

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

CROMWELL'S STATUE.

A VERY amusing incident was recorded in Tuesday's newspapers. The evening before, in the House of Commons, Mr. W. Johnston asked the First Commissioner of Works when it was intended to erect the statue of Oliver Cromwell, and if he could specify the proposed site. Before the question could be answered, up jumped Mr. Stanley Leighton and asked another. He desired to know whether the right honorable gentleman could also find a niche for a statue of Protector Richard, better known as "Tumbledown Dick"—the heir and successor of his Highness Oliver Cromwell. This laborious joke—about as silly as was ever perpetrated—caused a good deal of laughter in the House of Commons, which, after the House of Lords, is about the dullest assembly in this kingdom. Silly things, however, do get ended; and when Mr. Stanley Leighton sat down, Mr. Herbert Gladstone replied that the proposed cost of a Cromwell statue would appear in the 1895-6 estimates, but the question of the exact site was still under consideration.

We may take it, then, that the House of Commons will, in all probability, vote a sum of money for a statue of Oliver Cromwell, and that it will be placed on some site under the control of the First Commissioner of Works, possibly in one of the passages of that architectural monstrosity, the Houses of Parliament.

Was ever anything more stored with latent humor? Oliver Cromwell was the one man in English history who turned the House of Commons out of doors—and the House of Commons is going to give him a statue. Charles the First went down to the House to arrest the Five Members, and met more than his match. He also dismissed parliament in 1628, and did not call another till 1640, but that was the Long Parliament, which would not be dissolved, and which lasted till after his head was amputated. Oliver Cromwell did worse than this. He went down with a band of resolute soldiers and sent the Rump a-packing; and as all the members wore swords and could use them, and some were fanatical enough for anything, it was no child's play. Then he locked the door and put the key in his pocket. And the worst of it was that not a dog in the whole of London barked against this unconstitutional proceeding. Cromwell called three parliaments afterwards, but they would jaw without doing any business. One of them spent a week discussing whether James Nayler, the Quaker, should be burnt alive, besides being branded and mutilated. Cromwell thought a week was too long for such nonsense; and he said so in his own way, by a deed; he told the parliament to go home. And again the key was in his pocket.

Fancy a statue put up by parliament to a man like that? Does it only mean that, say what we will about him, Cromwell was a great Englishman? Or does it mean that Cromwell was right in shutting-up parliaments? Let there be no mistake about it. Cromwell would have had as little sympathy with our National Palaver as with any to which he administered the quietus. How grimly he would have smiled at the statesmanship of appointing a

special committee to report some time next summer on the "unemployed" who are starving this winter! Talk! Talk! Talk! Cromwell hated all that incontinence of speech. What was the use of talking unless it led to something? What wisdom could he perceive in debating for weeks when the voting could be foretold at the beginning? What can any man—not a jackass, or a pedant, or a time-server—see in it but mere vanity and vexation of spirit; vanity on the part of the talkers, and vexation of spirit to numerous other people?

It may, of course, be contended that Oliver Cromwell attempted the impossible; that human affairs will always refuse to be conducted in a sensible way. That is one view, the pessimist's. But there is another view, which is not exactly the optimist's—namely, that Cromwell was born three hundred years before his proper time. The late Prince Consort was not a particularly wise man, but he sometimes saw the truth; and he certainly did see it when he said that Parliamentary Government was on its trial. It was one of the few sensible things he ever said, and of course he was bitterly censured for saying it. Parliamentary Government is, indeed, more than on trial. It is under sentence. Every man who has any idea of business, and any honesty to back it, is perfectly aware that Parliamentary Government has proved a most ridiculous failure. Is despotism, then, the only alternative? Nothing of the kind. The alternative is common sense. Were it not for the standing armies, which might be used against a nation's liberties, there is no reason in the world why the affairs of every civilised nation could not be conducted on business lines, like the affairs of a ship on the high seas, or of a great commercial house on dry land.

Cromwell was not a parliamentarian. He saw "divine right" royalty break down. He also saw parliamentary government break down. After his time the two patched up a treaty of alliance; and, now two hundred years have rolled by, it is fatally discredited.

Cromwell would have done immense good for England, but the rogues and fools—especially the fools—would not let him do too much. He was a professed Christian, but he had little of the Christian's bigotry. Long before he was Lord Protector, he remarked, in a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, that if a man could serve the state no inquiry should be made into his opinions. He would not tolerate open Catholicism, but Catholicism was then a perpetual intrigue and rebellion against every liberal government. He would not sanction the persecution of the Quakers, he let the Jews come back to England after hundreds of years of banishment. He would never have assisted in persecuting even an Atheist, merely on account of his opinions. Men of all opinions, to use his own language, could serve the state. Whether they were going to Heaven or Hell was their own business.

Cromwell's heart was eaten out by the rogues and fools. They tried to kill him by poison and dagger, but they failed. They killed him more slowly. And after he was dead they had *their* innings; and what an innings it was! There is no argument like *comparison*.

Cromwell was the first man in English history who understood toleration; certainly the first great statesman who tried to reduce it to practice. He would have gone farther than John Milton. What does a man like this want with a niche and a statue at the hands of some insignificant Commissioner of Works? He fills a whole big chapter in English history—and fills it for ever.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE MORAL CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY.

