pork-butcher, and vestryman rolled into one—which, I think, leaves the Trinity a long way behind. In the same way, when you are at the "poetic fancy" business, you can work it up out of anything. "Two and two make five." Now that is quite understandable by the Shaw method. For if you take, say, a penny, and put it on the table, it is only a penny. Add

two pennies and two pennies to it, and lo, you have five pennies. So that two and two really do make five where there was not five before. This "poetic fancy," I should remark, is patented.

It was also seriously remarked that, since large numbers of people are still enthralled by dogma, the "destructive" work of Secularists is more essential and more practical for the moment than any amount of the "fancying" business, though there is as much serious work done by Secularists as a body as by any other party. But if there is a condemned house which is a danger to human life that requires to be cleared away, most people would think it more profitable to get pick-axe and spade than to discuss what was the original object for which the house was built, what "fancy" the architect had in mind when he designed it, and what amount of propping and patching would render it merely harmless. The person of common sense would argue that, as the house stood in the way, the first and necessary thing was to clear it out of the way, and then start to re-build a habitable better dwelling in its place. All this was pointed out, not as I have said it, but substantially. And Mr. Shaw replied. He kept up splendidly. And he said several delightful things by the way. One was that his first impulse, on seeing the Bradlaugh statue at Northampton, was to take up a stone and fling it thereat, because it was a bad statue, and, "as an artist," it offended his eye. He also incidentally gave a testimonial to John Bunyan, whom he—"actually a professional writer himself"—considered one of the masters, if not the greatest master, of the English language. But his great sallies were really lost; the irony possibly was too subtle, and so, as Mr. Shaw says of something else, it was probably understood only by a few kindred spirits.

And, when I returned home, I took up the *Saturday Review* and pondered again some sentences therein, in an article over the initials "G. B. S." It should be mentioned, perhaps, that Mr. Shaw and Mr. Oscar Wilde are both Irishmen. And Mr. Shaw, in the course of a criticism of Mr. Wilde's last play, speaks thusly:—

"In a certain sense Mr. Wilde is to me our only playwright. He plays with everything: with wit, with philosophy, with drama, with actors and audience—with the whole theatre. Such a feat scandalises the Englishman, who can no more play with wit and philosophy than he can with a football or a cricket-bat. He works at both, and has the consolation, if he cannot make people laugh, of being the best cricketer and footballer in the world. . . . Ireland is, of all countries, the most foreign to England, and to the Irishman (and Mr. Wilde is almost as acutely Irish an Irishman as the Iron Duke of Wellington) there is nothing in the world quite so exquisitely comic as an Englishman's seriousness. It becomes tragic, perhaps, when the Englishman acts on it; but that occurs too seldom to be taken into account—a fact which intensifies the humor of the situation, the total result being, the Englishman utterly unconscious of his real self, Mr. Wilde keenly observant of it and playing on the self-consciousness with irresistible humor, and, finally, the Englishman annoyed with himself for being amused at his own expense. . . . He is shocked, too, at the danger to the foundations of society when seriousness is publicly laughed at."

And then this passage had a new meaning for me, and Mr. Shaw was vindicated. But the majority of the audience had not read Mr. Shaw's article, and, therefore, did not understand Mr. Shaw's lecture fully. But Mr. Shaw cannot complain if his Irish humor is misunderstood in these days when even English statesmen—and who is so intelligent as an English statesman?—fall foul of a very cheap piece of English irony.

FREDERICK RYAN.

An Infinite Person.

The very notion of a person implies limitation. A person implies an agent capable of affecting external agencies. No person ever was, or could be, infinite. The very notion of infinity, as the Brahmins, who wasted much time in reflection upon the subject, saw, implies the absence or dissolution of personality. When the devotee, they say is absorbed in Brahm, his personality is like that of a grain of salt dissolved in the ocean. To talk of an infinite personality is to talk of a round square. It is an infinite absurdity.

OLD AND NEW CREEDS.

A PERUSAL of printed sermons, or an auricular attention to pulpit discourses, is instructive of what fearful straight the preachers are in to defend their theological positions. Hearty thanks must be rendered to all publishers who give to the world parsonic utterances in printed form, for the opportunity they afford to those outside the fold to become acquainted with modern Christian methods of controversy, to follow the ever-changing attitudes of the lights of the Churches, and to learn how they are readjusting their beliefs in deference to scientific discoveries, ascertained truths, and the improved culture of the human mind. "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" cannot be said of Christian doctrines, or rather of the doctrines of Christian sects (for which among the myriad bodies can properly claim possession of the pure and undiluted faith?), no more than it can refer to the Christian God, or, to be more precise, to the properties which Christian worshippers ascribe to their deity. To comprehend that this is inevitable, it should be borne in mind that change is the natural corollary of the existences of countries, peoples, and persons; and as no two Deists ever had an identical conception of their god, and as no two religionists ever had a similar comprehension of their faith, so, when nations arise and decay, when people are differently constituted, and influenced by altered environments and conditions, and when life itself scarcely appears to be composed of the same elements, do beliefs and ideas of gods fluctuate, and relations to old faiths become metamorphosed. This occurs in the ordinary process of things, and no one will question it, be they ever so affectionately attached to crude dogmas and stale fancies of bygone periods. The natural laws, however, which wreck unsupported mental conceptions, do not affect demonstrated facts and unquestionable truths, for these remain, like adamant rocks, unmoved or unshaken by the ceaseless roll of ages.

Of the two classes of Christians—those who adhere to the literal interpretation of the Bible, and endeavor, or feign, to order their lives in unison with the teachings of Christ and his apostles, and those who accept, according to their own personal opinions and prejudices, the contents of the New Testament, and virtually reject the admonitions of the Nazarene—it is difficult to decide which to hold in the most contempt. The former certainly have sincerity on their side, which is, perhaps, their only virtue; but it is an advantage in these times to find some who are simple and fossilised enough to cling with pathetic affection to old and eccentric traditions. Still, it is lamentable that their intellectual depravity is so great, that they are so sunken in the mire of superstition and shallow-mindedness, and that they are so far from the saving arms of light and truth. It is hardly, however, with feelings of scorn that their position should be viewed, or with chastisements of angry words that their misplaced faith should be condemned. Thoroughness is an enviable quality in a man, be he a blackguard or a saint.

It is with the dishonest, insincere, and elastic adherents (if they are adherents) of the Christian religion that chief concern should rest. Professedly attached to a faith whose plain and unvarnished items are mostly repulsive to them, they have not the courage or the honesty to openly avowedly subscribing to a form of belief, and a manual of historical narrative, they exhibit, by every means in their power, their abhorrence of the essentials of the one, and their rejection of the veracity of the other; seemingly devoted to a spiritual ideal which excludes participation in worldly affairs, they do their utmost to excel in earthly matters, and revel in carnal delights. Perhaps an impossible standard of conduct, a crude and incomplete ethical code, or a false conception of human duties and responsibilities, is the main cause of the discrepancies which exist between the teaching and the practice of the Christian creed. Whether that be so or not, it must be recognised what William Hazlitt has written, that "there is not a bigger hypocrisy in the world than religious hypocrisy." The vilest murderers are those from whose lips there hang pious phrases; the worst deceivers are those who are immersed in religion; the biggest swindlers are all fine Christian gentlemen. Praying Jabez will not be forgotten in a hurry.

Up-to-date sermons by advanced clericals are distin-

guished for a condescending recognition of the worth of sceptics, and of the merits of their works; and the assimilation of the discoveries and accomplishments of science. Where formerly heretics were treated to the scantiest considerations, their characters maligned, and their persons persecuted and tortured, a tardy tribute is now paid them for their disinterested services to mankind, their whole-hearted concern for the well-being of their fellow creatures, and for their honor and integrity. It is regretted that they cannot be numbered among the faithful; but the fold is being gradually made sufficiently accommodating to take them in, or some saving clause in the tenets of the faith is discovered to prove them to be working on the "Lord's side." But the most glaring hypocrisy of representative pulpits is their method of crediting religion with scientific knowledge and truths. "Science," say these men of God, "is but another blessing of the merciful Father to increase the delights and comforts of his children on earth. He reveals the hidden treasures of nature to man for his benefit; his handiwork is shown in the wonders of the universe. God has designed that man shall investigate his creation, and then glorify him for his goodness." But surely, if the products of science are blessings to man to-day, they would also have been equally blessings two thousand years ago. Then why did God allow man to be kept in ignorance of what would have been a great blessing to him? If the facts which science reveals to man to-day are of any value, they would have been infinitely more so to God's thick-headed chosen people four thousand years ago. And yet God kept them in ignorance of the properties of nature, through which lack of knowledge they suffered. But to whom shall be rendered thanks for the revelations of science? To God, who has kept them hidden for centuries, and has allowed his worshippers to persecute and murder those men who have sought to reveal the beauty of his handiwork? To God, who taught his people false ideas of the universe; who distorted their minds, and made them indifferent to all save the use of the sword and their neighbors' wives? To God, whose book contains more unscientific nonsense and inaccuracies than the mind of the most untutored savage? Or to man, who, during countless eras of the world's history, has searched the book of Nature for truth, and added to the store of knowledge at the cost of blighted constitutions and early graves? To man, who has fought the monsters of superstition and ignorance, heedless of the dungeon and the stake; who, being encompassed by unmerciful enemies, has still persevered in the sacred task of enlightenment? There can be no doubt who it is. Of course, no intelligent person whose mind was unhinged by dogmas would credit a deity with such performances as Christians do theirs. They rival savages in painting their God in devilish hues.

