

# The Free-thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## MR. DAVIDSON'S BALLADS.

*Ballads and Songs.* By John Davidson. (London: John Lane.)

NEARLY thirty years have elapsed since Mr. Swinburne burst upon the world with his *Songs and Ballads*. He had made a reputation already with his *Atalanta*, and was one of the established "younger poets." Much was expected of him, but the heresy and eroticism of his new volume horrified the godly purists, and young poets became odious. Shelley had shocked the world, and Swinburne had done the same thing; and bards would have to be looked at askance until they were turning bald or grey—in short, until their fervor cooled down to the temperature of mediocrity, when they might be "safe" even for bread-and-butter misses. Poets, however, will not be old before their time. They have their youth, like the rest of us; and it is a longer youth, for the divine enthusiasm burns hotter within them, and survives more of the sad chills of experience. For this reason, if for no other, we talk of our "younger poets," though they have lived into middle-age; indeed, it may be said that "younger poets" are poets under fifty.

Of this junior fraternity of song the most conspicuous, perhaps, is Mr. John Davidson, whose work has more substance than that of his colleagues or rivals. We need not chant his praises in tones of exaggeration, like the "log-rollers" who "laud each other face to face" in the newspapers and reviews. We need not say, with Mr. Zangwill, that he is "prodigal of every divine gift," or, with Mr. Le Gallienne, resemble him to George Meredith. Still less need we declare, with one of his panegyrists, that "everything" he does "bears the hall-mark of originality." Originality is a rare article, and everything is "a large order." It is enough to say, in more sober language, that Mr. Davidson has done some beautiful and forceful work, that he thinks as well as feels, and that his poetry challenges the attention of those who want something more than mere "sugared rhymes" when they invest their time and money in a volume of verse.

Mr. Davidson's latest production is of interest to Freethinkers. It is full of the new spirit. It is bright and bold in its defiance of orthodoxy—even the orthodoxy of "advanced" Christians. We like the two couplets, which are a kind of dedication of the book. The first is "To My Friend"—

What is between us two, we know :  
Shake hands and let the whole world go.

The second is "To My Enemy"—

Unwilling friend, let not your spite abate :  
Help me with scorn, and strengthen me with hate.

The longest poem is called a Ballad, though written in blank verse. It describes the "making of a poet." The youth lived "far in the North" (Mr. Davidson is a Scotchman), where

Time could take his ease,  
And Change hold holiday ; where Old and New  
Weltered upon the border of the world.

His father, a rigid Calvinist, has no sympathy with the youth's poetical and pagan dreams. He addresses him in this fashion :—

My son, have you decided for the Lord ?  
Your mother's heart and mine are exercised  
For your salvation. Will you turn to Christ ?  
Now, young and strong, you hanker for the world ;

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But think : the longest life must end at last,  
And then come Death and Judgment. Are you fit  
To meet your God before the great white throne ?  
If on the instant Death should summon you,  
What doom would the Eternal Judge pronounce—  
"Depart from me," or "Sit on my right hand" ?  
In life it is your privilege to choose,  
But after death you have no choice at all.  
Die unbelieving, and in endless woe  
You must believe throughout eternity.

The father's beseeching is helped by the mother's, who implores God to save her "foolish boy," who, at that very moment, saw not the Holy Ghost, but Aphrodite, rising from the sea, stepping inland, and evoking Adonis from his sepulchre.

Then all the trees were lit with budding flames  
Of emerald, and all the meads and leas,  
Coverts and shady places, glades and dells,  
Odored and dimly stained with opening flowers,  
And loud with love-songs of impassioned birds,  
Became the shrine and hostel of the spring.

But a "savage faith works woe." His mother dies in anguish for his sins. To spare his father he professes confidence in Christ, and goes to kirk and takes the communion. But he walks again in the evening beside the purple firth, and dreams again his old dreams. He says to himself that consciousness is God, that *he* is God ; and he will preach this gospel of emancipation to all the crushed and suffering slaves of earth. He tells this to his father, who is horrified, but at last finds an awful comfort in the thought that he will himself go to heaven, and experience there

the exceeding glory of delight,  
That shall entrance me with the constant thought  
Of how in Hell through all eternity  
My son performs the perfect will of God.

The stern Calvinist dies, and the son, kneeling beside him, suddenly thinks that, if it be terrible to fall into the hands of the living God, it is

much more dire  
To sicken face to face, like our sad age,  
Chained to an icy corpse of deity,  
Decked though it be and painted and embalmed.

Finally he dismisses the proud thought that man is God. To convert men to that faith would only found

A new religion, bringing new offence,  
Setting the child against the father still.

He will have nothing to do with the "ruthless creeds that bathe the earth in blood." They are moods made into dogmas, petrifications of metaphors. He will be a man apart, a poet, a mouthpiece for the souls of all men.

And lo ! to give me courage comes the dawn,  
Crimsoning the smoky east ; and still the sun  
With fire-shod feet shall step from hill to hill  
Downward before the night ; winter shall ply  
His ancient craft, soldering the years with ice ;  
And spring appear, caught in a leafless brake,  
Breathless with wonder and the tears half-dried  
Upon her rosy cheek ; summer shall come  
And waste his passion like a prodigal  
Right royally ; and autumn spend her gold  
Free-handed as a harlot ; men to know,  
Women to love are waiting everywhere.

"Free-handed as a harlot" is a daring but convincing simile, and the whole poem is powerful in conception and execution.

The next longest poem is "The Exodus from Houndsditch"—after Carlyle, the preacher of the old faith being obviously suggested by Irving. One verse will show this preacher's attitude:—

I preach no system nebulous and new ;  
God is or is not : I have not to sell  
Cosmetics for the soul : I offer you  
The choice of Heaven or Hell.

A vision is vouchsafed to this apostle of Jehovah of the break-up of his creed and of what shall succeed it. A man appears carrying a massive cross, which he flings into a deep abyss, whereupon despair falls from him, and there descends from the skies a sound of "joy and clapping hands." Hell at last burns out, and the "parish Heaven" ceases with it; earth and sky are left fair and clear, and the people sing a song of emancipation; at which the preacher starts aghast and falls down dead, and no one heeds his disappearance.

The "Ballad of a Nun" has earned the denunciation of Mr. W. T. Stead, who calls it a consecration of unchastity. The heroine is doorkeeper of a convent, which stands on a high hill, looking across a duchy:—

Where everlasting mountains flung  
Their shadows over tower and town.

The jewels of their lofty snows  
In constellations flashed at night ;  
Above their crests the moon arose ;  
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

Long ere she left her cloudy bed,  
Still dreaming in the orient land,  
On many a mountain's happy head  
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm ;  
Clouds scattered largesses of rain ;  
The sounding cities, rich and warm,  
Smouldered and glittered in the plain.

These are superb verses, with a strong, sure touch in every line. The poor nun scourges herself to suppress the rebellion of her blood, until one night, when the Carnival is being kept in the nearest city, she flings off her robe, and resolves to "taste of love at last." After a period of wild indulgence she returns to the convent, where she has not been missed, for the Virgin Mary has assumed her personality and acted as door-keeper in her absence. The Virgin speaks—

"You are sister to the mountains now,  
And sister to the day and night ;  
Sister to God." And on the brow  
She kissed her thrice, and left her sight.

Mr. Stead's denunciation of this poem is based upon a fallacy. He assumes that a poet writes affidavits and syllogistic arguments. Mr. Davidson vindicates "the flesh," as Christianity calls it, in the heightened, telling way of a poet. What he means is this, that woman is marked out for a wife and mother, and that those who deny their sex are farther off from nature than those who abuse it; also that if nature is turned out of doors she is very likely to come in at the window. Mr. Davidson is not one to be frightened by the Steads of journalism. He is a true poet, and he will deliver his message—in the poet's way.

G. W. FOOTE.

### DECEIVING THE VULGAR.

CHRISTIANITY in England has been intellectually undermined. What keeps it in place is its material establishment with wealth, power, and respectability; and a chief buttress of this is the dread of imaginary issues, should it fall. There are a class of people who view with dismay the break up of supernatural beliefs. They fancy that, whether true or not, these beliefs form a good auxiliary to the policeman. Some even of those who have given up belief in supernaturalism themselves think it good enough for others.

They think truth is too good a thing to be made common. For, they say, people cannot be got to think. To most it is a painful process. Why not rather let the herd lie in their happy delusion of angels and saints, gods and

devils, while the thinkers, teachers, and rulers remain a caste by themselves? This was a philosophy which suited the slavish conditions of the past, and which the era of democracy has not entirely destroyed, as anyone will find out who gets in intimate conversation with some members of "the Broad Church." They are fond of saying with Voltaire: "*Ah, croyez-moi l'erreur a son mérite.*" And with him they exclaim: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him!" which, as Miron remarked, is exactly what has been done.

A double doctrine has run through the history of Christianity. Jesus Christ is said to have taught in parables, "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark iv. 12). Paul boasted of being all things to all men, of having been crafty and caught some with guile; and he said that God would send strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they might all be damned (1 Corinthians ix. 22; 2 Corinthians xii. 16; 2 Thessalonians ii. 11, 12; see, too, Romans iii. 7).

Bishop Ellicott admits (*Cambridge Essays*, p. 175) of the early ages of the Church: "They certainly cannot be pronounced free from the influence of pious frauds"; and Mosheim (cent. iii., sec. 10) speaks of their "disingenuous and vicious method of surprising their adversaries by artifices, and striking them down, as it were, by lies and fictions." Hermas, who is supposed to have been saluted by Paul (Romans xiv. 14), and whose *Pastor* was said by Origen to be inspired, and is included in the Sinaitic Codex of the New Testament, is represented as confessing to an angel that he never told the truth, whereupon his divine visitor informs him that, if he keeps the commandments now, "even the falsehoods which you formerly told in your transactions may come to be believed through the truthfulness of your present statements. For even they can become worthy of credit." Eusebius, the father of Church history, in the words of Gibbon, "indirectly confesses that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace of religion."

It is curious and suggestive that the Society of Jesus has pre-eminence for the use of deception for the cause of religion. But Jesuitism, *ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, is not confined to the followers of Ignatius Loyola. It is seen in the Anglican, who reads new interpretations into the Thirty-nine Articles, and who preaches the salvation of the heathen, although he has sworn that he holds "They also are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." It is seen in the Presbyterian, who, sworn to believe in the Westminster Confession of Faith, preaches a doctrine wholly at variance with that confession. It is seen in religionists of all kinds, who studiously conceal the facts they have learnt about the history of the Bible and of theological beliefs.

Of all forms of deception the most detestable is that practised on children. Parents, guardians, governesses, and teachers ward off undesired questions with the old fables, and the minds of the young are warped and stultified with nonsense which no mature and rational mind could entertain. But often the children grow up to see that their own teachers do not believe the fables, and the discovery gives a far greater shock to their faith than if a frank, truthful explanation had originally been given. The religious practice of deceiving the vulgar leads to a cowardly hypocrisy, which stands in the way of all rational improvement, because it will not squarely front the facts.

J. M. WHEELER.

POLITICS IN THE PULPIT.—"Before the choir begins," said the minister, "I should like to make a statement to the brethren. I am told that Deacon Jones is a candidate for the legislature. Now, under ordinary circumstances, I should advise the brethren to vote for him; but, as I am a candidate for the same place myself, it would not be good politics to do so. You who are not afraid of hot weather hereafter can vote for Brother Jones; but all who desire short sermons, small collections, and cool salvation must step over on my side."