If any instance were wanted of the spread of Secular principles, it might be found in the changed tactics of Christian advocates. In the good old days of Christian supremacy Christianity was put forward as a divine revelation and the only way of salvation. Stress was laid on its credentials of miracles and of prophecy as proving it to be superhuman and divine. The joys of heaven and the terrors of hell were dilated upon to attract the faithful and warn the unbelieving. Satan, the enemy of souls, was evoked as the explanation of all difficulties. Now-a-days Satan is superannuated, and hell never mentioned to ears polite. Its temperature is popularly supposed to fit it for a skating rink. Miracles and prophecies are kept in the background; the former are felt to be rather sources of difficulty to minds trained in the scientific conception of natural law, while prophecies only raise the troublesome question of proving that their records were in existence before the time of their alleged fulfilment. Accordingly, we now hear of the sublime moral teachings of Christianity, of the sweet reasonableness of Jesus, and of the good which Christianity has done to the world. Virtually this is a surrender of the whole question to the Freethinker. For he has no quarrel with morality or moral influences, and only objects to their being ascribed to superhuman sources and placed upon what he considers a false basis of supernaturalism.

The point at issue between the Christian and the Freethinker is not whether Christianity has done some good or not, but whether it is of supernatural origin. Is it infallibly divine, or is it but one of many religions which have guided men's lives? Let it be granted it has had a moral influence. Can this be denied to Buddhism, to Confucianism, or to Mohammedanism? All religions teach morality, but does Christianity give assurance of practice? When you say a man is a Mohammedan, for instance, you know he is sober. Can you have the same assurance when you say a man is a Christian?

Then, is there not a sufficient set-off to the good done by Christianity in the persecution, malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness which it has engendered; in the slavery and tyranny of the past taught by its god-given code; in its persecution of witches also inculcated by the Bible; in its opposition to science? It is Christian theology which has placed creed before conduct, which has extolled death-bed repentance above an honest and consistent life. It is Christian theology which has taught men to hate father and mother, and that duty consists in obedience to the will of God, irrespective of considerations of human welfare. It is Christian theology which has increased selfish egoism by its contemptible offer of salvation through the merits of another, its terrors of burning brimstone and torments, and its even more contemptible bribes of thrones and golden harps, and the recompense of a hundredfold hereafter for all that is resigned now. All this the Secular spirit of the age is recoiling from, and Christian advocates accordingly keep their theology as much as possible in the background.

The political and social life of the modern world shows a complete disregard for the teachings of Jesus. Indeed, Dr. Magee, the late Archbishop of York, admitted that the Sermon on the Mount was not practicable by the State. The profession of Christianity is only a profession, upon which practice does not follow. In Mohammedan lands all law decisions are founded on the Koran. But Christian magistrates censure and punish the Peculiar People, who follow St. James, and when anyone is sick call in the elders and pray over them. They punish men who desert their wives for the sake of religion. Yet Jesus, or the monks who wrote about him, said: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life," and "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Matthew xix. 29; Luke xiv. 26).

The truth is that, while pretending that the words of the Bible are wholly divine, people pick and choose, take what suits them, and quietly put aside the rest. Protestants forget that the books come down to us through the monks

of the Romish Church, and that their view of Jesus and his religion is an entirely different one.

Is it true that, as Prebendary Row says, the evangel of modern enlightenment was taught more than 1,850 years ago? I answer, No. Jesus never spoke a word for education, enlightenment, industry, or social amelioration. He thought the world was coming to an end in the lifetime of those standing around him. He preached other-worldliness. He said, "The poor ye have always with you," and would deal with it by almsgiving. Science goes to work another way, and seeks to remove the causes of poverty and other evils. Nor were the teachings of Jesus original to himself. Everyone of his precepts can be paralleled from earlier Pagan teachers, and from the doctrines of Buddha, of Confucius, and of Lao-tse. Christians may be safely challenged to instance a single doctrine which was new to the world. Why, then, should it be supposed to be divine?

It is wrong to ascribe the benefits of Christianity, such as they are, to one man. From the New Testament itself it is plain that Paul had more to do with the spread of the religion than Jesus, who said he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that it was not fit that the children's food should be cast to dogs. In truth, the Christian Church has been built up by the labors of thousands of men. And it is being slowly improved by the influence of the Secular spirit, substituting work for prayer, science for faith, conduct for creed, and attention to this world for attention to kingdom-come.

J. M. WHEELER.

WAS CHRIST A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORMER?

(Concluded from page 84.)