Even on the supposition that God is the creator and manipulator of the universe, it is difficult to conceive how his beneficent qualities can be thereby proved. While many of nature's laws tend to the advantage of the human race, there are those which are cruel in their working and their inflexibility, and which bring about untold evil and misery. Some even threaten to obliterate the human species. The aim of science is to obtain control over the forces of nature by becoming acquainted with their properties; to utilise them for man's benefit, instead of allowing them to militate against his prosperity; to direct their influences into channels from which blessings may flow. Will anyone question this? Yet it is tantamount to saying, if God be above, behind, or in nature, that as soon as man has frustrated God's creation, and as soon as he has brought into subjection and control God's forces, he will be safer, happier, and more successful in his worldly avocations. But there, the clericals were always dense, and the controversial bog into which they have now fallen will serve as a fine pictorial representation of the ridiculous.

So surely as the remark ascribed to Christ, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," was true to the early believers—it has been made possible since—is the truth incontrovertible that religion and science have nothing in common. Let Christians be honest, and they will acknowledge that, if they really believed what they professed, they would say that this earth is but a vale of tears; that it is insulting to God to endeavor to improve his work; that the world is but a temporary ante-room to the mansions prepared above; and that it is not their dwelling-place, but a desert through which they travel before gaining the joys of their heavenly

home. Let them, like the honest Scotchman in Mr. Barrie's play, "The Professor's Love Study," who declares his unbelief in, and horror of, such scientific contrivances as electrical engines, on the ground that he does not read about them in the Bible, adhere to their text-book and abjure worldly matters, and then they may command, if not the admiration, at least the respect, of Rationalists for their sincerity.

FRED WILSON.

SOME LITTLE-KNOWN FREETHINKERS.

FREETHOUGHT can boast its noble army of martyrs and its glorious company of the apostles. Worthy work has been done, however, by those in the rank and file who have never aspired to eminence; and as it has been my fortune to know some of these, and to look up the lives and writings of others, I think well to jot down a few particulars of some minor workers in the good old cause. I begin with an early friend,

MYLES MCSWEENEY.

I was but a lad when I first heard the rich brogue of this Irish advocate at the Brill, Somers' Town, adjacent to the spot now crossed by the Midland Arches. The humorous way in which he referred to the myths of "Jasus and the Vargin" was irresistibly funny. His pet subject was the non-historical character of these legendary personages, and he brought to bear on his topic intimacy with the rites and doctrines of the Roman Church, in which he was educated, and a wide acquaintance with mythological lore. Born at Enniskillen in 1814, he early migrated to London, and, hearing the Rev. Robert Taylor at the Rotunda, in 1830, adopted the views of the "Devil's Chaplain." When I knew him he was a peripatetic stationer and book dealer, living in a very humble cottage down Westminster way. Yet his room was filled with books explaining "all the mythologies." Many of them were rare and valuable. There were the works of Drummond, Bryant, Maurice, Holwell, Pluché, Savory, Asiatic Researches, etc., mostly picked up secondhand during his peregrinations. Nor were later books wanting, such as those of Dr. Inman, presented by the author, whom McSweeney supplied with many books, as he did also Bishop Colenso.

He sold me some books, said to be "worth their weight in gold," and lent me others, from some of which I enlarged drawings for his lectures. Every Sunday he went from place to place discoursing on some phase of his constant theme. On one occasion I recollect that he took the chair for Mr. Bradlaugh at the Hall of Science, when our leader was lecturing on some similar topic to his own. I once accompanied McSweeney to a meeting of the old Anthropological Society to hear a paper by the Rev. Dunbar Heath. Myles opposed, and afforded much amusement by his rich brogue, and the Irish humor with which he satirised the lecture. At this meeting William Simpson—"Crimean Simpson," of the *Illustrated London News*, who was as good an antiquarian as he was an artist—was present and spoke. Some years afterwards, under the pen-name of Phandye, Simpson contributed to the *Secularist*, when under the conduct of Mr. Foote, an amusing skit, entitled "Is Myles McSweeney a Man, a God, or a Myth?" applying his own principles to resolve the living man into a solar hero. Myles was a good-humored man, and took the skit well. For his plainness of language about "Jasus and Mary," and what he considered the remnants of phallic worship in Christianity, he was regarded as coarse. Essentially he was not so. I well remember the fatherly way in which he advised me, while in my teens, to abstain from all indulgences and adopt the Stoic philosophy, which he not only held, but acted up to. For drawing my attention to the noble counsels of Antoninus and Epictetus I owe a debt of gratitude to this self-taught Irishman.

"Larn absthinince," he said, "afore ye thry motheration." His information was good and extensive, and it was at his tongue's tip. But two things he lacked that were essential to his studies—a sound knowledge of languages and philological evolution, and a knowledge of "primitive culture" and evolution. His mind was formed in the pre-Darwinian era. His writings in the *National Reformer* and *Secular Chronicle* are only valuable for their out-of-way information, which some other might shape to better purpose. The same criticism may be passed on a pamphlet on *Moses and Bacchus*, which he published, and which he intended to follow by *Biblical and Mythical Parallels*, which he compiled. An American, Mr. T. W. Doane, has since carried out this project in a way which reminds me of McSweeney's idea, which never received sufficient encouragement to obtain book form.

J. M. W.

Women's Christian Unionist—"Which do you consider the most improper and dangerous book in your stock?" Bookseller—"Well, mum, the Bible is very warm in parts."

ACID DROPS.

OUR "forward" contemporary, the *Methodist Times*, has just made the startling discovery that "what gave Mr. Bradlaugh his great position in Northampton was not his theological attitude, but his political opinions." This is not strictly true, for Bradlaugh's great personality counted for much in the long fight of thirteen years before Northampton elected him to a seat in the House of Commons. But, so far as it is true, it is certainly not new. Bradlaugh said so himself again and again; and, as a matter of fact, he dropped his Freethought propaganda at Northampton when he aspired to represent it in Parliament. On the other side, however, it is a fact that he was fiercely opposed in the name of Christianity, and vehemently denounced from Nonconformist pulpits. He did not win as an Atheist, but he certainly won *in spite* of his Atheism.

The *Methodist Times*, we observe, is still at war with the *Christian Advocate*. "Most people," the former says, "would apply to the statements of the *Christian Advocate* a very short, vigorous, and expressive Anglo-Saxon word." But it will not employ this word, because it believes its contemporary is only "grossly prejudiced and appallingly ignorant," and not animated by a desire to "deliberately and intentionally misrepresent the facts." From which it is a legitimate inference that the *Methodist Times* would employ the word "lie" if it were justified by the facts. But what a howl was raised when, *being* justified by the facts, we applied the word "lie" to Mr. Hughes's story of "The Atheist Shoemaker." The man's "dignity" was "outraged," and under this paltry pretence he avoided a Committee of Honor, which he knew would have to brand him as a liar in the face of the world.

Mr. Hughes does not use short, vigorous, and expressive Anglo-Saxon words. He shudders at "lie"—that is, when applied to himself—but he speaks of the *Advocate's* "moral obliquity," declares that what it says is "absolutely false and inaccurate from beginning to end," and calls a certain part of it an "outrageous untruth." Well now, it is a proverb that tastes differ; but, for our part, if a man thought all that about us, we would rather he said "lie" at once than waste his time and ours in ridiculous circumlocutions.

Considering that the *Methodist Times* is so rabidly teetotal, it is curious that it takes money for advertising "Mariani Wine."

Mrs. Mellon, the Spiritist medium at Sydney, who was "detected" in materialising "the small spirit form known as Cissie," has given the world an explanation. The gentleman who got hold of Cissie found he had caught Mrs. Mellon, whose shoes and stockings were afterwards discovered in her cabinet. But it appears that the spirits were bothered by the "inharmonious feeling at the meeting," so they "drew" only from Mrs. Mellon's "lower parts," and principally the "legs." "At one time," she says, "I felt as though I had no legs at all—they were rendered very small and shrunken; and that is how I explain my shoes and stockings coming off." It is said that this explanation satisfies the Chief Justice of the Colony. We hope he is not so easily satisfied when he sits upon the bench.

There is a ghost at Darweston, in Dorsetshire—one of those parts of the world in which ghosts are pretty much at home. This ghost is a real one. Of course! It has baffled the rector and the schoolmaster; but, as it writes on a slate, and spells *money* "mony," it seems greatly in need of the schoolmaster's services. We hope he will improve its neglected education.