## WAS CHRIST A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REFORMER?

(Continued from page 67.)

THE parable of "the rich man who set up greater barns," related in Luke (xii.), is another illustration of Christ's defective teachings in reference to the affairs of this life. The man in the parable proposed to enlarge his premises so that he might be able to put by increased stock of fruits and goods, and thus be in a position to take his "ease, eat, drink, and be merry." There does not appear to be any great crime in this, for he lacked room wherein to bestow his fruits, etc. (v. 17). Surely there could be no serious objection to making such careful provision for "a rainy day." Such conduct is frequently necessary to the advancement of personal comfort and general civilisation. Have not Christians in all ages, since their advent, done the same thing, when they have had the opportunity? Laying up treasures on earth, although forbidden by Christ, is often an effective precaution against starvation, and against being in old age the slave of charity. But for doing this very thing the man was told: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (v. 20). Jesus then said, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat," etc. Here we have the prominent Christian requirement of making the duties of this world subservient to the demands of a future existence put forth by one who is claimed as being a model social reformer. If it is alleged that Christ meant that the man in the parable should have distributed his fruits and goods rather than store them up, the reply is, the account does not say so. Why did not Christ, instead of making heaven the principal consideration, point out the evil influence of the monopoly of wealth upon human society? The social problems cannot be solved by indulging in speculations as to another world, of which we have had no experience. The principle sought to be enforced in this parable is evidently that the soul is of more importance than the body, and that heaven is of greater value than earth. Thoughtlessness of the things of time is directly encouraged by reference to the ravens: "For they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them" (v. 24).

It is worthy of note that Jesus never once intimated throughout his career, either by direct statement or illustration, that this world was the noblest and most desirable dwelling place for man, and that it was the home of social felicity and mutual happiness. His heart and home were in his Father's house, whither he went to prepare a place for his followers, to whom he gave a promise that he would come and receive them unto himself (John xiv. 2, 3). So little did Christ understand the philosophy of secular reform that when he condemned covetousness (which was very laudable upon his part) it was because he thought it interfered with the preparation for inhabiting "mansions in the skies," rather than in consequence of its effects upon homes on earth. He entirely overlooked the agencies that promote human comfort. The means that have been employed to produce and to advance civilisation received from him no matured consideration. If every word attributed to him had been left unuttered, not one feature of modern progress would be missing to-day. Let anyone carefully read, with an unbiassed mind, the four Gospels, and then ask himself the questions: What philosophic truth did Jesus propound? What scientific fact did he explain? What social problem did he solve? What political scheme did he unfold? The New Testament does not inform us. On the contrary, while other men, with less pretensions than himself, were active in giving the world their thoughts upon these great questions, Jesus remained silent in reference to them. It is no answer to say that to deal with the subjects was not his mission. For, if he came simply to talk about another world, at the sacrifice of the requirements of this, then my contention is made good that, whatever else he was, he certainly was no political and social reformer.

It appears to me that the gospel of Christ is a very poor one for any practical purposes, inasmuch as it never deals with the material comforts of human beings. It does not suggest any means by which the poor could obtain that power by which they could secure the amelioration of their sad condition. It is not here overlooked that Christ is credited with saying that those who sought the "Kingdom

of God" should have food, drink, etc., added unto them (Luke xii.). But, unfortunately, experience teaches that such a promise cannot be relied upon, for it is too well known that many of those persons who occupied much of their time in seeking the kingdom of God remained destitute of the necessaries of life. It was during the prevalence of this superstitious belief, and of an unreasonable reliance upon Christ, that personal misery and intellectual sterility prevailed throughout the land. For many generations the indiscriminate followers of Jesus failed to give the world any new thought, or to establish any new political or social institution; and from the Church nothing of practical secular value emanated during the fifteen centuries of its uninterrupted reign. This, however, is not all that can be fairly urged upon this point. The followers of Christ not only failed to originate any social scheme for the good of general society themselves, but they did their utmost to crush those who did. It appears almost incredible that such persistent efforts were ever made to extinguish every new thought as those recorded of Christians, when they had the power to do as they pleased. New books were despised and destroyed, and new inventions were said to be the work of the Devil. True happiness cannot co-exist with physical slavery and mental serfdom, and yet, it must be repeated, Jesus did nothing to remove these evils. His apathy towards the institution of slavery is the more strange if we accept the authority of Grütz, that Christ was connected with the Essenes, and that, to some extent, he founded his system upon theirs. By that community slavery, we are told, was prohibited; yet we read that both bond and free were one in Christ Jesus. Is not this striking evidence that Jesus had no intention to seek the removal of this inhuman blot from the history of our race?

Those persons to-day who desire to establish a relationship between Socialism and Christianity dwell with much persistency upon Christ's views as to the division of property. But let us see what are the facts of the case. Jesus told those who were willing to leave their homes, families, and lands for his "sake and the Gospels" (Mark x.), that they should receive "an hundredfold" of each in this world, besides "eternal life in the world to come." Now, this is ridiculous in the extreme; for what possible advantage could it be to any one to have his or her relatives multiplied a hundredfold? Besides, where could Christ get either a hundred mothers to replace every one that had been forsaken, or a hundred acres of land to compensate for each one that had been given up? And even supposing he could do this, what becomes of the theory of despising landed possessions? Moreover, if the smaller number and quantity were a drawback, the larger must be more so. Further, there is but little self-denial involved in parting with ten acres of land to secure a thousand. It is really surprising that the Jews did not "catch on" in this matter. Probably they saw that it was all a sham, because Christ had no means of keeping his promise. Where were the houses, land, etc., to come from? Evidently Christ had none, for he appears to have been entirely destitute of all worldly goods, having "not where to lay his head" (Matthew viii. 20). Would not such an augmentation of property be antagonistic to the principle Jesus taught on another occasion, when he said "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Matthew vi.)? No marvel that his friends thought he was "beside himself" (Mark iii. 21), or that the Jews considered "he hath a devil, and is mad" (John x. 20), and that "neither did his brethren believe in him" (John vii. 5). If any man at the present time dealt with the question of property in the same way as Christ is here represented to have done, he would not be regarded as a social reformer, but rather as a man whose intellect was far from being brilliant, and whose ideas were exceedingly confused. Christ's reply to the high priest, who asked him the question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark xiv. 61), is, to my mind, clear evidence that he was neither the political nor the social Messiah that some persons allege him to have been. His reply was, "I am; and he shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Does not this accord with his statement, "I am not of the world," and "my kingdom is not of this world"? Should not this settle at once, as a fact, that the mission of Jesus was not to be the founder of an earthly government, or the promoter of a mundane social system?

As to the idea that Christ will come, as he said, "in the clouds," that relates to the future, and has no bearing upon the present inquiry, the results of which will not be affected by either the fulfilment or the failure of that prediction. The question is not what will be, but rather what Christ did to entitle him to be classified as a secular reformer. Professor Graham, as we have seen, admits that Christ did not inaugurate State Socialism, but that he only proposed a sort of friendly society among Christians themselves. In doing even this, however, he showed himself sadly defective in the knowledge necessary to a real reformer. There exists to-day in this country an old-established Christian sect, termed Quakers, who keep a common treasury for the purpose of aiding those of their numbers who are in need. But, be it observed, they fill their treasury by industry and the result of laboring "for the meat which perisheth," the very thing that Jesus forbade. The method of the Quakers is a very charitable one, for it prevents their poorer members from going to the workhouse, or from begging in the streets, as other Christians are so often forced to do. They are enabled, by this plan of industry and of "taking thought for the morrow," to preserve their dignity and self-respect, and to receive all the advantages of assistance without being branded as paupers, who have to forfeit many rights in consequence of their poverty. This scheme of mutual aid is not based upon Christ's advice to "forsake all," under the insane idea that they will be kept alive, upon the same principle that the ravens and the lilies of the field are; on the contrary, among the Quakers all who can both "toil and spin." Jesus, in his method, counselled no sort of thrift, nor made any provision for the time of need. There is no record, that I am aware of, that any society of men ever lived upon help from heaven without labor, and due care being taken for the requirements of life. Certainly such a society does not exist in "Christian England."

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

## THE DATES OF THE BIBLE BOOKS.

(Concluded from p. 69.)

*Job*.—The date we assign to Job will depend entirely upon our ideas of the date of the Psalms, for the book of Job displays close familiarity with the book of Psalms, even with the later ones. As we shall see presently, the Psalms are not earlier than the Maccabees; so that Job cannot have been written before 100 B.C., and was probably later. The speeches of Elihu, at the end of the book, are universally recognised to be by a much later hand; so that the work, in its complete form as it exists to-day, cannot be much earlier than the Christian era.

The *Psalms* betray a unity of thought and expression which precludes the idea of their having been written at various times during an extended period. They differ widely from the ancient songs of the Hebrews, such as the Psalm of Habakkuk iii., or the fragments quoted from the book of Jasher, and they move in a circle of ideas of their own. They seem generally to refer to a period of great unrest, when Judaism was suffering from external and internal foes, such as we find during the period of the Maccabean revolt. Psalm cx. agrees in its phraseology with 1 Maccabees xiv. 41, and contains the name of Simon Maccabeus in an acrostic. But if the Psalms themselves date from the Maccabean period, the book itself must necessarily be later, for it shows traces of being an amalgamation of previous collections, even to the extent of giving two versions of the same Psalm (such as xiv. and liii.). The most probable date for the amalgamation of these different collections of Maccabean Psalms is the enlargement and rebuilding of the Temple by Herod, B.C. 14.

*Ecclesiastes*.—Dean Plumtree has shown conclusively that this work is full of Greek idioms, and that it was written by one having a complete knowledge of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies. He places it between the deaths of Zeno, the Stoic (240 B.C.), and Ptolemy Epiphanes (181 B.C.). The latter date is dictated by the particulars given in the prologue to the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus—a work which is founded upon Ecclesiastes. But Professor Grätz has shown that the text of this prologue varies widely, and that it is not found in all the copies and versions, so that it must be a late addition.

We must allow a considerable interval from the death of Zeno before the Stoical philosophy could have penetrated to the Jews. Grätz assigns Ecclesiastes to the time of Herod, 4 B.C.; and, although most critics make it older by a century and a half, yet the balance of probability is in his favor. Ecclesiastes was not admitted into the Jewish canon till 160 A.D.

The *Song of Solomon* is an amorous stage play in dialogue form. Its canonicity was denied as late as the time of Hadrian, and many Jews treated it as a secular song, which they sung at their banquets—a practice vigorously denounced by Rabbi Akiba. It is written in very late Hebrew, and contains Persian and Greek words. It can hardly be earlier than 250 B.C.

*Proverbs*.—The book of Proverbs is difficult to date, as it offers no historical allusions. Seeing, however, that the language in some parts closely resembles Aramaic, and several common Aramaic words are used, the collection must have been made at a very late period, when Hebrew was passing out of general use. It is generally admitted to be later than the return from the Exile; and, as throughout it speaks very loyally of the "king," it is probably earlier than the Maccabean revolt.