THE burden of Christ's preaching was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What was meant by this kingdom it is rather difficult to decide, for it is variously described in the Gospels. It is certain, however, that, whether it signified the reign of peace and justice on earth, or the appearance of Jesus "in the clouds," neither event has taken place up to date, although Christ said that in his time the kingdom was "at hand." In Luke (xvii. 21) it is stated "the kingdom of God is within you"; but that does not quite harmonise with the description given of it in Matthew (xiii. 47-50), where it is alleged that the kingdom of heaven is "like unto a net that was cast into the sea," which, when full, had the good of its contents retained, and the bad cast away. "So shall it be at the end of the world," when the angels are to "sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Now, if this refers to a condition upon earth, it is not a very happy one. And in neither case is there any light thrown upon the rational conduct of men, either politically or socially. Besides, the repeated references made by Christ to the approaching end of all earthly institutions render the idea of his being a reformer of this world altogether meaningless. The termination of mundane affairs was to occur in the presence of those to whom Jesus was speaking (Matthew xvi. 28). Whatever other texts may be cited to the contrary, the meaning here is clear, that no opportunity was to be given, and no provisions made, to reform the political and social conditions of earth. Let any one read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and try to harmonise the declarations there ascribed to Christ with the belief that his mission was to reform the world, and the impossibility of the task will soon be evident. True, in Matthew (xxv.) works of utility are required to secure a place at the "right hand" of God. But what does this involve? Uniformity of belief (Mark xvi. 16), and only the relief, not the cure, of poverty. No scheme was even hinted at by Christ whereby the great army of the poor and depraved should be impossible. He was inferior to the French philosopher, who aimed at providing a condition of society wherein men should be neither deprived nor poor.

To put the matter concisely, what are the factors of political and social progress? Briefly, they are these: The cultivation of the intellect, the extension of physical and mental freedom, the recognition and the application of

the principle of justice and liberty to all members of the community, regardless of their belief or non-belief in theology, the knowledge and application of science and art, the organisation of labor and the proper cultivation of the soil, the possession of political power, the understanding of the true value and use of wealth, and, finally, the persistent study of, and the constant struggling against, the numerous evils, wrongs, and injustice that now rob life of its comforts and real worth. These are the agencies that all men, who claim to be political and social reformers, should support and cultivate. Not one of these originated with Jesus, and throughout his career he never availed himself of these essentials of all progress. Thus, to designate him as the great social redeemer is entirely unjustifiable. His very mode of living was the opposite to that of a practical reformer. He was an ascetic, and avoided as much as possible the turmoil of public life, from which he might have learnt something of what was necessary to adjust the social relations. Prayer, not work, was his habit. In the day, and at night, would he retire to the solitude of the mountain, and there pray to his father (Luke vi. 12 and xxi. 37). So far did he believe in the efficacy of supplications to God that he frequently told his disciples that whatever they asked of his father he would grant the request (Matthew xviii. 19; xxi. 22; John xvi. 23). That this was a delusion is clear from the fact that he prayed himself for the unity of Christendom, that his followers might be one (John xvii. 21); yet from his time down to the present divisions have always existed among Christians. He distinctly promised that "Whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (John xiv. 13, 14). Relying upon this, the Church for centuries has been asking that unbelief should cease, and yet we find it more extensive to-day than it ever was. The lesson learnt from experience is, that all reforms are the result of active work, not the outcome of prayerful meditations.

With all these drawbacks in the character of Jesus, it is to me marvellous how he can be accepted as a model for us in the present age. But thousands of his devotees insist upon claiming him as their Ideal, although they cannot regulate their conduct by such a standard. Such persons overlook the fact that, if the better parts of an Ideal are marred by that which is erroneous and impracticable, it is comparatively useless as a guide in life. That Christ's alleged teachings are so marred the Gospels amply testify. His conduct, on several occasions, was such as his followers would not attempt to emulate to-day. Such, for instance, as his treatment of his parents (Luke ii. 43-49; John ii. 4); his cursing of the fig-tree (Matthew xxi. 18, 19); his driving the money changers from the temple with "a scourge of small cards" (John ii. 15); his possession of an ass and a colt, which evidently did not belong to him, and riding upon both of them into Jerusalem (Matthew xxi. 2-11); his expletives to the Pharisees (Luke xi. 37-44); his breaking up the peace of the domestic circle (Matthew x. 34-36).

Judged by the New Testament, Christ was certainly not "The Light of the World," for he revealed nothing of practical value, and he taught no virtues that were before unknown. No doubt in his life, supposing he ever lived, there were many commendable features; but he was far from being perfect. While he might have been well-meaning, he was in belief superstitious, in conduct inconsistent, in opinions contradictory, in teaching arbitrary, in knowledge deficient, in faith vacillating, and in pretensions great. He taught false notions of existence, had no knowledge of science; he misled his followers by claiming to be what he was not, and he deceived himself by his own credulity. He lacked experimental force, frequently living a life of isolation, and taking but slight interest in the affairs of this world. It is this lack of experimental force throughout the career of Christ that renders his notions of domestic duties so thoroughly imperfect. The happiness of a family, according to his teaching, was to be impaired before his doctrines could be accepted. So far as we know, he was never a husband or a father; and he did not aspire to be a statesman, a man of science, or a politician. Now, a person who lacks experience in these phases of life is not in the best position to give practical and satisfactory lessons thereon. Even in the conditions of life he is said to have filled, this "Light of the World" failed to exhibit any high degree of excellence, discrimination, or manly courage. As a son, he lacked affection and consideration for the feelings of his

parents. As a teacher, he was mystical and rude; and as a reasoner, he was defective and illogical. Lacking a true method of reasoning, possessing no uniformity of character, Christ exhibited a strange example—an example injudicious to exalt and dangerous to emulate. At times he was severe when he should have been gentle. When he might have reasoned he frequently rebuked. When he ought to have been firm and resolute he was vacillating. When he should have been happy he was sorrowful and desponding. After preaching faith as the one thing needful, he himself lacked it when he required it the most. Thus, on the cross, when a knowledge of a life of integrity, a sensibility of the fulfilment of a good mission, a conviction that he was dying for a good and righteous cause, and fulfilling the object of his life—when all these should have given him moral strength, we find him giving vent to utter despair. So overwhelmed was he with grief and anxiety of mind that he "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." "My soul," he exclaimed, "is sorrowful even unto death." At last, overcome with grief, he implores his father to rescue him from the death which was then awaiting him.