Mr. W. T. Stead is a curious bundle of contradictions. In the new year's address to his readers he once more boasts that he is engaged in a Holy War on behalf of Human Brotherhood. A few pages farther he rather rejoices that Mr. Cecil Rhodes will soon be in a position "at any moment to be at hand's-grip with the Mahdi." What a pity it is that Mr. Stead and Mrs. Besant cannot work up a new religion between them! It would be one of the wonders of the world.

Mr. Stead has taken to singing the praises of Albert Edward, who is going to "marshal the forces making for the improvement and the amelioration of the social system." Mr. Stead sees all this in his mind's eye. "Hereafter," he says, "I may return to it again." The grammar is characteristic of the hasty gentleman who superintends the affairs of this globe. Ordinary people return; Mr. Stead returns again. Ordinary people would write "improvement" or "amelioration"; Mr. Stead writes both. And his style is on a level with his thinking.

Mr. Maskelyne, the conjurer, says that Mr. Stead arranged with his son to photograph a spirit under conditions which would preclude the possibility of trickery. To this end Mr. Stead endeavored to find a medium of unimpeachable character, but was informed by the Spiritists that they knew only of one—a lady who had left for Australia. Probably Mrs. Mellon, whose spirit, Cissie, so depleted her legs that her stockings came off when she was grabbed with bare feet at Sydney.

"Some time afterwards," continues Mr. Maskelyne, "I received a letter from Mr. Stead, saying that he had met with a wonderful materialising medium, and desired that we should attend to photograph a spirit at a *séance* to be held the next day. But, as usual, by the next post we heard that the medium had been taken ill, and the *séance* was postponed. Since then the camera and accessories have been constantly in readiness, but we are still waiting."

Credulity is ever bursting out into new developments. Many people believe in "graphology," or telling people's characters from their handwriting. The "graphologists" have been at work on Mark Twain's caligraphy—of course, without knowing whose it was; and they find him "inconstant, illogical, insincere, absolutely devoid of feeling, self-conscious, and wanting in moral rectitude." That's a pretty large order for poor Mark, isn't it? But he can afford to laugh at it—and at the "graphologists."

By and bye the world will be overrun with "professors" of all sorts of nonsense. Matthew Arnold was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, but he dropped the title of "professor," feeling, as he said, that it was so much better adorned by men like Professor Anderson and Professor Pepper.

The Unitarians were defined by Dean Hook, in his *Church Dictionary*, as "certain heretics who do not worship the true God." And Coleridge, who had been one of them, gave his opinion that they were not entitled to the name of Christians. Now they are making a considerable fuss over the Sinai palimpsest, which says that Joseph begat Jesus, as a proof that they are the true primitive and only original Christians after all.

Mr. F. C. Conybeare argues this thesis in the *Academy*. He holds that the doctrine of the virgin birth is late, not being found in Paul. "The Christian dogma," he says, "is a materialisation of a philosophical myth found in Philo." The myth—viz., that the Logos is born of the virgin Sophia, or Reason from Wisdom, and "the story of the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, had a similar origin in the pre-Christian Philonian and Talmudic symbolisation of the Divine Spirit as a dove."

The crowing of the Unitarians, of course, makes the orthodox repudiate the newly-discovered heretical gospel. The *Church Times* frankly says there is "only one solution—to reduce the claims of the Syriac gospels," and "to recognise them as relics of a side tradition of a corrupt nature"; and it concludes by saying that, "if the Lewis Codex is heretical, it must involve the Cureton, which all admit to be closely allied to it, in its own fate." One thing the orthodox can never admit, and that is, that Jesus had an earthly father.

The Bishop of Manchester has been fulminating from his cathedral against the claims of the Roman Church. "These claims," he said, "from the very first, had been based on forgeries." Well, Dr. Moorhouse cannot deny that the Roman Church was antecedent to his own, which has adopted a great deal from it. Does not this suggest that the claims of the entire Christian Church require rigid scrutiny?

Mrs. Justice, the lady who collected money for a bogus Orphanage, of course protested that she was working for the Lord, and the respectable young ladies who were used to assist in the collection were provided with religious badges with a lamb and an angel upon them. These pious frauds are stayed from their practices for a while; but while dupes abound rogues are likely to be forthcoming.

Gradually but surely the nasty priest is being expelled from the marriage laws. In Hungary just now the emperor has consented to create sufficient new lords or magnates to carry a Civil Marriage Bill through the "upper" house, where the creatures of the Pope had previously kicked it out. It is an instructive fact, as we have noted before, that it is in Catholic lands, where the priest is best known, that he is the most intensely hated; in Protestant England, etc., where he is the most tolerated, but treated as a respectable fellow, although he is the deepest-dyed villain in the community.—*Liberator*.

At Minneapolis one Blitz, put in the dock for the murder of Miss Catherine Ging, brought his Bible in court and

clung to it tightly all through the proceedings, as if it was his only hope. "His eyes were bloodshot and restless, his hair dishevelled, and his whole appearance disquieting."

On this the *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, remarks: "That Bible had taught the guilty wretch if he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, though his sins were scarlet he should be made white as snow, and should enter the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem; while she who had no moment for preparation for the awful change did not believe, and was damned."

A Reuter's telegram from St. Petersburg mentions the trial of eleven persons of the province of Viatka for offering human sacrifices. They belonged to a sect known as Votiaks. The *Daily News* calls them an idolatrous sect, but we should like to know how many of the Russian Christians are not idolaters, or worshippers of icons. These Votiaks, however, are Pagans, though the population of Russia is classed as Christian.

From the evidence given at the trial it appears that the accused induced a certain beggar-man named Matrioumine to visit the house of Moses Dimitrieff, one of the prisoners. After making the beggar drunk, they cut his throat and decapitated him. They then suspended the headless trunk from the ceiling, and, after making five incisions, collected the blood in dishes, and extracted the man's heart and lungs, which they subsequently used in their idolatrous rites. The mutilated body was thrown by the side of a high road. This atrocity was perpetrated as long ago as March, 1894, during the great Russian famine, and the object of the sacrifice was to appease the anger of Kourbane, the spirit of evil, and prevent a fresh visitation of the scourge.

According to the *English Churchman*, Judge Bagshawe, Q.C., and Judge Stonor sat with Cardinal Vaughan when, in his official robes, he tried a case in this country, by virtue of his position as head of the Roman Catholic Church in England. The court may have been an informal one of arbitration; but the Cardinal seems to have done all possible to a private person to give it an authoritative aspect. And, after all, one of the parties would not accept his decision.

Nominally, the Church of England is the Church of the entire nation. Judged, however, by the bishops' confirmations, which are necessary for the admission of adolescents into the Church, it is only the Church of an insignificant minority. Out of a population of thirty millions the only persons confirmed in 1893 were 222,893. The immense majority of these were females. This fact suffices to prove that, despite its boasted activity, the Church is losing ground, and should encourage those who are looking forward to Disestablishment and, what is still more important Disendowment.

The remedy suggested by the *Church Times* for the paucity of confirmations betrays the weakness of the Church. It wants children to be confirmed earlier in order to prevent leakage. All sensible persons acquainted with the thoughts of the juveniles who are confirmed would rather suggest that such a rite should be deferred till their minds were more matured. But the less mature and the more credulous the mind of the child, so much the better for the Church.

The Borough Polytechnic, London, is an institution supported by all sections of society, including Freethinkers. Its managers, however, are making a big effort to get the working classes to come to the Victoria Hall, where various ministers are to dose them with Christianity. As the Polytechnic funds cannot be used for the purpose, a circular has been sent to the subscribers, begging funds for this pious enterprise. Mr. George Anderson, having received one of these gentle solicitations, replied as follows:—

"BOROUGH POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE.

"I would be pleased to subscribe to any effort to make better the lower classes; but preaching Christianity will not do it. Christianity has been preached for many hundreds of years, and it costs the country millions of money annually, and see the result. 'The neighborhood has been the despair of every Christian worker,' you write. Then why continue a system that has so failed? Why not teach the people something they can understand?—how to preserve their health, to keep the skin and hands in order, and not to fret over passing difficulties, but to work out their salvation instead of praying for it. Teach them the laws of health—sanitary science, some knowledge of the structure of their own bodies, and how to avoid prevalent diseases, the air to breathe, the clothes to wear, and things to avoid. Teach the people such things, and they will flock to you; they will understand what is said to them, and carry away ideas they can talk about; but the other leaves them in the clouds of ignorance, where neither teacher nor taught know anything. Instruct as I advise, and I will subscribe.—Yours,

"GEORGE ANDERSON."

Providence doesn't mean that we should enjoy cheap Florida oranges this year and forget our dependence on "one above." Towards the end of December an extraordinary frost visited Florida, and destroyed 85 per cent. of the orange crop, the damage being estimated at £1,000,000. The gospel is declared to be without money and without price, but the object-lessons of Providence are very costly.

Raphael's picture of the Miraculous Draught is a splendid piece of artistic audacity. The boat is tremendously dwarfed, and attention is thus concentrated on J. C. and the apostolic fisherman. Naturally speaking, it is clear enough that the little cockle-shell of a boat would capsize if a stout apostle stepped into it carelessly; and several of them, hauling away at a monstrous catch of fishes, is really grotesque—only, of course, the great painter knew that as well as his critics. The whole drama was *miraculous*; and, as nature was contravened in its details, she might be equally contravened in their representation.