*Isaiah* is a composite work. It is generally distinguished into two parts: 1 Isaiah and 2 Isaiah. 2 Isaiah comprises chapters xl.–lxvi., and is assigned by all critics of note to a poet living in the time of Cyrus; for the whole standpoint of the poem is that of the Babylonian exile. But it must not be supposed that the first thirty-nine chapters are all of an earlier date; some are even later. The only parts of the book which profess to be by the hand of Isaiah are vi. 1–13 and viii. 1–18; but these very verses speak of the Exile, "cities wasted without inhabitants"; "the land utterly desolate." When we study the sections referring to the Assyrian period, we come upon traces of Exilic coloring. Thus, in chapter vii., Isaiah is said to have a son bearing the unique name, Shear-jashub, "the remnant shall return." And this at a time when no remnant had gone away! xiii. 1–22, xiv. 1–23, and some other passages, are generally admitted to have been written during, or shortly after, the captivity. But the latest portion is contained in chapters xxiv.–xxvii. These chapters differ widely from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or the Exilic writings. The seemingly historical allusions are really symbolical, and cannot be made to square with our knowledge of ancient history. The theological views of the writer accord more with those of the book of Daniel than any other Old Testament writer. xxiv. 21 teaches of guardian angels similar to those of the Persians and Jews in Daniel; and xxvi. 19 announces the resurrection, another late Jewish doctrine. xxvi. 20 advises the Jews to hide themselves for a while till the anger of Yahveh is passed, thus implying that it was written at a time of trouble. These points can hardly be accidental, and we are therefore justified in assigning these chapters to the Maccabean period, 165 B.C. Consequently, 1 Isaiah is a collection of prophecies, formed at the very earliest 160 B.C.; and the book was completed by the addition of 2 Isaiah at some unknown later period.

*Jeremiah*.—Strictly speaking, the present Hebrew book of Jeremiah is later than the Christian era. The Septuagint version differs widely from it in the arrangement of the prophecies, and in bulk, for it is quite a third smaller. So that the Greek translators must have had a different and shorter Hebrew text before them. This text, however, was not entirely by the hand of Jeremiah, for l. 2 to li. 50 are recognised as having been written after the Exile; while chapters xxvii. to xxix. differ in style and orthography from the rest of the book, and must have been taken from a post-Exilic source. Therefore, these prophecies cannot have been collected together till somewhere about 500 B.C.

*Ezekiel* is one of the most homogeneous books in the Old Testament, and we are justified in taking it as having reached its present form about 550 B.C. Its canonicity was disputed by some of the Rabbins on the ground of its divergence from the Pentateuch, for it is really a link between the Deuteronomist and the Priestly Codes; and, while advancing beyond the former, it falls obviously short of the latter.

*Daniel* was written in the early part of 165 B.C. *Hosea* professes to have been written in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and Jeroboam, King of Israel. But Jeroboam was not the

contemporary of these other kings; and Hosea, a prophet of northern Israel, is extremely unlikely to have dated his productions by the reigns of kings of Judah. The idea of the editor who prefixed this title appears to have been to make Hosea a contemporary of Isaiah, who is credited with the same date (Isaiah i. 1). Hosea iii. 4 clearly refers to the destruction of Samaria, and must be dated about 720 B.C.

*Joel* is dated in the margin of our Bibles as 800 B.C. As, however, he is quite silent about the kingdom of Israel, the Assyrians, or Babylonians, but mentions the Greeks, and speaks of the temple as though it were standing, and services regularly carried on in it, we can only conclude that he lived in the early days of the Greek domination, about 300 B.C.

*Amos* is the earliest book in the Bible. It is dated "two years before the earthquake" which happened in the joint reigns of Azariah of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel; probably about 750 B.C.

*Obadiah* mentions "Sepharad," which is shown by the cuneiform inscriptions to have been the ancient name of Phrygia, where Jews were settled by the early Greek kings; and he alludes explicitly to the exploits of Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C., to which year the book must be referred.

*Jonah*.—The book of *Jonah* is referred to in the New Testament, and must have been well known when the Gospels were written. Modern critics see in it an allegory. *Jonah* typifies the Jewish nation, which has a mission from Yahveh to preach to the world. Judah neglects his mission, and is, therefore, swallowed up by Babylon (compare Jeremiah li. 34); but, after being disgorged by the monster, he preaches to the Gentiles and saves them from the threatened wrath of Yahveh. But, if this explanation be true, to what period must we assign the book of *Jonah*? It does not accord with the time of Ezra, for Ezra has no friendly feeling for the Gentiles; and his adversaries had no idea of evangelising the heathen either. Not until the beginning of the Christian era do we find the Jews anxious to spread a knowledge of the law among the Gentiles; and then it is only the sect of the Pharisees, who are described by the Evangelist as "moving heaven and earth to gain one proselyte" (Matthew xxiii. 15). Consequently we must consider the book of *Jonah* to be a kind of missionary tract, circulating at the Jewish May Meetings, and inculcating the conversion of the heathen. It may probably be dated about 50 B.C., or a little later.

*Micah* professes to have been composed in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; but this can only refer to chaps. i. to v. Ewald has shown that vi. to vii. 6 is by a later hand, about the time of Manasseh; while Wellhausen shows vii. 7-20 to date from the Babylonian captivity, about 550 B.C. Thus the book cannot have been compiled before that date.

*Nahum* is a poem, celebrating the destruction of Nineveh in 606 B.C., and was most probably written shortly after that event.

*Habakkuk* is in two parts—one prose, the other poetry. He wrote before the Exile, but how long before is a matter of doubt. We will put him 600 B.C.

*Zephaniah* is dated, by the title in the reign of Josiah, about 620 B.C.

*Haggai* gives its date in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, 520 B.C.

*Zechariah* consists of prophecies by at least two different hands. In the title *Zechariah* is styled the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. But in Ezra v. 1, vi. 14, he is "Zechariah, son of Iddo." Knobel suggests a confusion with *Zechariah*, son of Berechiah, mentioned in Isaiah viii. 2.\* Another *Zechariah*, son of Berechiah, is mentioned by Josephus as having been murdered in the temple shortly before the death of Nero; and he is also referred to in Matthew xxiii. 35. *Zechariah* i. to viii. are dated in the second and fourth years of Darius I.—i.e., 520 and 518 B.C. But the rest of the book is by an entirely different writer.

Professor Wellhausen, in his article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, points out that chapters ix. to xiv. can best be explained as having been written during the time of the Maccabees; but he hesitates to accept this conclusion, as it would imply too late a date for the formation of the canon of the Minor Prophets. As, however, it appears that

*Obadiah* must, from historical reasons, be dated in the time of the Maccabees, this objection disappears. Therefore, *Zechariah*, as a whole, must date from 160 B.C.

*Malachi* is part of the book of *Zechariah*, and has only been separated from it in order to make up the number of twelve minor prophets. Its title is in the same form as *Zechariah* ix. 1, xii. 1. "Malachi" is not a Hebrew name, but merely means "my messenger." The Septuagint has "The word of the Lord by his messenger," which shows that the translator read a *Vau*, instead of *Yod*, as in the present Hebrew text. The older Jews recognised perfectly that *Malachi* was not a proper name; for the Targum of Jonathan assigns this prophecy to Ezra, and the Talmud to Mordecai, which also affords proof that the real author was unknown.

CHILPERIC.

## NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD.

THEY say England is a Christian country. If the country thinks this a desirable and honorable appellation, let it not question the justness of its application; if Christians consider the country a credit and a testimonial to their religion, let them not cavil at the fitness of the description. But the world is governed by terms, and ruled by appearances. The use of the word Christian in the present age in this country provides a clothing of respectability, and how necessary it is to assume respectability—society respectability—even if the quality be not really possessed, is the knowledge of the least experienced. There may, nevertheless, be an amount of accuracy in the observation that England is a Christian country. When we are brave enough to throw off our hypocritical airs and fictitious assumptions, and when we release ourselves from patriotic influences and come to impartially examine ourselves as a nation, we confess that one of the most respected and cherished institutions in England is that of drunkenness; that we support living monuments and systems which speak our licentiousness; that selfishness is soundly ingrained in our national character; that ingratitude is one of our distinguishing characteristics, and that avarice and hypocrisy are two vices with which we are not altogether unacquainted. Finally, we confess that, as a nation, we are marked for our religious proclivities. England is a Christian country. Of course. Last year our Christian legislators devoted over £21,000,000 of the country's funds for the support of the army, and over £18,000,000 for the navy, two "branches of the public service" whose functions are the destruction of human life. These vast sums, which are utilised for the maintenance of men trained in the use of deadly instruments, seem to regulate the propagation of the belief that it is glorious to engage in the slaughter of fellow men if the whims and fancies of kings and governments are thereby appeased, and the expenditure of so many millions on the implements of war can be taken to authorise on behalf of the nation the savage custom of honoring those who have devastated countries, wrecked homes, and washed their hands in human blood. The men who now so ruthlessly squander the national finances may one day be reproached for encouraging the gratification of the base and brutal instincts of men, for stifling their higher passions, for blasting their feelings of love, and for establishing their fellowship with the beasts. But that time is not yet.

That war is a curse—perhaps a necessary one under present conditions—is acknowledged by all classes to-day, and even Christian clergymen wax indignant in their denunciation of it. What value may be attached to their indignation can be estimated when we read that a sum of more than £58,000 was entered in the army estimates of last year for the remuneration of chaplains, whose duty it is, presumably, to accompany regiments to the battlefield in time of war, and pray for the defeat and slaughter of the opposing forces. There can be no doubt that England is a Christian country.

The National Debt of England is now fixed at a figure above £587,000,000. The greater part of this huge debt has been incurred by past wars, and more than half of the taxation which is levied on the country to-day is the price Englishmen have to pay for the unrighteous shedding of blood in the past and the preparation for similar sanguinary exploits in the future. Europe, which is for the most part

\* The present Hebrew text has *Jeberchiah*, but the name is still *Berechiah* in the Septuagint.

Christian, is saddled with the sum of £200,000,000 per annum for the maintenance of vast armaments, a similar sum representing the interest which has to be paid on the debt incurred for previous wars.

If it were but calmly considered what good might be accomplished were these immense sums diverted from their present purposes, how much better in the matter of moral and intellectual strength nations would become, and how the brutal instincts of man could be subjugated and his affections cultivated were countries not cursed with the incentive to conflict, surely some great effort would be made by which greater securities for peace would be provided in the future. The patriotic Englishman is ever ready with the unholy cry that peace can only be promoted by keeping England armed to the teeth. Fancy, preparation for war being the best manner to ensure peace! Certainly in the present state of universal armament it would be absurd for any one country to divest itself of arms; but, viewed from an impartial standpoint, is the boasted aim of England to maintain a naval fleet equal to that of any other three combined more moral than the enforced militarism of continental countries? This anxiety on the part of one particular nation to equal in power the combined forces of any number of other nations is really the cause of the maintenance of such vast military and naval bodies, and constitutes, further, the principal danger to international peace. Is England, then, responsible for the present condition of armed Europe?

How well can we remember that oftentimes in our recent history a body of sensationalists have, for party or commercial purposes, raised a scare as to England's insecurity, and that many millions have been consequently expended on additions to the navy and the army. And how well do we also remember the sequels: Foreign countries have increased their armaments in a similar degree, and eventually our relations with foreign powers have been exactly the same as they were before the last big expenditure had been made. There is no soundness in the contention that England must arm herself so lavishly for the mere purpose of protection. The incentive of war lies in the maintenance of big armed forces. Lord Rosebery bore witness to the truth of this in his speech at Guildhall last November. He said: "There are three elements in the present situation which are not altogether reassuring in the interests of peace. One is those enormous armaments that roll up like snowballs, and snowballs which seem never to end, and which are, I freely acknowledge, in their essence, being territorial armies, measures of defence, and not of defiance; but there are in these great armaments some danger to peace itself. In the first place, there is the feeling that you cannot for ever perfect tools of great precision, of great expense, without sometimes having the wish to test them and to use them; and, in the second place, there is the still greater danger that the people who have to bear the burden of these armaments, weary of the blood and taxation that they involve, may some day say it will be better to put an end to this long-continued pressure and put all to the hazard of the die."