It is contended by some that, although Christ did not give detailed remedies for existing evils, he taught "general principles" which would, if acted upon, prove a panacea for the wrongs of life. This was not so, for his "general principles" lacked the saving power that was desired. What were those "principles" as laid down in the Gospels? So far as they can be understood, they were as follows: Absolute trust in God; implicit belief in himself; reliance upon the prayer of supplication; disregard of the world; taking no anxious thought for the morrow; encouragement of poverty, and contempt of riches; obedience to the law of the Old Testament; neglect of home and families; non-resistance of evil; that persecution in this world and punishment in some other would follow the rejection of Christianity; and that sickness was caused by the possession of devils. These are among the leading "principles" taught by Christ; and, if they were acted upon, there would be an end of all progress, harmony, and self-reliance. But even if the "general principles" propounded by Jesus were good, that would not be enough to make him the greatest reformer. It is necessary, in addition to knowing what is to be done, to have the knowledge of *how* it is to be done. And this is just what Jesus has not taught us. Principles do not aid progress unless they can be applied; and, whatever value his teachings may have as matters of belief, they are incapable of application in the great cause of political and social advancement in the nineteenth century.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE CHURCH AND THE DEMOCRACY.

LATTERLY there has been shown a most remarkable interest in social problems by a section of advanced Churchmen. Now, we would be very reluctant to in any way deprecate such a movement, or say aught that might be taken as a sneer against it. It is only by everyone who considers there are grievances to be exposed and wrongs to be righted, making his voice heard, that any progress can come. And, reason knows, there are enough evils and social sores to engage the attention and study of every honest thinker. But when one sees this new-born zeal on the part of the Church—or a small portion of it—one needs to be cautious. When we bear in mind that, historically, the Churches have been the inveterate enemies of all reform; when it is recollected that the bishops, as the representatives in Parliament of the Church, have consistently voted against every measure calculated to make for advancement; when one remembers that the Church has always been the foe of science, and that science is the only hope of the future; when all this is kept in mind, one must scrutinise very carefully these new professions of democratic love. The Church, in short, has betrayed progress too often for her mere verbal promise to be accepted now.

One example of this new fervor is the Christian Social Union, under whose auspices courses of Socialistic sermons, full of denunciation of the capitalist and mammon-seeker, are delivered by clergymen—who are not exactly starving. Such a sermon was delivered a few weeks ago by Dr.

Stubbs, Dean of Ely, in Holy Trinity Church, Sloane-square—an eminently democratic neighborhood; and a report of the discourse is before us. It is because it contains a few remarkable things that may be noticed that we deal with it here. It is probably only a type of many sermons which the pulpit is now giving forth.

At the beginning of his sermon the Dean quotes an apocryphal saying of Jesus, that he was practically going to turn the existing state of affairs upside down. "Unless ye shall cause that which is on the right hand to be on the left, and that which is on the left hand to be on the right, and that which is above to be below, and that which is before to be behind, ye have no knowledge of the kingdom of God." Now, that is a pretty large order. Certainly, one would say such a preacher was a revolutionary, if the word "revolutionary" has any meaning. There must be an absolute change—that is the meaning of the declaration. Yet Dr. Stubbs says that Christ "was not a revolutionist." Probably Dr. Stubbs has an aversion to revolution. "Christ," it seems, "did come to remodel society; He did come to turn the world upside down and the Christian Church, in the idea of its Founder, had for its object the reorganisation and the reconstitution of society, no less than the salvation of the individual." But what a commentary on all this is the simple record of nineteen Christian centuries! Christ came to turn the world upside down—and the world was too strong or too heavy for him. And he was omnipotent, forsooth! Let the Christian get out of this eternal dilemma as he may. Christ, he is always telling us, came to save the world, and the world is still "unsaved." Was Christ, then, a failure? Was he not powerful enough to effect his object? Was "God Almighty" too weak for his own "creation"? What has the religionist to say? Let us hear Dr. Stubbs again. He tells us that "it is, alas! only too easy to find many chapters which record only the Church's failure to sustain the character of a savior of society; yet, when we remember that all history is but a record of imperfectly realised ideals, it is only fair, surely, to ascribe the social failures of the Church to a falling short of the original ideal, rather than to any want of completeness in the ideal itself." How suave! The Christian ideal is perfect *only*—it can't be realised. And the Church, it seems, is just an ordinary natural phase of human effort, such as "all history" is concerned with. But we understood that this Church was the peculiar favorite of God; that it had large quantities of the Holy Ghost and divine grace, and other like commodities, stored on its premises. Now, Dr. Stubbs says it is only a human, imperfect institution. The fact is, these religionists cry hot and cold to suit their purpose. Just as the Bible is a unique and miraculous book at one time, and a merely human record when its errors and its filth have to be explained away, so the Church is a divine institution to-day, and a human one to-morrow. One can only say that sophistry of this kind does not evidence that love of truth and candor to which the democratic Dean aspires.