Unfortunately for five fishermen on the Irish coast last week, they had no J. C. on board, and no miracle to help them. They had an extraordinary catch of herrings, but in hauling them in the boat capsized, and the poor fellows were all drowned. Miraculous draughts don't pay except on the Sea of Galilee—and probably not there in this sceptical, god-forsaken age.

Fiji—Wesleyan converted Fiji—has been visited by a terrible hurricane, in which many lost their lives. Of the five churches in Suva, the capital, three collapsed. The Anglican Church was unroofed, while the Catholic sustained less serious damage. The Customs bonded store was destroyed, but the sugar mills remained uninjured.

A special service of supplication to God on behalf of the entombed miners at the flooded Audley Colliery was held on the spot; but, despite the prayers, and the heroism of men who did something better than pray, over seventy of the men were drowned.

Alexander McInnes, of Dumbarton-road, Glasgow, would seem to need the attention of his friends. He writes to the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* that he has studied "faith science" for more than thirty years, and can turn on the weather pretty much as he likes. He says: "According to Revelation iv. 3, Christ is the true magnet-stone, attracting all that is true, but repelling all that is false; further, imparting the true electro-magnetic power to his genuine followers, that they may do impossibilities. *Inter alia*, I find that, with a very small jet of gas-light, I can fill my bedroom every night with a supernatura light, and angels are attracted, but demons are driven away—the two kinds of electrical energy." If Mr. McInnes is really responsible for the weather, he deserves something severer than the care of his friends.

Mr. Savage Landor, in his book on *Corea*, tells a story of the King and telephones. When the invention was shown him, he immediately, at great expense, set about connecting by telephone the tomb of the queen dowager with the royal palace, a distance of several miles. Needless to say, though many hours a day were spent by his majesty and his suite in listening at their end of the telephone, and a watchman kept all night in case the queen dowager should wake up from her eternal sleep, not a message, or a sound, or murmur even was heard, which result caused the telephone to be condemned as a fraud by his Majesty the King of Cho-sen. After all, the King of Cho-sen, the Hermit Kingdom of Corea, is not much unlike some good Christians who fall out with science because it does not confirm their old superstitions.

Scene, a Salvation Army meeting on the South coast. Captain to the meeting—"Dear friends, the collection is one shilling and fourpence halfpenny. Will some kind friends make up the other three shillings and sevenpence halfpenny?" They didn't.

"Dagonet" (Mr. G. R. Sims) in the *Referee* writes strongly on the subject of General Booth's shelters, which he regards as "capable of breeding enough disease to decimate London." Mr. Sims says it is "monstrous" that Mr. Booth should be the one person in England allowed to keep a common lodging-house without complying with the Act of Parliament. "The matter must be seen to at once," he concludes, "and the Booth shelters placed under proper police inspection and control. There is not a shadow of excuse for the continuance of the present disgraceful state of things."

We recently drew attention to some anecdotes retailed by the Rev. Charles Berry about John Morley's condescension to family prayers in houses where he is staying. Mr. Berry has hopes of the sceptic yet. "Perhaps some day," he remarks, "his spirit of piety will find a body for itself in a credible statement of the Christian message." What a

roundabout way of prophesying that John Morley will become a Christian—as he may if he ever descends to the intellectual level of Mr. Berry. Happily that seems impossible.

The lauding of Laud, whom the High Church papers have been calling "the English Cyprian," "a martyr to the faith," etc., shows how these Churchmen would like to deal with Dissent. The hammer of the Puritans, who put in force against them all the musty old laws he could find, and who had no conception of tolerance, is the very ideal of the Romanising section of the Church; though in himself he was, as Carlyle said, "a kiln-dried man, a baked man, hard and dry like a cricket, unlovable as a locust." Worse, he was a bigoted persecutor.

A *fac-simile* begging letter from Father B. Murray, of Wellingboro', reaches us. It begins by saying, "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered by Father Murray for you and all who read this letter, or who listen to it." It appeals for help for the struggling mission of our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and promises in return that "your name, too, shall lie on the altar of God and at the shrine of our Lady with the Sacred Heart." A medal or picture of our Lady is also promised. These fishers of men have learnt how to land their tin with glittering but valueless tin-bait.

An Aberdeen female pauper, in sending to St. Nicholas Parochial Board a letter pleading on behalf of another pauper whose allowance had been reduced, accompanied her letter with the following "revised" version of the 23rd Psalm:—

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
Now seems to me a lie;
He leads me not in pastures green,
Nor quiet waters by.

My soul I must myself restore,
The walk myself must make;
My comfort and my happiness
Depend upon the path I take.

Yea, when I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill;
For truth and justice are my creed
And staff to comfort still.

My table's always furnished,
Though very poor, Lord knows;
My head I don't with oil anoint,
My cup ne'er overflows.

Troubles and trials all my life
Have surely followed me,
And in old age the Poorhouse
My dwelling-place must be.

Last year the Bishop of Winchester inhibited the Rev. H. Lindsay Young, vicar of St. John's, Portsea, from joining in a Communion service at the Presbyterian Church, Portsmouth. Mr. Young asked his bishop to supply him with the law which prohibited him, and was referred to the Chancellor of the diocese for information. But he got none, and this year accepted the Presbyterian invitation to assert his civil and religious liberty. At which insubordination to bishops the *Church Times* is greatly shocked.

The Dreyfus affair exhibits one of the dangers of democracy, the danger of losing its head. Guilty or not guilty, the man was tried *in camera*, and found guilty beforehand by the crowd of journalists, who fancy themselves leaders of the people, though they merely echo its prejudices and voice its passions. The mobbing of Dreyfus at La Rochelle is a pitiable climax to a very sorry drama. Beating a helpless convict with sticks and umbrellas is simply disgusting. One is bound to say, after all, that the "spy" bore himself more proudly than his judges and executioners.

According to the *Crescent*, the police of Liverpool succeeded in arresting one of the fanatical Christians who threw missiles at the Muezzin, who called to prayers at the Mosque in that city. It turns out that the person arrested is a Christian Sunday-school teacher.

The Rev. W. Campbell, of Los Angeles, California, mounted his pulpit, stood on his hind legs, screwed up his eyes, and besought the Lord to vouchsafe his saving grace to the lady Librarian of the City Library, and to cleanse her from all sin, and make her worthy of her office. That minister will have to consult a solicitor in future before he prays in public for anyone but himself. The lady librarian has instituted an action against him for libel. She reckons she's as much "cleansed" as the minister, anyhow.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 27, Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool:—1, "Problems of Civilisation"; 3, "Angels"; 7, "Did Jesus Ever Live?"
February 3, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 27, Hall of Science, London. February 3, Hall of Science, London; 10, Camberwell; 17, Plymouth; 24, Newcastle-on-Tyne. March 3, Manchester. April 7, Sheffield.—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.

MR. FOOTE is obliged to defer the announcement he promised to make in this week's *Freethinker*. A serious obstacle has arisen, which may or may not be removed or surmounted. Next week, in any case, it will be his duty to print a public statement.

CHATHAM BRANCH.—Lecture Notices are too late on Wednesday, when yours arrived last week.

T. G. DOWNS.—Dr. Parker is a Congregationalist. He is minister of the City Temple, Holborn Viaduct. The Temple, of which Dr. Vaughan is Master, is quite another place—a Church of England establishment.

INQUIRER.—If you want to tackle George Meredith, we advise you to begin with *Richard Feverel*.

E. GAGE.—We cannot reply to legal questions, except in relation to Freethought; though it is clear enough to the lay mind that you cannot leave a house without giving some notice, which will, of course, depend on the special circumstances of the case.

R. WARD.—That is exactly what happened before. A suitable hall could not be obtained at Hanley. Sorry to hear of your illness.

F. J. BOORMAN.—Mr. Foote was absent from London, and your letter could not be answered by the time desired. Financial considerations need not stand in the way of the debate. Mr. Foote will agree to anything in reason, only he cannot afford to lose money.

E. C. RAMSEY, of the Wood Green Branch, who was educated at Christ's Hospital, would like to correspond with any old "blues" who are now Freethinkers. Address from R. Forder.

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Always glad to receive your useful papers.

J. S.—You will see in Alger's *Glimpses of the French Revolution* that the story of Cazotte's prediction of the Reign of Terror, so famous with lovers of the marvellous, was invented for him after the event by La Harpe. Probably other remarkable prophecies might be explained in a similar way.

G. R.—Shall appear.

WATTS ELECTION FUND.—Mr. G. Ward, treasurer, acknowledges: O. Featherstone (2nd subscription), 5s.

MR. FOOTE'S FIGHTING FUND.—W. W. Roberts, 2s. 6d.