Such is the alarm of an English Prime Minister after centuries of religious education and domination. Had Agnostics, Atheists, and others of unorthodox bearings been the guardians of the country's fortunes, their descendants would have been long ago now swept from power, on the score that existing conditions were sufficient commentaries on the tendencies of their teachings. But Agnostics and anti-Christians have not been in power, and they have not moulded the fortunes of the country. England has given many of her best sons, and almost all of her governors and legislators, as partisans of that creed "in whose name," Mr. John Morley declares, "more human blood has been violently shed than in any other cause whatever." England has been subject to the sole direction and care of the disciples of one who, if we are to believe the Gospels, stated it was his mission to bring a sword upon earth, and not establish peace. Surely about the only thing he ever succeeded in doing! And not only has the long-continued establishment of Christianity failed to prevent nations battling one against the other with cannons, powder, and bayonets, on the slightest and most imaginary provocations, but its spirit of racial and class hatred, of personal animosity, uncharitableness, and persecution has permeated individual natures. In the wake of religion there lurk the monsters of oppression, tyranny, and war. It is said that the shedding of innocent blood

was necessary for the world's salvation; the adherents of this belief have been guilty of the shedding of much innocent blood since the event in which they place so much concern. Be a household ever so happy and contented, the introduction of religion invariably tends to discord and sorrow; it turns the father against the son, the daughter against the mother, the brother against the sister. Be a community ever so peaceable, amicable, and loving, a bitter spirit of sectarianism is created, and riot and unrest occur in the event of religion obtaining a hold in its midst.

Mr. W. T. Stead, who is very cold-blooded at times in criticising his friends, recently wrote: "There are people, and good people too, who will make a prayer-meeting as much a field for the indulgence of their pugnacious instincts as Von Moltke and Yamagata made of the districts in which their armies operated. Indeed, there would often be a great deal more of the true Christian spirit in some of our little meeting-places if class leaders and officials could liberate their embittered sentiments by a good bout of fisticuffs, instead of taking them to the throne of grace and praying at each other in language the venom of which is very imperfectly concealed by conventional phraseology and a copious veneer of scriptural texts. There is nothing more familiar to those who are acquainted with the manifestations of the old Adam under a Christian cloak than the dexterity with which he can use texts from the Old Testament and the New, as the soldier uses the bomb, or the sailor his torpedo-boat. The spirit is there, full of wrath and bitterness and rivalry and all uncharitableness; and Diotrophes, in the class, or in chapel, or in church, is quite as much a child of the devil as any swashbuckler of them all." He came not to bring peace. Verily hath Christ succeeded, and truly is England a Christian country.

Arbitration, no doubt, is a very desirable substitute for war. The arbitrament of reason is preferable to the arbitrament of the sword; but the danger lies in the likelihood that those who are worsted in the reasoning may yet resort to the argument of the sword. International peace, however, will scarcely be brought about by deputations and public meetings. Not until nations cease to be cradled in the hatred of "foreigners," until children are trained no more in racial exclusiveness and affection for the trappings of war, and until men are educated out of the false ideas of the glories of slaughter, will arbitration be possible. It will only be brought about by the gradual and systematic eradication of the pugnacious instincts of man; for, while people of the same race, blood, and religion perpetually fall foul of one another, there will exist little probability of their becoming more amicable to those of a different nation, blood, and creed.

FRED WILSON.

## ACID DROPS.

MR. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL has done some "Birrelling" in the *Nineteenth Century*. He remarks that first-class Freethinkers are caressed by society and hob-a-nob with bishops, while second-class Freethinkers are insulted and persecuted. Charles Bradlaugh belonged to the second-class, says Mr. Birrell. His life was a hard one, and he was "abused, but never criticised." "In a single sentence," writes Mr. Birrell, "he was never taught the extent of his own ignorance." Perhaps not. But we doubt if Mr. Birrell would have been able to teach him. Of all the impertinence in the world there is none so insufferable as the impertinence of "culture."

Now that Hugh Price Hughes is back again his "all very fine and large" style is spread over the *Methodist Times*. His adjectives, and especially his adverbs, are such as only a religious paper would tolerate. Every epithet, every description, is superlative. Mr. Hughes scorns such a miserable word as "greatly," and condescends to nothing less than "immensely." His cocksureness, too, is enough to startle a Macaulay. He is in an indentured partnership with God Almighty. Every servant of God, every true friend of Christ, every real promoter of the Kingdom of Heaven will (to put it briefly) agree on all points with the editor of the *Methodist Times*.

It is a significant fact that Mr. Hughes's paper is lusty in its praise of Sir William Harcourt, and steadily distrustful of Lord Rosebery. Sir William flatters the Nonconformist Conscience; Lord Rosebery is too proud to do anything of the kind. This is the whole explanation.

A great cause of the "crushing defeat of the Liberal party" at Evesham, according to Mr. Hughes, is "the failure of Lord Rosebery to arouse the moral enthusiasm of the Nonconformists." Poor creatures! Cannot they vote straight, not to say early and often, unless Lord Rosebery has his galvanic battery in constant application to their "moral enthusiasm"? We should have thought their own weekly organs supplied enough "arousing."

"Mr. Gladstone knew perfectly well, as he often confessed," says the *Methodist Times*, "that the Nonconformists were the backbone of the army of progress in England." Every Nonconformist on reading this should grow two inches taller. But is it true? Well, it all depends on what is meant by "progress." The "progress" of the Nonconformist Conscience means the reduction of English life to a monotonous drab, only relieved by tea-fights and muffin-struggles, and the excitement of a sermon by Mr. Hughes.

Nonconformists are the backbone of the army of progress, are they? Let us take an illustration. The last Wesleyan Methodist Conference was startled by the portent of a lady delegate. A special committee was appointed to consider this tremendous novelty. Should women be admitted to the Conference, or should they not? This committee met in the Centenary Hall recently, sat in the morning, adjourned for lunch, and sat again in the afternoon. At last it came to a decision, by a majority of sixteen to eleven, that women should be admitted to the Conference. The pill was coated, however, with the comforting assurance that "it is not probable that many women will be so elected." It was also pointed out that a delegation to the Conference is only "a lay office." The male sex is still to monopolise the pulpit, and every other function that has any salary attached to it.

This is how the Nonconformists assert themselves as the backbone of the army of progress. Secular Societies settled this woman question long ago; or rather they never regarded it as open. It did not occur to them that there was any reason why women, if they chose, should not be as useful as men; or any reason why they should be debarred, either by law or custom, from any office they were capable of filling. This was one of the things which John Stuart Mill admired in our movement. It is amusing to Secularists to see the Nonconformist backbone of the army of progress in a state of agitation over such a simple matter. They can only lift their eyebrows, and exclaim, "What a backbone!"

The *Crescent*, noticing the case of Mr. Wise, of Kansas, who is to be tried for sending a passage from the Bible (Isaiah xxxvi. 12) on a postcard, says: "What a contrast there is between this Christian Bible, with its plethora of filthy and disgusting passages, and the Holy Koran, not a single line whereof contains a word which would bring a blush to the cheek of the most modest virgin."

My readers credit me with power to do a great deal, but I mistrust my ability to get the Book of Common Prayer revised, or even to get the Psalter re-edited. I am obliged to say this, because a gentleman in the country has come to me for assistance in getting the imprecatory passages in the Psalms omitted from the public services of the Church. He cites such verses as the following:—

"55. v. 16.—Let death come hastily upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.

"58. v. 6.—Break their teeth, O God, in their mouths.

"58. v. 9.—The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his footsteps in the blood of the ungodly.

"68. v. 23.—That thy foot may be dipped in [the blood of thine enemies, and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same.

"109. v. 9.—Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread.

"109. v. 11.—Let there be no man to pity him, nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children."—*Truth*.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes said that the mind of the bigot is like the pupil of the eye—the more light you throw into it, the smaller it grows.

Frank Marscamp is a scamp who has marred the fortunes of several servant girls, and who is now retired for eighteen months at the public expense. Detective Sergeant Ward testified that the prisoner had been a speaker at religious meetings in Hyde Park.

A Glasgow chemist had a touching appeal from a callow youngster on Sunday. "Gimme a penn'orth o' plaister, mister." "All right, my boy. Been cycling on Sunday, eh?" "Naw, I wis shavin' for the Sunday-schule!"

The Pope asks the American bishops to teach journalists to have respect for religion; but journalists are an

intractable lot, and even those connected with Catholic papers sometimes consider their own office superior to that of a bishop.

When the convict first arrived at Princetown it struck him as rather appropriate to hear the warder whistling that lovely air, "Abide with me."

A church at Marsala was unroofed during a cyclone, and, a marriage being in progress, the bride was fatally crushed by the falling debris.

A writer in the *Living Church* analyses the returns of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, and shows that there are 4,366 churches with less than 100 communicants each, 1,506 having between 100 and 200, twenty-four with 1,000, two with over 2,000 and one with over 3,000 communicants.

The American House of Bishops, assembled in Council at New York, have issued a pastoral letter in opposition to the growing rationalism and latitudinarianism. They affirm that all who minister in holy things must hold and teach the Incarnation; that Jesus Christ was, "by the operation of the Holy Ghost, made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary, his mother, and that without spot of sin." They say: "Unless our Lord Jesus Christ is firmly held to be God's own true and proper Son, equal to the Father as touching his godhead, and to be also the true Son of the Blessed Virgin, by miraculous conception and birth, taking our very manhood of her substance, we sinners have no true and adequate mediator; our nature has no restored union with God; we have no sacrifice for our sins in full atonement and propitiation, holy and acceptable to God."

They further affirm that the Holy Scriptures are the word of God, and "any instruction," say they, "or any study which makes any part of the Bible less authoritative than it really is, which weakens faith in its inspiration, which tends to eliminate Christ from the utterances of the Prophets, or which leads a man to think of miracles with a half-suppressed scepticism, is a pernicious instruction and a pernicious study."

The *Church Times* rejoices over this piece of mediaevalism, and says: "Seeing how keenly the same truths have been attacked in our own country, and how much many ill-balanced minds have suffered in consequence, the present would seem to offer a fitting opportunity for the Bishops of the Church in England to issue a similar authoritative utterance, whereby the weak may be strengthened, and the faith of the Church may be declared without gainsaying." This would, at any rate, make the members of the Broad Church feel uncomfortable, and that would be a matter of rejoicing to the *Church Times*.

In the matter of the "Armenian atrocities," it appears the atrocities were not always the work of the "unspeakable Turk." The special correspondent of the *Daily News* says: "I believe there is no doubt of the fact that certain of these Armenian conspirators arranged to murder the Rev. Dr. Edward Riggs and two other American missionaries at Marsovan, and fasten the blame upon the Turks, in order that, as they imagined, the United States might inflict summary punishment upon the Turkish Government."

The Turks allege that Armenians have inflicted shocking outrages upon Turkish men and women, and, says the correspondent, "from what is already known of conspiracy methods, it is quite likely that the assertion is true."