But the Dean, after some talk on the "democracy of to-morrow," gives expression to what we believe to be the real aim of, and object of, these ecclesiastics in the social movement. He is concerned, in fact, for the religiosity of the future. "For if," he tells us, "the English democracy of the future is not going to be a religionist democracy, then God help us all." Aye, there's the rub! We must make sure that "religion"—and the loaves and fishes—are safe, anyhow, democracy or no democracy. And that we venture to suggest is the mission of what we may call these interlopers in the camp of reform; nine-tenths of them are there for the purpose of laying the foundations of their priestcraft in the new soil that seems so fruitful and so full of promise. Honest men in the Church who desire to assist the cause of progress there may be; nay, honest men there undoubtedly are. But they are the exceptions, not the rule. They represent a phase of opinion which cannot be general or permanent. You cannot belong to the camp of Progress and the camp of Faith without feeling the strain, and soon you will be compelled to break either with Progress or with Faith. And as the typical Churchman is a Churchman first and a humanist afterwards, one is compelled to look askance at the typical reforming ecclesiastic.

And, read in that light, this passage of Dean Stubbs's sermon is ominous and reveals a good deal. Listen! "There is no use mincing matters: unless the world goes

back, democracy must go forward; the will of the people must more and more prevail. *We cannot prevent numbers ruling; we can only try to teach them to rule well.*" The italics, of course, are ours. But doesn't that one sentence reveal worlds?—"We can only try to teach them to rule well." Isn't it the expression of a man forced against his will to concede something, and then trying to make the best of a bad necessity? Trying to teach them to rule well means, of course, dosing them up with "Christ" and reverence for his "Holy Church" and her deans. But the Dean gets even more definite. He goes on: "And the Church of Christ, if it is to be of any use at all in the world, must take part in that work. She must not waste time in lamenting the mistakes of the past—and God knows the social errors and sins of the Church, in its travesty of her Master's message of social salvation, have been great—but she must address herself to the tasks of the future." So there it is. The Church captured the old civilisation and dragged it down; it must set itself to the task of capturing the new. But Dr. Stubbs moves a bit too fast. If the Church has made so many mistakes as even he admits, we have surely a right, in the light of that history, to question her credentials now. To say in effect, in the one sentence: "We have blundered hopelessly in the past; we have made desperate mistakes. We are going to guide you in the future"; isn't it a little out of gear? The fact is, the meekness and candor displayed by Dr. Stubbs are very admirable in their way, and we welcome these admissions of the Church's incompetency and the Church's cupidity; but even Dr. Stubbs's meekness is a flimsy foundation for a fresh support to an organisation of which he is but a more or less unrepresentative unit.

Even in the conclusion of his sermon he suggests an analogy which he can hardly have intended, which bears out our point. He tells us that Christ "uttered words until then almost unknown—Love, Service, Sacrifice, Duty—and the dead arose from that dead society arose the Christian world, the world of Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood." For the moment, it matters little that these statements are not true; indeed, if Dr. Stubbs were given to that sort of thing, we should take the reference to the Christian Liberty and Equality as downright joking. The "Brotherhood," of course, one may admit when one calls to mind Torquemada, St. Bartholomew's Eve, Calvin, Smithfield, and other brotherly memories. Decidedly the "brotherhood" part of Christianity has always been a strong point. But the real significance of the passage is this: Christ, *vide* the Dean, came with these fine phrases on his lips, and everything was to run smoothly ever after. Yet, instead of running smoothly, there were blunders and failures and crimes—*vide* the Dean. Now, however, comes the Christian reformer with a fresh batch of fine phrases—everything is to run smoothly *now*. Will the result be different? Or will some newer new Christian of the twentieth century come to tell us of the blunders of the Christianity of the nineteenth?

FREDERICK RYAN.

REWARD.

THE idea of reward as a stimulus to virtue is radically wrong. It must ever appear in a disfavorable light to thinking minds. The substance of a thing may be the same, but only that deed which is actuated by righteous motives can be properly considered as good. The man who throws a sovereign upon the plate from a wish to appear respectable has not done a righteous deed. A good motive, though it should result in abortive effort, is to be counted for righteousness. But to do good for sake of reward is to act on a bad motive. To hold up the rewards of heaven as a stimulus to mankind to act rightly is to instigate men to act by unworthy motives, and is, in itself, morally wrong. Yet this is what is constantly done. The highest rule that man can act upon—namely, to do right for righteousness' sake—occurs nowhere in the Bible. Man always asks himself, "Why should I do this thing?" and has not as yet acquired sufficient nobility of mind to satisfy himself with the answer, "Because it is right."