INQUIRER (Bacup).—The oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament books are supposed to belong to the early part of the tenth century, but we are not inclined to admit this chronology without a reservation. The earliest manuscripts of the New Testament are supposed to be several hundred years older; to belong, that is, to the second half of the fourth century. Dr. Giles's *Christian and Hebrew Records* is one of the best and most honest works to which we can refer you.

G. CRUDDAS.—The clergy are State-supported in the sense that their right to their incomes is absolutely based on the law of the land. We cannot go into the matter at length in this column.

C. KENDRICK.—What is the "critical" mistake you refer to in *Darwin on God*? We say that the lecture which Charles Bradburn delivered in aid of the Forder Testimonial was his last. Mrs. Bonner says so too in the Life of her father. What is the use of asking "Was not" this, that, or the other? Make your statement, if you have one.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.—Shall be dealt with in our next.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.—Shall appear.

E. J.—Not without some merit, but hardly up to the mark for publication.

J. LIGHTOWLER.—Will try to find room.

F. J. VOISEY.—In our next, owing to Mr. Foote's absence from London.

RYHOPE BRANCH.—All members are requested to attend a special meeting in the Miners' Hall at 11 a.m. to-day (January 27).

In consequence of Mr. Foote's absence in the country, some answers to correspondents, and other items, stand over till next week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Montreal Saturday Times—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Progressive Thinker—Liberty—Lucifer—Open Court—Liberator—Western Figaro—Crescent—Clydesdale Catholic Herald—Post—Two Worlds—Rad—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Daily News—Freidenker—Fur Unsere Jugend—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Twentieth Century.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

A GOOD Wednesday evening audience assembled at the London Hall of Science on January 16, when Mr. Foote gave "A Night with George Meredith." The lecture was followed with much interest, and the selections, especially the poetical ones, were highly appreciated. Mr. Foote did no lecturing last Sunday, but he lectures three times to-day (January 27) at Liverpool. The local Freethinkers should endeavor to bring as many as possible of their Christian friends to the evening lecture on "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" The afternoon lecture is also a new one on "Angels." The morning subject is "Problems of Civilisation." On the following Sunday (February 3) Mr. Foote will be at Manchester.

We regret to say that, owing to inflammation of the eyes, Mr. Parris was precluded from lecturing at the Hall of Science on Sunday. His place was taken by Mr. Forder, who dealt with the subjects advertised, and received quite an ovation at the close of the evening lecture on "Science and Theology."

Mr. Charles Watts had a very hearty reception last Sunday in Nottingham, where he lectured three times in the Assembly Rooms. The weather was severe in the extreme, raining in torrents the whole of the day, without a moment's cessation. Friends from all the surrounding districts braved the storm and attended all the lectures, and the audiences increased in number at each meeting. In the evening every seat was occupied. We are pleased to hear from Mr. Watts that the Nottingham Branch has an energetic Committee, who are arranging week-night meetings, to be held regularly during the remainder of the winter.

Mr. Watts lectures this Sunday evening (January 27) at the Hall of Science, London, taking for his subject, "Trust in God a Delusion."

The following is the complete list of donations received at the London Secular Federation's annual dinner:—G. Ward, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Fincken, 10s.; A. Sumner, 10s.; E. Wilson, 10s.; J. Pottage, 10s.; R. Forder, 10s.; Mrs. Foote, 10s.; G. Harlow, 10s.; Touzeau Parris, 10s.; W. Hunt, 10s.; E. Henderson, 1s.; P. Sabine, 2s.; J. West, 2s. 6d.; F. J. W., 5s.; Mrs. Forder, 5s.; H. Poulson, 4s.; J. C., 5s.; F. R. Cottrell, 2s. 6d.; A. J. Marriott, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Hancock, 5s.; Miss E. Robins, 5s.; Mrs. Miller, 3s.; B. Bowden, 5s.; E. C., 5s.; F. Martini, 5s.; E. Dunn, 5s.; C. Burton, 5s.; A. and D. Bury, 5s.; B. Cook, 1s.; L. Roger, 2s.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.; P. Rossignol, 2s.; C. F., 3s.

Among members of the N.S.S. elected on the new vestries is Mr. R. W. Parsons, for Ward No. 1, Pentonville, N.

Those members of the West London Branch who are desirous of the lectures at Kilburn being resumed during the forthcoming season are requested to attend a meeting to-day (Sunday, Jan. 27), 3.30 p.m., at 4 Springfield-gardens, N.W.

The annual meeting of the East London Branch will be held to-day (Jan. 27), at 11.30 a.m., at the Tower Hamlets Radical Association, 16 Durham-row, Stepney, E. A full attendance is requested.

Commenting on the death of Professor Seeley, *Reynolds's Newspaper* pays a tribute to the memory of Houston, who issued a book called *Ecce Homo* in 1813, for which he was condemned to two years' imprisonment and a fine of £200. "This is the way," says *Reynolds's*, "that an ignorant clergy met an argument which they found unanswerable." Our contemporary also speaks in the highest terms of Strauss, and says it is largely through the influence of such men that "some of the best men in the Church, and the most educated of the aristocracy, are Agnostics, if not Atheists."

Monday's *Daily Chronicle* contained a review of the second volume of Mr. M. D. Conway's collected edition of Thomas Paine's writings. It speaks of the *Rights of Man* as "the most pungent and forcible statement ever made of the grounds and claims of English Radicalism," and as "a far more able and vigorous piece of thinking than Burke's work, though the literary form has not the charm of Burke." The reader is informed that "he will be surprised throughout at the long prevalent conception of Paine as a vulgar brawler against authority," and that "he will come into contact with a powerful mind, well-balanced, clear, honest, and able to express itself through a lucid and vigorous style." This is excellent. But what a pity that the truth cannot be admitted about a great writer till he has been dead nearly a century, simply because he had the courage to think all round the compass.

Darwin's grandfather defined Unitarianism as a feather-bed to catch a falling Christian. In the spirit of this definition we hail with satisfaction the news that Unitarian ministers are increasing faster than those of any other denomination in the United States. During the past three years the increase has been 25 per cent., and the accessions have mostly come from other Churches.

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne seems to have become more Pagan since he wrote his *Religion of a Literary Man*, in which he championed a vague idea called "Essential Christianity." Lecturing at South-place Institute lately on "The Puritan Crusade," he praised the old Greek view of life, and then proceeded as follows:—"Suddenly there comes to him, like the clang of a dolorous bell, the sound of the clock of time, striking the Christian era. A bitter east wind, full of spiritual influenza, swept across the world. As the poor Greek shivers in the blast, he realises for the first time, like Adam, that he is naked, that it is wrong for him to be happy in his simple, natural way." The *Christian World* says that all this will only provoke a smile, but, judging from some words in our contemporary's criticism, we should say it had produced an opposite effect.

Secular Thought, of Toronto, has now commenced its seventeenth volume. We congratulate Mr. J. Spencer Ellis on having so ably maintained a Freethought organ in priest, parson, and presbytery-ridden Canada.

Mr. Symes continues his *Liberator*, and mentions that it is now eighteen years since he delivered his first Freethought lecture at Newcastle. He has had a hard fighting life ever since, but then a good soldier always rejoices in the battle. The number of the *Liberator* before us reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on "Buddhism and Christianity."

Mr. Foote will lecture for the Humanitarian League at the Lecture Room, 32 Sackville-street, Piccadilly, on Thursday, February 14. The subject of his discourse is to be War. Full particulars will appear in our next issue. Mr. Foote has also consented to revise his pamphlet, *The Shadow of the Sword*, so as to bring it quite up to date for general circulation, and to let the Humanitarian League print it as one of their tracts.

The final meeting of the Children's Party Committee will be held at the Hall of Science on Sunday (January 27), after the lecture, when all collecting-cards should be returned. Those ladies and gentlemen who have promised assistance should be present, if possible, or write Miss Vance the time at which they can attend on Wednesday. Children's tickets can be obtained from members of the Committee and Branch Secretaries. Unattached members should apply to Miss Vance at 28 Stonecutter-street, enclosing stamped envelope. The tickets admit children not under five or over fourteen years of age, and not more than three can be given to one family. To make the Children's Party a thoroughly enjoyable one, cash is needed, and should be sent in at once to Mr. Forder or Miss Vance at Stonecutter-street.

Everybody is tinkering away at the great "drink question," including the Church of England Temperance Society, which recently held a demonstration at Newcastle, the local Bishop being in the chair, and two other Bishops in the list of speakers. A non-sympathiser got up and asked if an amendment would be allowed; whereupon he was surrounded by a mob of intemperate clergymen, and speedily ejected from the premises. After this there was perfect harmony. Resolutions were passed in favor of the Bishop's Bill, which aims at reducing licences to one per 1,000 of the population. This would allow about twenty-five public-houses for the clergy of the Established Church. Does any man in his senses think it would be sufficient? Now and then we read of a clerical toper who would keep a considerable part of that number of public-houses going by himself.

HOW IT FEELS TO BE AN ATHEIST.