In the case of an old man arrested for conspiracy, says the writer, "it was shown at the trial that the charge against him was a piece of religious spite, not of Moslem against Christian, but of Presbyterian against Baptist. There had had been a denominational dispute of some sort or other, and this was the way in which it was settled. The facts in this case will suggest to the person of impartial mind that the wholesale arrests that have been filling the wretched prisons of Armenia for several months past may not all be the work of the unregenerate Turk, and that controversial Presbyterians and Baptists may possibly be deciding knotty points of doctrinal usage with a thoroughness strangely suggestive of the early religious history of England and America."

Religion does not always impress the youthful mind—at least, not seriously. A bright youngster of eight, near Manchester, coming home from Sunday-school, was asked by his mother what he had learned. He replied: "Oh, about Jesus, the man that does the tricks."

Mr. R. H. Charles, who continues to write on the Syriac Gospels in the *Academy*, now thinks that verses 2 to 17 of Matthew i. are, in this version, an interpolation. We should say that the parties who did not scruple at this did not

stick at much else. What a pity God does not clear up all difficulties by editing an infallible version of his revelation himself.

Mr. Bell, in his book on *Obeah*, says that candles are purchased from the Romish priests under the belief that they bring down a curse on an enemy's head. He says: "This, I fear, is quite a common thing, and frequently have I heard the threat used, 'I go to put a candle on your head.'"

Another characteristic of the West Indian negro is thus related by Mr. Bell: "A nigger begins a phrase with 'Please God,' in the same spirit as he generally ends it with a 'Damn it!' and I should not wonder if, when passing an especially tempting bunch of plantains within reach, he might find himself saying: 'Please God, I go tief dat plantain to-night?'"

A nice man of God is the Rev. Herbert Gregory, formerly of Southport, and afterwards curate of St. Michael's, Manchester. His wife, in the Divorce Court, gave evidence of brutal ill-treatment, and disgusting, indecent language. He spat in her face, and told her that no one cared for a married curate, and that if he had not married her he could have married some rich woman who would have kept him. The man of God elected to give evidence, but was threatened by Lord Lopes with an indictment for perjury. A decree nisi, with costs, was granted to his wife.

The Rev. Mr. Mackey, curate of St. Margaret's, Plumstead, endeavored to obtain a divorce from his wife, but the jury considered there had been wilful neglect of such a kind as to conduce to adultery, and the petition was dismissed with costs.

In another divorce case, that of *Aubourg v. Aubourg*, the wife prays for the dissolution of her marriage on the ground of the adultery of her husband, who was a Sunday-school Superintendent, with one of the young lady teachers.

That the constant contemplation of one subject, to the exclusion of all others, is apt to play sad havoc with the reasoning faculties is shown by a lecture recently delivered at Milton Hall, Kentish Town, by Mr. Coote, the Secretary of the National Vigilance Society. After expressing his belief that the bulk of our juvenile population gratify their prurient tastes by stealthy perusals of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Zola's *Nana*, although most of us labor under the delusion that boys much prefer literature of the Dick Turpin sort, Mr. Coote, in answer to questions, said "that, in his opinion, none of the so-called filthy stories in the Bible could be considered indecent, from the fact that they were inspired."

After the laughter occasioned by this statement had subsided, Mr. Coote, who is not easily abashed, inquired in tones of cheery optimism, "how any story could be considered nasty that was found within the pages of the grandest, noblest, best book ever in the world?" When asked why, if this was so, it had been thought necessary to publish a children's edition of the Bible with all the suggestive passages and stories eliminated, Mr. Coote said: "Thank God I have not sunk so low as to question the morality of my maker's own book," and that he pitied any person who had. This reply provoked a perfect avalanche of awkward questioning, which, it is only fair to state, Mr. Coote endured with Christian-like resignation and pious fortitude. "Laugh as much as you please," he cried, "I do not mind, the Holy Ghost is with me." One gentleman asked him "Whether, in the event of the Empire presenting a tableau representing the expulsion of Eve from the Garden of Eden, he would consider that indecent?" Another wanted to know "What sort of a tableau Mr. Coote thought Lot sleeping with his daughters would make?" To neither of these questions did Mr. Coote vouchsafe a reply.

The schoolmaster has been abroad for a long while now, yet it appears that there is a considerable percentage of the world's inhabitants who cannot yet read, and, alas! some who can have no opportunities for perusing God's Word. Yet the Holy Bible is the sole revelation of truth and duty to the world, and he who dies ignorant of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for sin must be eternally roasted.

The Romish Church is pledged by Papal Bulls to the authenticity of the Holy House at Loretto having been transported from Nazareth to Italy. Accordingly, we are not surprised to find an English Catholic paper seriously arguing that the stones are identical with others found at Nazareth. The trouble is that the monks at Nazareth say the Holy House is still there, and never has been shifted.

The truth about the House of Loretto is probably that when the Moslems held Palestine a good source of revenue was cut off from the monks for showing the birthplace of

Jesus, and they accordingly declared that it had been removed bodily in the night by angels to Italy.

In one of E. Fitzgerald's letters to Fanny Kemble, published in this month's *Temple Bar*, he narrates the following, which was told him by "a pious but humorous man":—

Scene.—Country church on Winter's Evening. Congregation, with the Old Hundredth ready for the parson to give out some Dismissal Words.

Good old Parson (not at all meaning rhyme)—"The light has grown so very dim, I scarce can see to read the hymn!"

Congregation, taking it up, to the first half of the Old Hundredth:

The Light has grown so very dim,  
I scarce can see to read the Hymn.

Pause, as usual. Parson (mildly impatient)—"I did not mean to read a hymn; I only meant my eyes were dim."

Congregation, to second part of Old Hundredth:

I did not mean to read a Hymn;  
I only meant my eyes were dim.

Parson, out of patience, etc.:

I didn't mean a Hymn at all—  
I think the Devil's in you all.

Henry Mansfield, a chorister at St. Mary's, Moorfields, died in the church while the service was proceeding.

Bishop Harold Browne used to relate, with great amusement, how, coming out of church on Trinity Sunday morning, after having preached as clearly as he could on the topic of the day, an old woman stopped him in the road to thank him for his "beautiful sermon," "for," said she, quite earnestly, "I never did see so clear before how there were three Gods!"

Mr. Symes, referring in the *Liberator* to the reading of the new Syriac Gospel that Joseph begat Jesus, says: "Unitarians and some others will be delighted to learn that Mary was not false to her spouse, that Jesus was lawfully begotten, and that the old gospel scandal is at length removed. But the orthodox will be in a terrible rage, and will perhaps send a few extra persons on to hell at once for daring to bring to light so decent a blasphemy. The ultrapians would rather keep up the old fiction and regard Mary as—well, you know, you know—than adopt this decent record. It is so shocking, don't you see, to believe that Jesus was naturally and lawfully begotten. It takes away all the romance of his origin, and leaves you with—nothing in particular, to save your immortal soul upon." The *Liberator*, by the way, reprints entirely what the *Freethinker* had to say on the subject of this Syriac Gospel.

The disaster of the "Elbe" on our coast was even more appalling than the flooded pit of the Diglake Colliery. A terrible shipwreck like this should bring home to the least thinking how little reliance is to be placed on providence for safeguarding the lives of men, women, and children.

The parish church of Whittington, near Chesterfield, has been burnt down. One of the firemen, who endeavored to save the building, was struck by masses of falling stone, and was seriously injured.

A writer in the *Sunday Times* says that in democratic New York certain members of the plutocracy are so exclusive that they will not take the Communion in common with their fellow Christians. A "Sanitary Communion Outfit Company" has been started, which provides racks containing rows of small goblets, and the officiating priest tenders the rack, from which each one takes his own glass. This is Christianity as brought up to date.

The *Church Times* notes with alarm that, whereas the general marriage-rate shows a decrease, the marriage-rate in the case of divorces shows a marked increase. It urges that clergymen should not perform such marriages even in the case of innocent parties.

Whether Mr. Impey, the rejected of Evesham, is right as to the decadence of Dissent there, it is certain that the old type of Evangelical Puritanism, which was to the front in the last generation, is now pretty much in the background. As the rottenness of the Church becomes more evident, it is compelled to put on more paint and varnish. The old dogmas being incredible, musical and other attractions are resorted to in order to maintain the prestige of religion. The old type of religionist, who lived his religion, and was ready to die for it, is almost extinct.

Scene: Camp-meeting: young man coming down from the mourner's bench. Anxious Friend (grasping him by the hand)—"Is it well with your soul, brother?" Young Man (ruefully)—"Yes, but I've lost my hat."



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 10, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London :— 11.30, "The Government Program"; 7, "Humors and Absurdities of the Life of Christ."

Wednesday, February 6, Hall of Science, Old-street, E.C. :— "Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice.'"

February 17 and 24, Hall of Science.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—February 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.

A. LEVITT.—Thanks for cuttings.

A. LEWIS.—We will try to find the reference and let you know.

PLODDER.—There are plenty of English Grammars. Almost any would serve your turn. Professor Bain's is a good book on English Composition. We advise you not to waste a great deal of time on such studies. Just master the chief rules, and then study with the utmost care some picked passages from a few of our greatest writers.

W. B. JEVONS.—Paper subscription handed to Mr. Forder, and N.S.S. subscription to Miss Vance. Thanks for your good wishes.

A. HINDLEY.—Glad to have your good opinion. Mr. Foote is not likely to imitate the example of M. Casimir-Perier. The French President resigned justly, finding the constitution gave him responsibility without power. Happily the N.S.S. constitution gives the President more authority, which he is resolved to exercise while he holds the office. Many tell us, as you do, the *Freethinker* improves in quality. We should like it to improve proportionately in circulation.

DARIUS.—The article shall appear. Glad you opine that the *Freethinker* "grows steadily better." The *Westminster Review* article on the Blasphemy Laws is from the pen of Mr. Taylor, a member of the N.S.S. Manchester Branch. We shall deal with it next week.

J. DRAFER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

E. S.—(1) Christians never found out that Freethought objections to their faith were based upon caricatures of its doctrines until they had lost the chief part of their power to persecute. Besides, the Christians accuse each other of caricaturing the teaching of the Bible. Read what Catholics say of Protestants and Protestants of Catholics, and what the various Protestant sects say of each other. (2) We have never denied the part played by Christians like Wilberforce, Clarkson, and Sharp in the abolition of slavery; but other Christians upheld slavery; and, if both sides appealed to the Bible, it shows what a lucid text-book of morality is "Holy Writ."

A. THORNTON.—See "Acid Drops."

W. RUDD.—We cannot comment on the case until it is concluded. The report you send us ends with "continued on p. 8."

W. MOLE.—We think you will find the authority for the paragraph about the Rev. J. Hunt in the *English Churchman*.

S. T. PHILLIPS.—The texts you require are probably Genesis i. 2; Psalm cxlviii. 16, 17; Job xxviii. 9-11; Isaiah xlv. 7. You should furnish yourself with a copy of our *Bible Handbook*.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges :— F. Jones, 2s. 6d.; W. V. Keeble, 5s.; M. E. M., 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Lupton, 5s.; G. Willock, 6s.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—Miss Annie Brown, secretary, acknowledges :—W. H. Baker, 2s. 6d.; E. Robins, 5s. The 5s. acknowledged to J. W. Hancock should read Mrs. Hancock.