It is instructive to examine into the practical force which this idea of reward in a future life possesses in connection with the conduct of men here and now. Is it effectual in

furthering the interests of truth and virtue in our midst? Is it useful in promoting the moral welfare of mankind? Regarded as a recompense, it has, to ordinary minds, the disadvantage of offering a reward of a different kind from the pleasure for whose loss it is to compensate. If a man abstain from the pleasure of the table, he knows the recompense of heaven will not be one of a similar kind to that pleasure he loses. It boots nothing to say it will be something far higher and nobler, or that the things of this transitory life are not to be compared to it. If men are to look upon it as a return for abstinence here, they will naturally look for a repayment in kind. Men's minds are made so, and will not be persuaded out of their nature into desiring to lose one thing and gain another in its place. There is also the lapse of time between the loss and its recompense to be considered. Man feels his abstinence as a very actual thing. Is the certainty of heaven (though it were assured as a fact of science) a very actual thing to him? Are the thoughts of heaven ever very real to men? How hard it is to throw away a little actual good which we hold in our hands, even on the assurance of a much greater benefit to follow. The idea, we may safely say, can be but rarely strong enough to persuade us to forego the pleasures of the hour. The fact is exemplified again and again in life. We choose instinctively the nearest and most certain good. If I may be excused a homely illustration, we prefer to sustain ourselves on broken victuals when we are hungry than await the feast that is being prepared. It is precisely the same with the great promised compensations of heaven, which most of us would barter for a little comfort to be enjoyed now, when we feel the want of it. Faust is not intended to represent a bad man, and in exchanging his soul for present pleasure he is but fulfilling the natural desire of all men. We can but possess the present, and most of us are in the habit of leaving the far future to take care of itself.

Over and above all such considerations it should be recognised that reward hereafter cannot truly be compensation for present ills. To be happy at one time does not repay the unhappiness of an anterior period. Man's present feelings are all-in-all to him. He lives but, as it were, a moment; for the past and future seem like unreal shadows. If, then, he experiences a moment of pain, he has suffered; and, though the next be spent in the most entrancing pleasures, it is so sharply divided from the first as to seem scarcely related. To say that in the past we sorrowed, but that now we experience pleasure, is to define two separately existing epochs, which do not interact upon each other—do not obliterate or annul one another. Pain is grievous, though happiness may follow; happiness retains its nature, though sorrows compass it on every side. It may be said that to look back on past sorrows when the present is bright and prosperous often brings an added feeling of comfort to men. It may be so; but whether memory of all the world's cares and vicissitudes must not also produce something of sadness is doubtful. Pain and sorrow are not merely grievous because of the negation of joy, but are inherently disliked and feared for their own sake. The idea of an after-life recompense, therefore, gains no sanction or reason for existence from the suffering of the present.

In placing reward as the ultimate aim of ambition we act merely on animal principles. The cattle follow us for food; the horse runs after the corn-sieve; our dog awaits his daily bone at our hands. Yet even the dog will follow his master out of pure affection, and often clings to him with a devotion which has been found faithful unto death. Shall man prove himself to be lower than his dog in that he cannot follow that which is higher than himself but from selfish motives of gain and aggrandisement? It is untrue that any man has been heroic or noble from such motives. The idea of heaven is more tolerated than loved. If a scientist can work laboriously year after year expecting no return, seeing his discoveries sink into the mass of things which benefit mankind, but call for no special remark, the moralist surely can live in a similar fashion. Good is, at least, partially rewarded here—sometimes with generous fulness. Is heaven to pay for what is already recompensed? The good man will count himself sufficiently rewarded by the approbation of his own soul; the inward sense of having done right will be abundant reparation for any loss sustained. This is the true man's reward. Heaven is the wages of servitors and minions. The smile on the pale face which greets our

efforts to ameliorate pain; the look of gratitude from the oppressed whom we have befriended; the warm shake of the hand when some noble soul recognises that, though weak and erring, we have done our best: these things are a full and overflowing reward to all generous hearts. Why should we ask for more? If we are paid in kind, the score is wiped out, and charity no longer blesses him that gives and him that takes. Repaid, we are on a mere equality with him whom we have benefited. To have the world in one's debt is to be surpassing rich in inward satisfaction. Let us thoroughly recognise the highest principle that man can act upon, and learn, as far as in us lies, to do the right for righteousness' sake alone.

DARIUS.

IGNATIUS LOYOLA ON HELL.

As a set-off to the excerpts from Martin Luther's *Table Talk* on the Devil, I extract the views of the founder of the Society of Jesus on hell. These views are not, like those of the Protestant leader, personal ones. They are the creed of the company, and are taken from the *Spiritual Exercises*, which have to be meditated upon by every Jesuit novice during his thirty days' retreat. The book almost takes the place of the Bible in the eyes of Jesuits, and is even said to have been inspired by the Holy Ghost. The work is devoted to various religious meditations, the fifth of which is on Hell:—

The first prelude gives the composition of place—viz., the eyes of the imagination must behold the length, breadth, and depth of hell. The second consists in praying for an intimate knowledge or consciousness of the sins for which the reprobate are suffering; so that, if ever we should forget the love of God, the fear of punishment, at least, should restrain us from sin.