MANY years ago, when I was a Christian, I often used to wonder what the feelings of an Atheist were like. I used to believe that there must be a constant dread of approaching death. Like other Christians at that time (years ago), I used to think that prominent Atheists had a really unhappy time of it, and I often joined in that old-fashioned Christian war-cry, "Wait till that Atheist gets on his death-bed." To me an Atheist was a person who, out of pure cussedness or bad morality, sets himself up to defy the Supreme Being. Consequently, when his span of life was run out, his end would not be an enviable one. And many Christians hold that view to-day. But how erroneous are these opinions, how faulty is the argument. If any one had told me in those days that I would ultimately become an Atheist, I would, in all probability, have used forcible or physical arguments to rebut these statements. Yet to-day I am an Atheist; as proud of that title as, years ago, I used to be of that of Christian. And yet I am no God-defier, no man of bad morality. I do not deny God or the Supreme Being. I am an Atheist, but not because I wish to transgress some laws supposed to have been laid down by God years ago. No; I am an Atheist because my reason has made me one. Blind faith is detrimental to the society in general, and to the individual in particular. Where Faith reigns supreme Reason is powerless. Generals do not expect to win battles by the aid of faith, but they use their reason, and find out if their soldiers are numerous and brave enough to beat the enemy. Captains do not go to sea and trust to faith; they use compasses and charts instead. Inventors do not reckon on faith to help them when they wish to give to the world some great invention. No; they use their brains instead. And the same holds good as regards belief in Christianity. Christians walk by faith, and not by sight—not a safe mode of locomotion.

I became an Atheist, not from pure cussedness, but from logical reasoning. Literature of a Freethought nature came into my possession, materially changing my views. Sadly, at that time, did I give up my entrenchments of Christianity to the ever-conquering foe. My last fortress—namely, Deism—ultimately fell. I became an Atheist. The God to whom I worshipped became a shadow; Christ, my Savior, had fled from me; the Holy Ghost was a thing (?) of the past. The Bible was to me only like other books. The fires of hell have no terrors to me, and the expected joys of Christianity's heaven are to me less than tinsel of my childhood's toys.

And I have found out that the Atheists in general are brave men. Ostracism stares them in the face, bigotry is brought to bear upon them, and slander plays a prominent part in endeavoring to wreck the Atheist's career. I have found that the generality of people do not understand Atheism, and, what is much to be regretted, many do not want to; they will not reason, they trust to faith.

Why should an Atheist fear death? When he comes to his death-bed why should he call upon the "Lord" to forgive him? The Atheist knows that everything which has life must, sooner or later, come to an end—must resolve itself again into the elements. The Atheist knows man is no exception to this rule; be he Christian, Jew, Pagan, or Atheist, none can escape. If this is so, then why fear death? If an Atheist lives a good and upright life—and there are many of them—what cause has he to fear death? If a Christian has faith, but does not lead a good life, he is the one who should, and probably would, cry to the "Lord" to help him when on his death-bed. But when the Atheist, who has never seen or heard God (or gods), and lives a moral life, comes to die, he wants no one to save him, for his own actions and words will stand him in good stead if (?) there should be anything after death. And if death ends all, then what has the Christian gained by rejecting reason and preferring faith?

Speaking for myself, I am not the least uncomfortable as to whether death ends all or not. All my belief or disbelief cannot close the gates of heaven—if there be one. All the parsons in Christendom cannot make me believe that a fiery hell exists somewhere, the whereabouts of which has, up to now, not been discovered. All the sermons in the world cannot make me believe that a good father exists somewhere in space, and that he allows

miserable to be so great a factor in life without endeavoring to help it or minimise it. Earthquakes swallow whole nations, disease carries off millions of our brothers and sisters, hunger is rampant, whilst riches are produced in abundance. Justice is seldom seen, might takes the place of right, the worker starves and lives in hovels, whilst the idlers fare sumptuously and live in palaces. The worker often ends his days in the workhouse, whilst the drone, when he comes to die, has all the luxuries of life to make his dying moments the easier. And where is God? Where is our father? What is he doing? Receiving no reply, man feels in his heart that he must do those things which require aid. Man, in all his majesty, then stoops to do that work which benefits mankind, and finds that God, or gods, have never done anything themselves. Then feelings (aided largely by no reason) creep into the heart that perhaps there is no supreme, intelligent, and loving being up in the sky. And circumstances happen which strengthen and confirm this view, and then man becomes an Atheist. No fear of hell has he, no longing for heaven; no favor does he require from God or gods. The knowledge of having done his duty during life would debar him from calling on the "Lord." The knowledge of having lived a moral life, according to his lights, will smooth away all terrors of death. He knows that if there is nothing after death, his worn-out body will once more live again in flowers, and air, and water. And if there is something after death, his good actions and honest endeavors will be to him a passport to that place where suffering is not.

Looked at, then, from every standpoint, the Atheist has no cause to fear the approach of his end, but will look to it with equanimity, considering that if he lives right, then he will die right. The Atheist, therefore, jogs along on life's highway quite contented, calm, and philosophical. If any Christian should read this article, let him ponder these remarks carefully.

G. E. CONRAD NAEWIGER.

WHAT ARE WOMEN HERE FOR?*

I WAS asked the other day if I was going to speak on "Woman's Rights" at a meeting of women which I was expected to address, and my questioner said that a good many somewhat "conservative" friends of hers were anxious to hear me, but might not want to come if I was to speak upon that topic. Personally, I do not recognise that there is such a topic as woman's rights, and certainly I have never spoken upon it in my life. There are human rights, and some of these have, so far, been withheld from woman; but what do these people mean by "rights," if it is not the opportunity to do and to be all of those things which are recognised as the legitimate occupations or means of development or support which human beings are capable of undertaking, or wish to undertake for their own benefit or happiness?

The lady who asked me that question did not realise, and her friends do not realise, that for a woman to stand before an audience at all and speak upon any subject in the world is a full assertion of what they are pleased to think they are shocked at under the name of "woman's rights." Every time a woman earns a dollar in any occupation whatsoever (outside of the kitchen) she is a living exponent of "woman's rights," unless she refrains from taking that dollar, and it is paid over to and spent by the men of her family. Until this movement began for the equality of the sexes before the law (which by these nervous folks is called woman's rights), every dollar a woman earned belonged to her father or to her husband. She couldn't collect it. She didn't own it. It was looked upon by those who were the "conservatives" of that day as exceedingly unwomanly for her to want to own money? Never! Why, that would proclaim to the world that I suspected my husband of dishonesty. Would I give myself to a man, and not give him all my property? And so, if the wife inherited property from her father, the moment she married she didn't own that property. If she earned it herself, she didn't own it. And it was looked upon then as far more "unwomanly" and "brazen," and as a "dangerous" undermining of the family relation, and as "unsexing" the wife (whatever that absurd and hard-driven word may mean) for her to want to own her own

property and collect her own wages, than it is now for her to want to own *herself*, and to count as one in the economy of life.

There are always timid people, however, who think it is just as good form to be what they call "conservative"—that is, to keep just far enough behind the procession of progress to reap all of its benefits without having met and helped to solve any of its difficulties. But I will venture to assert that there is not one so-called conservative woman in New York who does not take full advantage of her "woman's rights" to own her own home, collect her own rent, or her salary (if she does anything to earn one); to draw her own royalty if she is an author; in short, that she does what she can to reap the benefits of this struggle for woman's human and equal footing before the law, in so far as it has already been established; and if she does so, she is (whether she knows it or not) proclaiming to the world that she is in favor of "woman's rights." Now, all these concessions, so far, have been gained as concessions, and not at all as inalienable rights of a human being to stand before the law on a dignified and equal footing with other human units.

So long as this is true, it is possible for woman to lose those concessions. She has absolutely no way to guard or protect them. There is a way to enable her to secure them in perpetuity—a way that takes nothing from man; that deprives him of nothing; that is in no way or sense antagonistic to his interests—a simple, easy way, which has in its favor all justice, all honesty, all logic, all common sense; which has against it absolutely nothing but ignorance and prejudice—absolutely nothing! Because there has never yet been given one single logical argument in favor of self-government for men, in favor of a democratic government at all, which does not apply absolutely and wholly to women also—not one! Because there has never been one single objection brought against woman's equality before the law with man which is not equally valid against self-government of men, or else is based upon wholly unproven and untenable evasion or assumption; assumptions which have been met, and which can be met, with entire ease, and disproven without using a great deal of brain matter in the process. One of these was reset in its old frame in a recent article by Janette Gilder. She argued that there was too large an ignorant vote in New York now—and so there may be; but upon what possible idea of justice is this means of self-protection and self-development given to ignorant men and withheld from ignorant women? If there is to be an intelligence test (or an educational one), let it be an educational test; but that will have nothing to do with sex! That argument is entirely too large. It covers entirely too much ground to meet the demands required of it. It is a *non sequitur*.