W. H. WHITNEY.—Thanks for the information.

W. H. HARRAP.—Draconian law is the policy of impatience, and it always increases the evils it would remove. Mr. Bradlaugh would never have brought in your bill to make adultery punishable with long terms of penal servitude. That was the old Christian plan of reformation, and history shows what came of it. Does it not occur to you how many women with adulterous husbands (or vice versa) would suffer almost anything rather than take the first step in sending the fathers of their children to convict prisons? Only the more callous would obtain redress under your scheme. You forget that wisdom, not indignation, must prescribe the remedies for social evils.

J. KEAST.—Secularists who say the work is done simply mean they are tired of doing it. Go forward, and leave the "rest-and-be-thankful" to their inglorious repose.

C. DOGG.—All right.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—We will gladly advertise the little volume for you, as a small acknowledgment of your clever contributions.

A. N. STAGER.—Better be glad of the good that has been done than lament it is no more. It is never any use depending on the majority. Whenever any good work is being done we may also be sure that some good man or two are really doing it. Active and zealous men find this out and get disheartened; and thus pay for a lesson they might have learned gratuitously.

WELL-WISHER.—There is still a deficit on the Watts Election Fund, for which we are personally responsible. Any who can assist to clear it off will save us from a loss which we can ill afford.

D. F. GLOAK.—Your lecture notices arrive as we are going to press—too late.

A. CLARK.—The arrangement was only one to tide over a present difficulty with the least possible unpleasantness. A strong feeling prevailed on the Executive, as it prevailed outside in the party generally, that the Hall of Science Club, on its existing basis, should be abolished, and that the social element there should be entirely confined to the members of the National Secular Society. This view was shared by the Directors, who intend, if they have the opportunity, to bring about this alteration, and thus to make the establishment worthier of our party's aims and objects. Unfortunately it is not possible to be "as swift as meditation" in the sphere of action; and the difficulty is all the greater in consequence of some recent, and different, complications, which the Directors have had to face, and which we shall probably have to write about next week in connection with the announcement already promised, and which we have been obliged to delay.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—The Rad—Vegetarian Messenger—Liberator—Two Worlds—Truthseeker—Secular Thought—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—De Dageraad—Manchester Spy—Liberty—Open Court—Bobcaygeon Independent—Isle of Man Times—Herts Leader—Reynolds's Newspaper—Church Reformer.

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.

## DARWIN AND MISSIONS.

ABOUT the time of the death of Charles Darwin a paragraph went round the religious journals to the effect that, when the great naturalist heard of the success of the mission to the Yahgans, or coast Indians, of Tierra-del-Fuego, he was so struck that he contributed to the funds of the Church Missionary Society to the day of his death. A writer in the current number of *Scribner's Magazine* gives a sad sequel to this story; for it appears that the missionising of the Tierra-del-Fuegians has resulted in their virtual extinction. Whatever good was worked by the missionaries, their efforts have been fatal to their poor converts.

It was in 1870 that the first missionary landed, to make his home among the natives. "He was backed by a great society, and assisted by white men and women who believed as he did. To improve the Yahgans, warm houses were built to take the place of twig wigwams. Some of the Yahgans were taught to dig, to plant, to saw lumber, and so on. In return for furs and labor on the missionary plot of ground, the Yahgans received clothing and soap, which they were taught to use. An orphanage was erected, where orphan children were entirely supported.

"But the tribe had been ruined by its friends. The Indians, who had thrived when naked and living on whale-blubber, did not thrive as clothed farm-laborers, living on bread. The woollens of the whites were less efficient as clothing than whale-oil. Children, who had been sturdy and strong when naked in the storms of sleet, died when well-dressed and living in a warm orphanage; every child taken into it died. Pneumonia and consumption became plagues.

"In 1871 there were three thousand Yahgans; in 1894 there were less than three hundred. In 1871 every man among them was ready and eager to stand up and fight for his home, man-fashion. Of those that the traveller now may see, every soul is a cowering, hypocritical beggar. The attempt to change a tribe of wandering fishermen into farmers failed utterly. Nature had not fashioned them so."\*

\* "The End of the Continent," by John R. Spears, *Scribner's Magazine*, February, 1895.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE libel case, affecting the reputation of the London Hall of Science—Smith v. Snow and another—will be tried soon after this week's *Freethinker* goes to press. Our next week's issue will contain a full report of the proceedings. We shall print a large edition, so that our readers may take extra copies for distribution among their friends.

The bitter weather at Manchester thinned Mr. Foote's morning audience on Sunday, but there was an improvement in the afternoon, and the hall was filled in the evening, when the audience was very enthusiastic. Mr. Taylor presided on all three occasions. All copies of the *Freethinker* were sold out in the afternoon.

Manchester Freethinkers have long put up with the ridiculous antics of a certain Christian who has always abused the opportunity for discussion. Those who were most annoyed by his performances will be glad to know that he has now been refused admittance. He came in on Sunday morning without a ticket, and after a little scene he was ejected with the least possible violence.

Mr. Foote is engaged for three Sundays at the London Hall of Science. To-day (Feb. 10) he lectures in the morning on "The Government Program," and in the evening on "Humors and Absurdities of the Life of Christ." On the Wednesday (Feb. 13) Mr. Foote will deliver the second of his February course of literary lectures, the subject being "Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*."

The Humanitarian League holds a meeting at the Lecture Room, 32 Sackville-street, Piccadilly, on Thursday, Feb. 14, at 8 p.m., when a paper will be read by Mr. G. W. Foote on "The Shadow of the Sword." The paper will deal with the subject of War up to date, and will afterwards be published by the Humanitarian League as one of its propagandist pamphlets. It should be added that the admission on Feb. 14 is entirely free. Tickets are not necessary.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts's lecture at the Hall of Science, London, upon "Religion with and without Theology," was most enthusiastically received. Mr. Guest ably presided. Although several Christians were present, they could not be induced to oppose Mr. Watts, in spite of the Chairman's repeated invitations. This evening (Sunday, February 10) Mr. Watts lectures in the North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road, S.E.

Mr. C. Cohen lectured for the Bradford Sunday Society on February 3, his subject being, "Lucretius, a Roman Poet in the Light of Modern Science." Mr. W. P. Byles, M.P., was in the chair, and the lecturer earned the applause of a large audience. The local press describes his address as of "a most interesting and lucid nature."

The San Francisco *Bulletin*, noticing the benefactions of Mr. James Lick, the infidel, who erected the Paine Memorial Hall at Boston, says: "It will be noticed that James Lick gave nothing for mere charity. He did not believe in relieving any human being able to work from the necessity of earning his bread. Lick gave to science and educational improvement, to public necessity, and to art."

Mr. A. B. Moss is not asleep on the new Camberwell Vestry, though he would have liked to be recently when the Vestry had an all-night sitting. It was all over the question of the proper day for the elections. The Moderates wanted Thursday—for the shopkeepers; the Progressives wanted Saturday—for the working men. Mr. Moss created a sensation by saying that the really proper day was Sunday, when all classes would be free to vote at their leisure. Two clerical members of the Vestry were horrified. No doubt they fancy the end of the world must be approaching when such irreligion is allowed to pass without a thunderbolt from old Jahveh.

At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive leave was given for the formation of a Branch at Stockton-on-Tees. There are a good many Freethinkers in that district, and we hope they will organise for an active propaganda. The new Branch starts with the advantage of a zealous secretary in Mr. Dobson, who has lately removed from Huddersfield.

The usual circular is being sent out to N.S.S. Branches with regard to nominations for the Conference. It is hoped that the conditions will be carefully considered before answers are forwarded, and that the replies will be sent into the Secretary with all possible promptitude.

Bristol Secularists are reminded that the N.S.S. Branch meets every Sunday evening at 7 at the Shepherds' Hall. A social gathering takes place on the first Sunday evening in

each month. The one held on February 3 was a great success. Mr. J. Keast (secretary), 32 Morgan-street, St. Paul's, will be happy to hear from any lady or gentleman ready to join the Branch or to assist in its work; also to receive parcels of Freethought literature for distribution.

In the *Truthseeker* of January 26 Mr. W. H. Burr returns to his thesis that Thomas Paine was Junius, and seeks to show that Paine, in his early days, was better off than he is generally supposed to have been. But we cannot see that Mr. Burr adduces anything decisive; while the evidence of style and of handwriting goes against the hypothesis.

A number of gentlemen have formed themselves into an association called "The Sunday Philharmonic Union," for the purpose of organising public performances of music on Sundays and holidays. The enterprise is in no sense a commercial one, and, indeed, application has been made to the Board of Trade for registration as a company "not for profit." It is, however, intended to associate the concerts with literary, scientific, and art lectures and exhibitions.

The abortive prosecution of the Leeds Sunday Society has led to the formation of a National Federation of Sunday Societies, at a Conference of which resolutions were passed in favor of making Sunday lectures and concerts legal.

The *Freethinker* and *Truth Seeker* are now allowed upon the table at the Rochdale Workmen's Club, and are read by many who would otherwise never see them.

In the *Open Court* Mr. M. D. Conway, under the title of "The First French Socialist," writes upon one of the most interesting characters of the French Revolution—François Babeuf. Mr. Conway gives a letter of Thomas Paine, addressed to the French directory, in which he deals with the conspiracy of Babeuf, and which has never appeared in English until now.

In *De Dugeraud* for February Dr. J. G. ten Bokkel writes on Vivisection, and on Darwinism and Belief. H. Peypers gives an account of the life and works of Dr. Herman Hartogh Heys von Zouteveen, one of the leading Freethinkers of Holland and the translator of Darwin's works into Dutch. Our contemporary continues its translation of our *Crimes of Christianity*.

Our lively exchange, the *Ironclad Age*, of Indianapolis, reprints Mr. Wheeler's recent article on "Hypocrisy," and the contribution to the *Freethinker* by Mr. J. A. Richardson on "How the Sun Stood Still the Second Time."

The Rev. A. J. Waldron, of the Christian Evidence Society, lecturing in the Public Hall, New Brompton, is reported to have spoken as follows: "He stated his willingness to accept the challenge of the Secularists for a two nights' debate in that hall. As the challenged party he had a right to choose both his opponent and the subjects." It is a pity Mr. Waldron did not also claim to settle the "conditions." He added: "As the champion of the Secularists he should choose Mr. Foote, and the subjects would be 'Which has been productive of the greatest good to the world, Atheism or Christianity?' and 'Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead?' He was willing to add a third subject if necessary." Mr. Waldron does not see that the subject opposed to Atheism is Theism, and that the one to be opposed to Christianity is Secularism. However, if he is really willing to debate with Mr. Foote, we have no doubt that satisfactory arrangements can be made, especially if Mr. Waldron is put forward as a representative by the Christian Evidence Society.

Ingersoll delivered his lecture on the Bible at Lima, O., Saturday, January 5. The churches all had free concerts and lectures. Ex-governor Chase talked to the disciples. At the P. B. O. Elks hall all the reading circles gave a free musical and literary entertainment. The Church might have been spared this great exertion and loss of cash, for the theatre where Ingersoll spoke was packed, even standing room at a good price. The intelligent masses are seeking enlightenment, and the Church trembles at the voice of Ingersoll demolishing its idols.—*Ironclad Age*.

Here is an advertisement from the *Church Times*:—"Young Rector (bachelor), in a beautiful part of Norfolk, with right of shooting and fishing over 1,000 acres, desires paying Guests, ladies or gentlemen, from two guineas upwards. Dogs and guns furnished; golf and tennis. Late and early dinners.—Address, in first instance, Woodhouse, Fern Lodge, Cley, Norfolk." We should like to know the condition of the agricultural laborers in this beautiful part of Norfolk, and what they think of their young bachelor rector and his paying guests—ladies or gentlemen.