The first point is to *behold*, in imagination, the vast conflagration of hell, and the souls therein, enclosed in certain flaming bodies, as it were in a prison of fire.

Secondly, to *hear*, in imagination, the wailings, the shrieks, cries, and blasphemies against Christ and his saints issuing thence.

Third, thoroughly to *smell*, even with the smelling of the imagination, the smoke, brimstone, and the horrid stench of some sewer or filth and rottenness.

Fourthly, to *taste* in like manner the bitterest things; such as tears, rancour, the worm of conscience.

Fifthly, to *touch* in a manner those fires, by whose touch those very souls are burnt up.

In the colloquy with Christ we must call to mind the souls of those who are condemned to hell, either because they would not believe in the coming of Christ, or, if they believed, did not live in conformity with his precepts, either at the same time when Christ lived in this world, or after and subsequently. We must then give thanks to the same Christ most fervently for not having permitted us to rush to such destruction, but rather has, to this very day, treated us with clemency and mercy.

Having thus thoroughly immersed the novice in the thought of burning hell, he is fitted to become as the waxen mould, ready to take any impress his superiors chose to stamp upon him. The Jesuits well know the value of the hellish teaching of Christianity, and would endorse the saying of the old Scotch beadle, that "a kirk without a hell is na worth a damn."

LUCIANUS.

The Bible and Truth.

We have proof in the Bible that, apart from the lying which constituted false witness and was to the injury of a neighbor, there was among the Hebrews but little reprobation of lying. Indeed, it would be remarkable were it otherwise, considering that Jahveh set the example; as when, to ruin Ahab, he commissioned "a lying spirit" (1 Kings xxii. 22) to deceive his prophets; or as when, according to Ezekiel xiv. 9, he threatened to use deception as a means of vengeance. "If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." Evidently from a race-character, which evolved such a conception of a deity's principles, there naturally came no great regard for veracity.—Herbert Spencer, "*Principles of Ethics*," sec. 158, vol. i., p. 402.

ACID DROPS.

MR. HARRY FOSTER, M.P., intends to move an amendment to the Address, regretting that the Queen's advisers have given no promise of "a policy of justice, fairness, and consideration" towards voluntary schools. Upon this matter we have two questions to ask. (1) Is Mr. Harry Foster selected, for the purpose of moving this amendment, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and his pious gang who want to thrust their hands deeper into the ratepayers' pockets? (2) Is this Mr. Harry Foster the company-promoter who came so badly out of that libel action against the *Westminster Gazette*? If these questions are answered in the affirmative, we commend this bit of business to the attention of Bishop Moorhouse, who ought to work it into the next speech he delivers on the immorality of Secular Education.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has given fresh currency to the statement of Bishop Moorhouse, of Manchester, that in the colony of Victoria, where the education in the public schools is purely secular, crime, and particularly juvenile crime, had alarmingly increased during the last ten years. The Archbishop's speech has been much commented upon at Melbourne; and, according to a Dalziel telegram, his figures as to the criminology of Victoria have been examined by Mr. H. Hayter, the Government statistician, who declares them to be incorrect.

We never could understand Bishop Moorhouse's figures except as pious efforts of imagination. Twenty years ago the Victoria Government stopped the grant of £50,000 a year which used to be distributed among the various Christian denominations. This horrible fact, taken with two others—namely, that no Christian minister is allowed to sit in the Legislature, and that no religion is allowed to be taught in the schools—will probably account for a good deal of clerical invention. If you fight priests, you must look out for calumny.

Mr. John Rae, in his new volume, *Eight Hours for Work*, gives a very interesting account of Victoria, where the eight-hour day is nearly universal. The working men there read more, save more, and drink less than they do in England. Victoria has actually less crime than any other part of Australasia. New South Wales tops the list with 213 commitments and 139 convictions per 100,000 of population. Victoria comes last with 68 commitments and 38 convictions. In the matter of convictions she shows better than England, where the proportion is 44 to every 100,000 of population. Yet here in England we have the great Bishop Moorhouse; we have also the Bible in the overwhelming majority of our schools; we have, further, many millions of public money spent in supporting Christianity.

Christian denominations are all alike in their use of "infidel death-bed" stories. One by one the heroes of Freethought are traduced by these black assassins, who slay reputations when they can no longer kill lives. Here is Pastor James Douglas, of Kenyon Chapel, Brixton, printing in his *Silent Messenger*, which is a very loud liar, that the great Ludwig Feuerbach died in "bewilderment" and "despair," crying "Truth! O Truth! where is it?" We have asked so many retailers of pious falsehoods for their "authorities" that we shall not waste our time in putting the question afresh to James Douglas. We just look at him and pass on.

The Price Hughes gang are playing the "converted Atheist" game again. At the annual meeting of the Central Mission, in the Holborn Tower Hall, one of those veracious Sisters trotted out her rescued infidel. This is the report in the *Methodist Times*: "Sister Dorothy did not believe in arguing with persons who were opposed to Christianity. She had a different way of dealing with them. This way she made plain in a fine description of the conversion of an Atheist brought to Christ under Mr. Wakerley's ministry. The subject of her sketch was in the congregation."