Then there is another worn-out, frayed-at-the-edges argument about serving as soldiers. Now, in the first place, citizenship does *not*, as is so often asserted, rest upon man's ability to serve in the army or navy. If it did, then all men incapacitated for such service would lose their votes. Are you aware that that would disfranchise very nearly three-fifths of the male voting population? Don't you see that that argument cuts two ways? Don't you see that it is spurious? Don't you know that it would, in the main, be the most intelligent of all the voters who fall under this ban? It is not the man who is a good fighter (a perfect animal) who is the wisest or safest legislator. That soldier argument would disfranchise almost all of our college professors, our physicians, clergymen, lawyers—in short, almost all of the ablest professional men in the country. It would really disfranchise pretty much everyone who would fall *inside* of the educational test; while the intelligence and educational test would disfranchise a large majority of those who come under the war-service test—both of which are mere evasions of the basic question—the question of woman's right to stand before the law as a human being on exactly the same level as other human beings.

If you take "male" out of the constitution, women will make no objections to all the intelligence tests, and all the physical perfection tests you care to devise, and apply to both sexes alike! She is not afraid of a fair and equal test on an equal footing with man. *She* asks for no special privileges. It is *he* who insists upon protective privileges against those who, he says, are his inferiors; and, somehow or other, it looks to me as if there was an African in that woodpile! If he is so sure that he is her superior, why is he so mortally afraid of meeting her on an equal footing?

But, jesting aside, did it ever occur to you what a coward a man is who insists upon claiming legal and political rights which he is afraid to allow his wife and mother to share with him? Can he not hold his own on a level footing with her? And did it ever occur to you that it is not the large-brained men, the able men, who are opposed to this measure? Such men as Abraham Lincoln are always in favor of it, as he was. It is the men who are instinctively aware of personal inferiority to many women who cling so tenaciously to the legal privilege which makes him her superior by law—a position in which he is unable to sustain himself on simply his own merits. That is a coward's refuge. And it matters not one whit whether he

* Delivered before a meeting of fashionable women who had said they would "open their parlors" for discussion of the "legal status of women" if Helen H. Gardener would agree to be one of the speakers.

can march and shoot in a war or not; he is a coward who claims for himself legal advantages which he withholds from his sister.

Again, no man is subject to duty as a soldier absolutely. He is permitted to furnish a substitute. The women of a nation have not only furnished their substitutes, but they have furnished to that country *all* of the soldiers it can get—substitute, conscript, and volunteer. And she has faced a greater danger and more suffering in doing it than that substitute will be called upon to face in protecting his mother in any war that may call him out. Yet again, whenever a war is stirred up in this country, voted for, wanted, and managed by women; whenever the flag is fired upon by an armed force of women, there will be an equal number of women ready, willing, and able to protect it. Whenever an army of women invades our country, there will be an army of women ready to repel the invasion. Until then, let those who want the wars, who bring them on, fight them out!

There is another assertion which sometimes passes for argument upon this question. It is said that "the immoral vote" will be doubled. I do not believe that (using the word "immoral" in the sense in which it is always implied here for women) there is anybody who will assert that there are half as many "immoral" women as men. We cannot measure the whole country by a few large cities in this regard. But that argument surely covers a good deal more ground than its inventors intended it to. It would result, would it not, if applied, in enfranchising about nine-tenths of all women the world over, and in disfranchising about nine-tenths of the present voters, not omitting our small army contingent? But *is* it the morality test which they want rigidly applied? *Is* it a man's morality which secures him his suffrage, his status before the law? or is it his needs as a human unit in a republican form of government? Which ground does he claim it on? If on the morality ground, as they apply that to women, don't you think his tenure of office or of citizenship is on a pretty shaky foundation? Ask them down in Kentucky?

HELEN H. GARDENER.

—*Truth Seeker Annual.*

(*To be concluded.*)

OPPORTUNITY.

A GREAT man dies, but still the world goes on,
For many quite as good are always left
To work the world with minds and hands as deft
As those of all the greatest, dead and gone.

Not one is indispensable; the world
Has sons of opportunity at hand
To fill the leader's place of ev'ry band,
Whate'er the banner be by it unfurled.

The seed that falls on barren stoney ground
Is just as good as that which elsewhere lies;
'Tis opportunity that makes it rise
To growth and strength, till full fruition's found.

A man has toiled through life, but who shall say
That what he *best* could do was what he *did*?
Perhaps, through lack of quick'ning chance, all hid
Within his brain some germ of genius lay.

Success is not secured by work alone,
Nor merit always measured by access;
A man may win, and yet have conquered less
Than he who, striving, fails to hold his own.

The unit works, but worlds for it must toil;
The ages dog each step that man may take,
With hosts at flanks, at rear, and van, to make
Or mar the opportune congenial soil.

Like anchored ships upon a restless sea,
We're tethered to the depths of all the past
By chains invisible that hold us fast,
And hold us most when most we think we're free.

The men who conquered nations were the fruits
Of circumstance that generated crimes;
Those men, perchance, in less unsettled times,
Had lived like honest folk, and less like brutes.

We hope to raise our race, and speed the course
Of progress, with the spread of mental light;
For Science breeds the love of truth and right—
The antidotes to baneful cosmic force.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

WAR UPON PHYSIOLOGY.

PHYSIOLOGY treats of the phenomena of organised life. To know one's self, and the laws governing his being—to preserve a healthy mind in a healthy body—a person should be educated in this department of scientific knowledge. In Illinois, and probably in other States, it is taught to the higher classes in the public schools. Teachers, to obtain first-class certificates, must be well educated in this science. It enables a person to guard himself against a thousand ills, and it is very essential to those who are entrusted with the care of the young, and to those who watch at the bedside of the sick and dying.

Churchmen have recently discovered that the teachings of physiology are pernicious, yea, heretical. In some school districts public meetings have been held protesting against its being taught, alleging it is inconsistent with the inculcations of the Bible.

The advanced student learns that miracles are incompatible with natural law; that God never intervenes, even in answer to prayer, to protect persons from being burned in furnaces; that life cannot be sustained for three days in a whale's belly; that virgins do not bear children; that the dead cannot rise, clothed in mortal form, and be seen of many.

It is very apparent, from this brief statement, that either knowledge must be restricted, or the dogmas of the Church must be constructed along new lines. The Catholics saw this, hence the real motive for their warfare on the common school system. For three hundred years the parent Church refused to allow the Copernican system of astronomy to be taught in its schools, because it conflicted with Bible teaching. All the sciences, as they have sprung up with advancing knowledge, have met with similar opposition. To be consistent with its past, physiology must be opposed, and suppressed, if possible.—*Progressive Thinker.*

After a Royal Dinner.

A single incident may help us to realise the moral atmosphere which was shed around the brilliant Court in Paris, where Admiral Coligny spent his boyhood. The Royal household was entertained after dinner by the burning of six heretics, one of whom was a woman. It was on January 19, 1535.

Among the company was Cardinal Duprat, Chancellor of France, bishop of half-a-dozen sees, besides his archbishopric of Sens, whose cathedral never saw him enter until his corpse was borne there to its burial.

The mode of execution of heretics was the *estrapade*. The victims were fastened to a beam which played up and down, and alternately dipped them into, and withdrew them from, the flames. As the torture was prolonged, the Duchess d'Etampes turned to Duprat and complained, not of the atrocious cruelty of the punishment, but of the smell of burning flesh.

"Madame," replied the Cardinal, jocosely, "it is clear you have never entered your kitchen when pork was being cooked—the odor is exactly the same."—*Pearson's Weekly, January 12.*

Obituary.

ON Friday, January 18, William Dawson, of Annistford, was interred at Bedlington Cemetery. It was deceased's ardent desire to have a purely Secular burial. His remains were allowed to rest in the church, where Mr. R. H. Wharrier read the Secular Burial Service in an impressive manner. Mr. John Bryson also delivered a short address, pointing out the many sterling qualities of the deceased. Mr. Dawson was a veteran Freethinker, being eighty-three years old. He was a great admirer of the late Mr. Bradlaugh.—JAMES LATTY, Sec.

AN eminent German Freethinking philosopher has passed away in the person of Moritz Carriere, who died on January 18, at the age of seventy-seven. He was professor of philosophy at Giessen and Munich. Though a Theist, he showed considerable independence of thought. He wrote on such historical subjects as Abelard and Heloise, and the character of Cromwell.

It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history, that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith.—*John Stuart Mill.*

BOOK CHAT.

We are pleased to note that a biography of Judge Stephen is being prepared by his brother, Mr. Leslie Stephen.

* * *

The Life and Teachings of Jesus, by A. Kenyon Rogers (Putnam & Sons; 3s. 6d.), professes to be a critical analysis of the sources of the gospels, together with a study of the sayings of Jesus, but goes on the plan of selecting about as much as the average modern religious body can be expected to swallow with its eyes partly open. The author admits, with regret, that on examination "a very large part, indeed, of all we seemed to know about Jesus has crumbled away."

* * *

According to the *Academy*, Messrs. Macmillan are just issuing *A Confession of Faith*, by an Unorthodox Believer, who seeks to show that the religious spirit, in what seems to him the true sense, is independent of belief in the miraculous.