## MR. HOLYOAKE ON HIS NEWCASTLE LETTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You do not cite any portion of my letter to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (Jan. 12), but merely repeat what you said before; thus your readers have no means of judging whether I have done what you allege against me. In your questions and remarks I do not recognise my own letter, which is no doubt owing to that incapacity you discern in me, of not being "able to see, in some cases, what is clear as daylight" to more fortunate persons.

My object in writing the letter in question was to elucidate Secularism, as at first explained, and as assented to at one time by Mr. Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and, I might have added, by yourself. Where, in all this, do I show any "fondness for suggesting that hardly anybody ever understood Secularism but myself"? This would be conceit and fatuity. On the contrary, I show pride in my letter that so many persons do understand what was new, when first proposed. Now many writers and speakers, more bright minded and more perspicacious than myself, illustrate the same way of thinking. My compliment to Mr. Wakefield related alone to his defence of Secularism against others. I am sorry I did not notice what he said of you. It would have been with me an act of party loyalty to disown anything unfair said of you.

You request that I will tell you what I have ever done of Secular work in connection with Secular organisation. In the *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, which you reviewed in the *Freethinker* in many generous sentences, I tell of many things I did in consequence of my being a Secularist, though I have never ceased to contend against theological errors. But if, as you contend, we must first see the end of such error before joining in Secular work, neither I nor you will live to see the day when that work can begin.

I am busy on a book on the origin and nature of Secularism, which will prevent any saying, after my death, that I have in any way failed to maintain Secularist principles or the rights of Freethought. I may not be so unerring as you, but I am always for truth and the honor of the party to which I belong.—Very faithfully,

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

[We gave the pertinent sentences of Mr. Holyoake's letter. Most of it had no relation to the point raised in our criticism. We did not say that Mr. Holyoake had done no Secular work—which would be a contemptible absurdity. What we said was, that he had not done it, and could not have done it, in connection with a Secular Society, but as an individual Secularist. We also pointed out that other Secularists take their share of Secular labor in the same way. Secularism as a principle is permeating the whole of our civilisation, but Secularism as an organisation is obliged to fight for its very existence, in consequence of oppressive old laws which still disgrace our jurisprudence. This is the principal point at issue, and Mr. Holyoake does not touch it. His jocularly is admirable at his time of life, and we do a little in that line ourselves occasionally, but we like sticking to the argument for all that.—EDITOR.]

## Hopes and Happiness.

To destroy a groundless hope is not to destroy a man's happiness. The instantaneous effort may be painful; but it is the price which we have to pay for a cure of deep-seated complaints. The infidel's reply is substantially this: "I may destroy your hopes; but I do not destroy your power of hoping. I bid you no longer fix your mind on a chimera, but on tangible and realisable prospects. I warn you that efforts to soar above the atmosphere can only lead to disappointment, and that time spent in squaring the circle is simply time spent. Apply your strength and your intellect on matters which lie at hand, and on problems which admit of solution. The happiest man is not the man who has the grandest dreams, but the man whose aspirations are best fitted to guide his talents; the most efficient worker is not the one who mistakes his own fancies for an external support, but he who has most accurately gauged the conditions under which he is laboring."—*Leslie Stephen, "Essays on Freethinking and Plain Speaking,"* p. 356.

## LUTHER ON THE DEVIL.

IN Dr. Martin Luther's *Colloquia Mensalia* there are several interesting particulars concerning the devil and his works which deserve to be extracted, as they illustrate the nature of the faith of the founder of Protestantism.

"I hold," said Luther, "that the devil sendeth all heavy diseases and sicknesses to people (for he is a prince of death); from hence St. Peter saith, Christ healed all that were oppressed of the devil." "A physician," said Luther, "is our Lord God's Botcher—he helpeth corporally, we divines spiritually; we make the case good again when the devil hath spoiled it. The devil ministereth poison to kill people." "The Devil is the Lord God's hangman." "I would wish," said Luther, "rather to die through the Devil than through the Emperor or Pope; for then I should die, nevertheless, through a great and mighty prince of the world. But if I die through him, he shall eat such a bit of me as will be his bane; he shall spew me out again; and at the last day of judgment I will, in requital, devour him."

"Witchcraft," said Luther, "is the Devil's own proper work, wherewith (when God permitteth) he not only hurteth people, but also often times through the same he maketh them quite awry; yea, in this world we are both body and soul cast under the devil, as guests and strangers. The Devil is so crafty a spirit that he can ape and deceive all human senses. He can bring to pass that one thinketh he seeth something, which, notwithstanding, he seeth not. Also that one heareth a thundering, a pipe, or a trumpet, which he heareth not." Worse still, "he bewitcheth and deceiveth the hearts and conscience in such sort that they hold and receive erroneous and ungodly doctrine and opinions for the upright and divine truth." A sufficient proof was found in the Sectaries, the Anabaptists, and other seducers.

Luther had scriptural authority for asserting that Satan could transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians xi. 14). He goes yet further, and says: "It is a fearful thing when Satan intendeth to torment the sorrowful consciences with intolerable melancholy; then the wicked villain, master-like, can mask and disguise himself into the person of Christ, so that it is impossible for a poor human creature (whose conscience is troubled with such great and heavy tribulations) to mark and discover the villainy of the devil. From hence it falleth out that many of those (that neither know nor understand the same) do run headlong into despair, do kill and make themselves away; for they are blinded and deceived so powerfully by the devil that they are fully persuaded it is not the devil, but Christ himself, that vexeth and tormenteth them in such sort."

Satan often sought to seduce Martin himself, and in the room of the Wartburg, where he sat translating the Bible, they still show the stains from the inkstand which Luther flung full in the face of the fiend, who forthwith disappeared. It was a terrible belief, and Luther consoled himself with the faith that the Devil, once overcome, could never recur with the same temptation. Luther sometimes met him in even more ridiculous style than flinging inkpots. But, as the matter is rather coarse, I must refer to the Reformer's own words (*Colloquia*, chap. 35).

Luther believes that "the Devil can deceive people and beget children." He gravely tells the story of a gentleman who had a wife that died, but who came back and had children by him, vanishing when he uttered a particular oath. "The Prince Elector of Saxony (John Frederick), having received advertisement of this strange accident, sent thereupon presently unto me (said Luther) to have my opinion; what I held of that woman, and of the children which were bogotten and born of these two persons. Whereupon I wrote to his Highness that, in my opinion, neither that woman, nor those children, were right human creatures, but devils. For the Devil casteth before the eyes a blaze, or a mist, and so deceiveth people; inasmuch that one thinketh he lieth by a right woman, and yet is no such matter; for, as St. Paul saith, the Devil is strong by the children of unbelief. But inasmuch as children, or devils, are conceived in such sort, the same are very horrible and fearful examples, in that Satan can plague and so torment people as to beget children. Like unto this is it also with that which they call the (Nix) in the water, who draweth people unto him, as maids and virgins, of whom he begetteth (devils) children. The Devil can also

steal children away (as sometimes children, within the space of six weeks after their birth, are lost), and other children called (supposititii) or Changelings, laid in their places. Of the Saxons they are called Killercrops." Luther has a section on these Changelings or Killercrops, who were known by sucking their mothers dry. He had seen one at Dessau, aged twelve, who did nothing but feed, and would eat as much as two clowns. He advised the Prince of Anhalt to throw it into the river Moldaw. Another near Halberstad, who sucked his mother and five other women dry, being carried in a basket to the Virgin Mary, when, crossing a bridge, "another devil that was below in the river called, and said: 'Killcrop, killcrop!' Then the child in the basket (which never before spake one word) answered: 'Ho, ho!' The devil in the water asked further: 'Whither art thou going?' The child in the basket said: 'I am going towards Hocklestad, to our loving Mother, to be rocked.' The man, being much affrighted thereat, threw the child, with the basket, over the bridge into the water. Whereupon the two devils flew away together, and cried 'Ho ho ha,' tumbling themselves one over another, and so vanished." Certain it is, said Luther, that good and godly Christians may be bewitched. "I am persuaded that my sicknesses are not always natural; but that the Devil, by witchcraft, practiseth his wilfulness upon me; but God delivereth his chosen from such evils."

"Dr. Spalatine," said Luther, "told me that a young maid at Altenburg was lately bewitched, insomuch that she wept tears of blood. The magistrate should make haste with such witches to punishment. I had lately a matrimonial cause in hand. A wicked woman, by poison, intended to make away her husband, insomuch that he vomited and cast out little vipers. When she was put to the torture, she refused to confess anything; for such witches are altogether dumb, and contemn the rack; the Devil will not suffer them to speak. But such actions are sufficient proofs for them to receive condign punishment to the example of others." Luther then gave his view that witchcraft is, as the Bible says, worthy of death; "forasmuch as witchcraft is an abominable offence, in that one giveth himself from God over to the Devil, who is God's utter enemy; so is the same well worthy of death's punishment."

LUCIANUS.

### FIEND OR FOOL.

To discover the will of a Deity whose sway  
In the universe nought can resist,  
It would seem at first sight that a sensible way  
Is to notice the things that exist.

By his hand into space all the planets were hurled;  
He for ages unchallenged has reigned.  
It would seem as if God who created the world  
Had created the things it contained.

But no; we must learn we are wide of the mark.  
What is logical need not be right;  
The disciples of Reason are all in the dark,  
The disciples of Faith in the light.

If from slavery, cruelty, carnage and crime  
The intentions of God should be gleaned,  
The Almighty Creator would seem for all time  
But a paramount Infinite Fiend.

So we learn the Almighty is not what he seems,  
But is better and kinder by far.  
He intended great things that are still only dreams—  
Is distressed by the facts as they are.

The Lord is a potter, and man is the clay;  
But, in spite of his infinite skill,  
He sadly refuses to have his own way,  
And mould the poor stuff to his will.

The Lord is a shepherd who places his sheep  
On the edge of a dangerous rock;  
And, while to destruction they stumble or leap,  
Sits bemoaning the fate of his flock.

But, on seeing the fruit of the theory they state,  
His defenders may open their eyes;  
For, in robbing our hearts of a Deity to hate,  
They have given us one to despise.

In working his dolls on their miniature stage,  
If a showman would imitate God,  
He'd weep for poor Judy and tremble with rage  
When his Punch was applying the rod.

But, despite all the freaks that his puppets have played,  
The showman contrives to keep cool;  
While God by *his* puppets is grieved and dismayed,  
And sits in despair like a fool.

Great God! though the timid who cringe at thy feet  
May in terror thy wisdom avow,  
The man who's conducting the show in the street  
Is a hundredfold wiser than thou.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

### THE CHILDREN'S PARTY.

NEARLY three hundred children enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content at the Hall of Science on January 30. The cake and tea they stowed away was a caution. And after that, during the evening, sweets, plum-puddings, etc., washed down by twenty-eight gallons of lemonade; for the skipping contests, walking matches, three-legged races, thread the needle, and tug-of-war contests were warm work, though Jack Frost was both within and without. The musicians, too, must have been thirsty, for they were kept going with little intermission, though they did not all drink lemonade. "Jack Frost" was the name of the children's operetta, and capably performed it was by Misses O'Donoghue, Harding, Ward, Drew, and Guest, and by Masters Courtney, Winsor, J. and R. Forder, C. Shepherd, and B. Fox. The scenery, by Mr. R. G. Brown, represented an old Mill House. On the wall appeared, "Bill Stickers Beware"; but, just before the play, old Dan Chatterton solemnly stalked up and pasted a *Freethinker* bill over the notice, much to the amusement of youngsters and oldsters. There was a magic mill wheel, which had been stopped by Jack Frost, but which, after his defeat by the Fairy Sunshine, worked by hydraulic power, and ground out prizes for all the children present. None went empty away. Miss Vance was the substantial fairy behind the scenes who worked the oracle, and generally saw that things went right. Thanks are also due to Miss Robins, Miss Brown, Mrs. Sleigh, Mrs. Leekey, Mrs. Burch, and Messrs. Brown, Ward, Courtney, Forder, Guest, Bater, and Searle, for assistance in making the evening a delightful one to the children. A few pounds are still needed to clear up all accounts, and we hope they will reach Mr. Forder without delay.

### FURTHER SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Per Mr. Searle, 7s.; Mr. Balchan, junr., 9s.; Mrs. Lightowler, 8s.; E. Winsor, 1s. 6d.; G. Ward, 5s. 6d.; Miss Simson, 3s.; Mr. Wood, 4s. 9d.; H. Cowell, 2s.; Mrs. O'Donoghue, 3s. 2d.; Mrs. Billot, 2s.; Mr. Bater, 2s. 6d.; W. Webber, 1s.; F. Schaller, 5s.; C. Shepherd, 5s. 3d.; Miss Neate, 6d.; H. M. Ridgway, 2s. 6d.; J. Walker, 1s.; W. Stewart, 2s. 6d.; E. Furby, 10s.; E. Newman, 5s.; Miss Pullen, 5s.; A. Wheeler, 1s.

The Committee desire to sincerely thank Mr. Church, of Holloway, and Mr. Godwin, of Hackney, for large supplies of sweets and cakes; Mr. Caspary for three hundred Bon-bons, and Messrs. Warborn, Penny, Mrs. Dunster, and an unknown friend, for toys, confectionery, etc.

Friends having collecting-cards are requested to return them not later than Sunday next, to Miss Vance.

R. FORDER, *Treasurer.*

### AN UNKNOWN HERETIC.

In Martin Luther's *Colloquia* (p. 86; 1652) I read: "Anno 1530 (said Luther) there was here at Wittenberg a student that had written in a book manie ungodlie questions; hee would wrest the Scriptures according to his own brains, and in a manner would prepare a new Epicurism; he alleged there were neither good nor evil angels, besides manie other blasphemous things against the Holie Ghost, the Resurrection of the dead, etc. The same was sharply reprehended by the Professors, who informed mee thereof; whereupon I desired the magistrates of the town to take these things into their consideration, and according to their offices would caus that Epicure to bee punished as other public offenders."

I should much like to know the name and the book of that Epicure. Can any German friend inform me if there is any record of his punishment at Wittenberg?

J. M. W.

## JEHOVAH'S JOKES.

When cruel, bloody Abel seized a lamb,  
And through his tender throat a stick did ram,  
What do you think God did? Blamed him?  
No; *praised him.*

When kindly Cain—who shrank from shedding blood  
In "cold blood"—offered God a harmless "spud,"  
What do you think God did? Praised him?  
No; *blamed him.*

When Jacob sneaked from Esau all he had,  
And vilely tricked his blind and dying dad,  
What do you think God did? Cursed him?  
No; *blessed him.*

When brutal Moses, Joshua, & Co.  
Filled neighbors' lands with blood and fire and woe,  
What do you think God did? Killed them?  
No; *helped them.*

When Saul from cutting captives' throats refrained,  
And thus respect from later ages gained,  
What do you think God did? Blessed him?  
No; *cursed him.*

When careful Uzzah carted Yahveh's box,  
And held it safe when slipped the stumbling ox,  
What do you think God did? Thanked him?  
No; *killed him.*

When selfish Mary—vain, and lazy too—  
Left worthy Martha all the work to do,  
What do you think Christ did? Blamed her?  
No; *praised her.*

When God's own folk assisted God's own plan,  
By helping God to die for good of man,  
What do you think God did? Blessed them?  
No; *cursed them.*

This *topsy-turvy* God, whose *best's* our worst,  
Who cursed and blessed where we'd have blessed and  
cursed,  
This heav'nly clown had made, in playful spite,  
His sense of *wrong* his creatures' sense of *right*;  
And yet—and here's the joke—his Scriptures state:  
Unless we love this God, whose deeds we hate;  
Unless we honor those whose guilt amazes,  
And scorn what all our moral judgment praises,  
We'll die like dogs, and howl in hell and blazes!  
(Selah!—and other refreshment.)

Let none, then, heed the disrespectful rumor  
That God's a solemn party, void of humor.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

## PROVIDENTIAL ACCIDENTS.

How often we read and hear of a "providential escape." The words are uttered so frequently and glibly as almost to make them sickening to the ears of those who understand their hollowness. One can hardly take up a newspaper without meeting with the phrase. It seems to be a sort of tail piece to nearly every accident recorded. If, while scores of lives are ruined, there can be found even one who gets off scot free, that person is sure to be the hero of providential interference, of at least one sort. But most people seem to lose sight of the other side of the picture, and, while rejoicing over the escape, forget that the same power—if such power there be—was also the cause of the disaster, and responsible for those who met their miserable fate. The term, "providential escape," is at best contradictory. If a providence presides over the destinies of the world, it should be a guarantee of perfect safety, and so control our lives as to leave no room for any thing to happen which would tend to endanger our existence. A true providence ought rather to be an unflinching preventive of causes which would otherwise lead to mishaps.

This providential idea has also a tendency to lead those who have chanced to escape the clutches of a catastrophe to lose their manhood and offer up canting expressions of thanks for their deliverance to a "heavenly father," whose parental love and watchfulness has been the means of all the suffering to their fellow creatures. Of the many instances of this unmanly spirit we might mention that displayed by the few survivors of a terrible calamity at sea, who invariably tender thank-offerings to him who has drowned the rest.

If no other evidence will avail to persuade men from the notion that a god rules the universe, surely the obvious

unconcern of that god for our welfare ought to dispel for ever such a misconception. If man will intelligently reflect and exercise some of his latent common sense and experience, he must inevitably come to the conclusion that human beings are of no more account than sparrows, and that both species of life exist without the slightest trace of divine intervention.

This foolish conception of an interfering providence is the bane of society, and not until it is swallowed up in reason will there be a stalwart, clear-headed, loving people, with all their energies centred upon the betterment of this world, judging its disorders in a rational light, and thoroughly convinced that upon man, and him alone, depends the lasting welfare of humanity. And let us for the future, when our Christian acquaintances begin to talk about providential escapes, call their attention to the other side of the account, and show them that for one providential escape there are a hundred providential accidents.

J. W. C. S.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## MR. MARRIOTT'S LETTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. A. J. Marriott, tells you (*Freethinker*, January 27) that "he is not a little disgusted that I should head a deputation of Brighton co-operators to pray for a diminution of public-houses in Brighton." In the courteous note you gave on this subject there is no foundation for Mr. Marriott's disquietude. There was no "deputation"—so I never "headed one." I merely forwarded a memorial, because a co-operative store, formed to promote thrift, always suffers if the members are induced to waste the wages, which, spent at the stores, bring saving and economy in the household. I am sorry Mr. Marriott should be "disgusted" at this. I have no doubt he has good sense enough to be delighted, if he understood the question.—Yours faithfully,

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

## PROFANE JOKES.

Rev. Dr. Goodlee—"Tell me, Robert, why is it that you say your prayers?" Bobbie—"Cause dad spansk me when I don't."

Darkey (in U.S. post-office)—"Please to gimme one stamp, sah." Clerk—"What denomination?" Darkey—"Baptis', sah! Baptis', o' course."

At prayers—Minnie (in a whisper)—"Jimmie, wot makes Uncle Eben shet 'is eyes wen he's prayin'?" Jimmie (in a louder whisper)—"Mebbe he's ashamed ter look the Lord in th' face."

Over the portal of a magnificent villa near Dresden, Saxony, is written: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." But at the back entrance to the garden is a sign that reads: "No beggars admitted. The dog bites."

An old darkey arose recently in one of the Southern prayer meetings and exclaimed: "Brethren and sistern, I've been havin' a drefful time since las' we met together, chawin' hard bones and swallowing bitter pills. I'm afraid I've broken every one of the Ten Commandments, but, thank the Lord, I haven't lost my religion!"

He was a curate, and nervous. On one occasion he read a chapter from Exodus, which he remembered for some time, as also did the congregation. "I am," he informed them, and then hurriedly turned over the pages, "an ass—the foal of an ass!" Realising that the pages had stuck together, he quickly parted them. "That I am!" triumphantly added the disconcerted youth.

## How to Help Us.

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

## 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, G. W. Foote, "The Government Program." (Free.) 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Humors and Absurdities of the Life of Christ." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Wednesday, at 8.30, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice.'"

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, Herbert Burrows, "Why Secularists should be Socialists." Monday, at 8, musical and dramatic entertainment and dance. (Tickets 3d. and 6d.) Tuesday and Friday, at 8, social gatherings for N.S.S. members and friends.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Why Should we Live Moral Lives?—The Christian and Secular Answer." (Preceded by vocal and instrumental music.) Thursday, at 7.30, free science classes.

EAST LONDON (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile-end-road, E.): 8, J. Fagan, "London To-day and Forty Years Ago."

ISLINGTON (Liberal and Radical Association Committee Rooms, Upper-street, near the Vestry Hall): Thursday, at 8.30, a lecture.

MILTON HALL (Hawley-crescent, 89 Kentish Town-road): 7.15, Olivia Dante Rossetti, "The Social and Political Conditions of Italy."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Conscience as God's Vicar."

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

WOOD GREEN (Star Coffee House, High-street): 7, C. James, "Still it Moves."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Haslam, "Bible Stories: are they True?"

## COUNTRY.

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

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, G. E. Harris, "Phrenology."

BRADFORD (Oddfellows' Hall, Thornton-road): 7, Sam Standing, "The Prayer of Faith."

CHESTER (Old Chapel, Commonhall-street): 6.30, Charles Lewis, "The French Revolution—the Overthrow of Robespierre." (Free.)

GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 11.30, discussion class—James Gilbert, "Liberty in Art and Literature"; 6.30, Zosimus, "Great French Freethinkers—IV., Voltaire." (Free.)

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street): 7, S. Ackroyd, "Gladstone as a Theologian."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 11, tontine society; 3, philosophy class—"Kant" (Ernest Newman); 7, Ernest Newman, "The Logic of the Faithful."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. Greevz Fisher, "Secularism and Individualism." (Free.)

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, miscellaneous evening.

ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street); 6.30, J. A. Ashton and others, recitations, music, etc.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Ernest Evans, "Science the Friend of Man—A Reply to the Grumblers"; 7, "Science from Lantern Slides." Wednesdays, at 8, dancing.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane): 11, C. Cohen, "Voltaire"; 7, "Christianity: its Rise."

SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, opposite Echo office): 7, The Secretary, "Mind Considered as a Bodily Function."

## Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—All Sundays until April, South Shields.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—Feb. 10, Dundee; 24, Edinburgh. March 3, Hull; 10, Sheffield; 11, Chesterfield.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—March 24, Camberwell.

SAM STANDRING, 6 Bury-road, Rochdale.—Feb. 10, Bradford; 17, Failsworth. March 26 and 27, Sheffield.

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