* * *

A holiday book reaches us from the New York Truth-seeker Co., entitled *A Tale of a Halo* (28 Lafayette-place; cloth, \$1; paper, 50 cents). The author is Morgan A. Robertson, and the amusing illustrations, which are even superior to the verse, are by A. Carey K. Jurist. The *Tale of a Halo* is all about a visit of Beelzebub to heaven, wearing a specially fine halo, and the "ructions" that ensue. The opening lines may be taken as a sample of the author's irreverent style:—

St. Peter was gazing one day by the gate
At a sign on the rampart, and, sad to relate,
His face wore a look of surprise and chagrin,
For the sign bore the legend, "No Smoking Within."
It seems that Peter's pipe had a smell of its own,
Too strong for the incense that hung round the throne.

The story contains some fun and satire on the pretensions of the Church. The illustrations are capital.

* * *

The daughters of Thackeray mingled with some notable people, and in *Chapters from Some Memoirs* (Macmillan) Mrs. Anne Thackeray Ritchie has given reminiscences of Chopin, Dickens, Leach, Mr. and Mrs. Caryle, Fanny Kemble, her sister, etc. The book is written in a strain of tender feeling, which recalls the style of the father of the authoress.

* * *

From the Humanitarian League we have received two of its latest twopenny publications—No. 15, dealing with *Cattle Ships and Our Meat Supply*, by I. M. Greg and S. H. Powers; and No. 16, on *Public Control of Hospitals*, by H. Roberts. The writers seem to have a competent knowledge of the matter on which they treat.

WAS COLUMBUS A JEW?

Jews figure prominently in the history of the discovery of America. The plans and calculations for Columbus's expedition were largely the work of two Hebrew astronomers and mathematicians. Two Jews, also, were employed as interpreters by Columbus, and one of them, Luis de Torres, was the first European to set foot in the New World. When Columbus sighted the island of San Salvador, he imagined he was approaching a portion of the east Asiatic coast, and he sent Torres—who was engaged for his knowledge of Arabic—ashore to make inquiries of the natives.

It was probably this Torres who was the Madrid Jew to whom Columbus bequeathed half a mark of silver in his will. Another curious fact is that it has been seriously suggested, by Dr. Delitzsch we believe, that Columbus himself was a Jew, or of Jewish birth. The name Christopher was frequently adopted by converts, while the surname Colon was borne by a distinguished family of Jewish scholars. Christopher's brother, Diego, bore originally the Jewish name Jacob, which sounds surprisingly like a Shem Kadosh. Perhaps some Jewish scholar in Italy will make inquiry into the validity of this daring suggestion.—*Peterson's Magazine*.

The liberality of the age, or, in other words, the weakening of the obstinate prejudice which makes men unable to see what is before their eyes because it is contrary to their expectations, has caused it to be very commonly admitted that a Deist may be truly religious; but if religion stands for any graces of character, and not for mere dogma, the assertion may equally be made of many whose belief is far short of Deism.—*J. S. Mill, "Autobiography," p. 46.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BRIGHTON CO-OPERATORS AND LOCAL OPTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was not a little disgusted to see the report in your journal, that Mr. Holyoake had headed a deputation of Brighton co-operators to pray for a diminution of the number of public-houses in Brighton. I could understand Mr. Holyoake doing this as a Methodist; but what have co-operators, as co-operators, to do with the licensing question? You have in this spectacle an object-lesson *re* Local Option. Brighton is a great place for excursionists, and, of course, requires greater facilities for rest and refreshment than ordinary towns. Public-houses being primarily for travellers, it follows that the reasonable requirements of people who are away from home is the question to be studied in licensing, not the requirements of any particular locality. The fact is, snobs and bigots would like to prevent excursions—especially Sunday excursions—altogether. Now, Stiggins has grown artful, and has evidently become a co-operator, and he knows that to openly attack even Sunday excursions won't do. But there are more ways than one of trying to fill chapels and churches. To reform the public-house or to suppress drunkenness would not answer. Let us diminish their number, if we cannot close them altogether on Sunday, so as to put these vile excursionists to as much discomfort as possible, and we shall drive some of the wretches to the conventicle. Before the prayer of the Brighton co-operators is acceded to, let them show that Brighton is more drunken than towns where public-houses are more restricted in their numbers.—Yours truly,

A. J. MARRIOTT.

Christianity.

Christianity is to be regarded as a system rather than as a doctrine, for, like Proteus, it changes its forms, and whenever defeated in attack, if policy so dictates, it adopts the proved ideas of its assailants, and thus preserves its organisation, which is more essential to its official supporters than are its dogmas. These are abandoned or changed whenever expediency dictates, making aggressive effort very difficult; for whenever a point is successfully assailed it is declared to be "unessential," or else not to belong to true Christianity. Everything is abandoned but natural morality, and still men call themselves Christians and support the system which has no excuse for continuance unless miracle and revelation are facts. When Rationalists see the duty of consistency, they will cease to uphold a system which has no logical existence apart from supernaturalism.—*Robert C. Adams.*

PROFANE JOKES.

Son—"What is that ceremony known as 'elevating the host,' papa?" Dad—"Dunno! Lifting him out from under the table, I suppose."

Nellie (looking at picture of Adam and Eve)—"Say, Bertie, which is Adam and which is Eve?" Bertie—"Don't be silly! How can anyone tell that when they're not dressed?"

If the Devil should die,
The priest would sie,
Perhaps erie;
For the reason whie
His salarie
Would "take wings and flie"
To the "by and bie"
"High and drie";
He would have to trie
To earn his pudding and pie.

Parson in the Pulpit (to congregation)—"I will take for my text this morning the subject of 'What must we do to save our souls?'" Voice from Congregation—"Walk on your heels."

Inspector (in the schoolroom)—"Who drove the Israelites out of Egypt? you, little boy in the corner." Little boy in the corner (trembling all over with fright)—"I-I never, sir; I only came from the country last week!"

Gabriel—"Well, what can I do for you?" Applicant—"I want to see St. Peter." Gabriel—"Engaged on important work, and can't be bothered just now." Applicant—"What is he doing?" Gabriel—"Making up his report on how many sparrows fell to the ground during the past month."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.C.): 11.30, T. Jarvis (Fabian), "Why Do We Pay Rent?" (Free.) 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Trust in God a Delusion." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) 9, Children's Party Committee meeting in the Minor Hall; helpers wanted. Wednesday, at 5.30, Children's Party.

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, musical and dramatic entertainment. (Free.) Tuesday and Friday, at 8, dancing.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Causes Leading to the Formation of the Independent Labor Party." (Preceded by vocal and instrumental music.) Thursday, at 7.30, science classes. (Free.)

ISLINGTON (Liberal and Radical Association Committee Rooms, Upper-street, near Vestry Hall): Thursday, Jan. 24, at 8, Stanley Jones, "How We Got Our Bible." Thursday, Jan. 31, at 8, A. Guest, "Is the Bible a Safe Guide?"

MILTON HALL (Hawley-crescent, 89 Kentish Town-road): 7.30, W. A. Coote, "The National Vigilance Association in Relation to Literature and Morals." (Free.)

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Modern Rivalry of Duty, Humanity, and Christ."

WEST LONDON BRANCH: 3.30, important meeting of Kilburn members at 4 Springfield-gardens, N.W.

WOOD GREEN (Star Coffee House, High-street): 7, W. Mawer, F.G.S., "Creation v. Evolution."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "The Origin of the Bible"; 3.30, Stanley Jones, "The State and the Schools."

COUNTRY.

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

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, J. Keast, "Christianity and Progress."

CHESTER (Old Chapel, Commonhall-street): 7, Lawrence Small, B.Sc., "Evolution and Design."

DERBY: Monday, at 7.30, meeting at the Wooding Institute. Tuesday, at 8, Amye Reade, "Secularism and Immorality—A Reply to the Church."

DUNDEE (City Assembly Rooms): 11, discussion class; 1, shorthand class; 2.30, J. Bowman, "The Prophecies Concerning Christ"; 3, elocution class; 6.30, concert.

GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion class—S. Downie, "Labor Problems"; 6.30, soiree, anniversary of Paine and Burns. (Tickets 6d.)

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Oxley, "Answers to Some Christian Objections."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 11, G. W. Foote, "Problems of Civilisation"; 3, "Angels"; 7, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Abraham Newell, "The Local Government Act, 1894, and its Effect upon the Life of the People." (Free.)

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): impromptu evening by members and friends.

PORTSMOUTH (Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea): 7, a meeting. Wednesday, at 8, dancing.

ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street): 11, discussion; 3, Bible study; 6.30, Sam Standring, "Worlds Outside Ours," with lime-light illustrations. Monday, at 7.30, discussion class.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3 and 7, vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc. (Collections for local hospitals.) Thursday, soiree and ball in honor of Thomas Paine.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane): 11, O. Cohen, "The Creed of a Man of Science"; 7, "The Existence of God."

Lecturers' Engagements.

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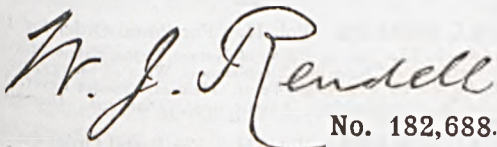
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