Of course we shall never get the name and address of this converted Atheist, unless we get it by accident. That he was "in the congregation" is easy to affirm, and difficult to deny, especially if the man was not there. May be the man was there, but was not much of an Atheist before his conversion; something like Charles Alfred Gibson, the Atheist Shoemaker, who was never known to be an Atheist until he was made into one by Price Hughes and the Sisters who "converted" him.

Sister Dorothy is wise in not arguing with persons opposed to Christianity. Mr. Hughes follows the same discreet method. But then he is base enough to lie over them, and that is carrying discretion to the point of infamy.

The *Herts Leader* of February 1 gives an illustration of the Watford fig-tree, in which a tree is growing out of a tomb, the stones of which it has riven asunder. The little legend in connection with it is that the lady buried in the vault from which the tree is growing was an Atheist, and that on her death-bed she adhered to her tenet, and expressed a wish that a fig-tree might grow out of her heart if there was a God. Of course, the thing is absurd; but it was not thought so by the credulous of the last century, who handed the tale down from one to another.

The *Leader* says: "When the churchyard was lowered an opportunity accidentally presented itself for a peep into this vault, and those who embraced that opportunity clearly saw that the root of the tree was not in the vault, but in the crown of the arch, four or five feet from where the lady's heart must have been. A few of the tendrils of the root had found their way through the brickwork of the arch, and had attached themselves to the bottom of the vault; and to this probably may be attributed its luxuriant growth, as much more moisture must be obtained by these tendrils than the parts of the root attached to the crown of the arch." No doubt the Watford fig-tree serves the pious purpose of making the yokels regard Atheism with horror.

Really we would not be able to get along without our parsons. The *Railway Review* opens out on the Rev. J. T. Wardle-Stafford, who bosses the Wesleyan Chapel at York. The members of the York Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants asked him to preach a sermon in aid of the Orphan Fund. They supplied him with an Orphan Fund book and all the necessary literature to enable him to speak correctly and fully about the splendid work the fund is doing. Instead of which, Wardle-Stafford preached fire and brimstone upon the men and the cause of which the fund is a part. The collection, which was taken before the sermon, amounted to £11, and Wardle-Stafford refuses to give it to the Orphan Fund. He has offered half of it to the local secretary as a compromise, and the local secretary has told him rightly enough that he will have none of it. York is a fine old city, and contains some fine old curiosities. —*Spy*.

"What a grim tyrant is money!" exclaims the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse. No doubt. But how the grim tyrant is sought after by all the clerical tribe! Say to them, "Silver and gold I have none," and they soon drop your acquaintance.

The Rev. Samuel Smith, rector of Landulph, sued the Rev. F. G. May, rector of St. Mellion, Cornwall, for burying one of his parishioners and not handing over the fees. Letters were put in, in which the plaintiff called defendant "a sacerdotal snob," and said: "I will put him in court and see him damned." To prevent misunderstanding, he added: "Lest some pig-headed people should think this is a swear word, I beg to observe that I use the word damn in its proper sense." The plaintiff got as damages one farthing, and may consider himself damned by the observations which the judge made on the case.

The clergy in South Africa are complaining of poverty, and, at the Graham's Town Diocesan Synod, seem to have given their entire attention to the important question, how to improve their worldly position. The Bishop gave his opinion that the stipend of a married clergyman should be at least £400, but did not offer anything himself towards seeing that it reached this amount.

We have here a Christian Social Union, which puts itself a good deal in evidence at the propaganda of Christian Socialism. But we notice that the C.S.U. says nothing of equality of clerical incomes. If they would first start levelling matters among their own fraternity, we should have more faith in the consistency of the principles of these Socialists of the cloth.

An attempt to rob a bank was made at Portland, in San Francisco, by a Baptist minister, named Reid, who had disguised himself for the purpose. He entered the office with a revolver, and made the cashier, who was alone, hold up his hands while he was being bound and gagged. As Reid was putting all the coin on which he could lay his hands into a sack, a cashier of another bank entered the office with a shot gun, and Reid had to give himself up.

Mr. Franklin Steiner has recently given in the *Truthseeker* particulars of the religious status of the convicts in sixteen United States penitentiaries and in Canada, as gathered from official reports, all made by parties favorable to Christianity. The total list embraces 33,168. Of those who were members of churches, or were taught in Sunday-schools, there were 29,906. Of the remaining 3,262 two are reported Atheists, and one an Infidel. He reports as many preachers in one penitentiary as there are Atheists and Infidels in seventeen.

Mr. Steiner quotes the following from the *Christian Advocate*, a leading Methodist organ: "In Sing Sing there are 1,515 men. There are among them about one hundred men who, in the past, have been connected with Protestant churches as members. There are at least fifty who have confessed their sinfulness, and have professed to find God's favor. Of all those 1,515 men fifty-five per cent. are Roman Catholics, and forty-five per cent. nominally are Protestants. Of the whole number ninety per cent. went to Sunday school when boys."

Edwin O. Quigley, the Wall-street broker, whose wholesale forgeries have been the sensation of New York, and who is now remitted to Sing Sing Prison for fifteen years, was the son of a Methodist minister, and as remarkable for piety as Jabez Balfour and his colleagues.

The *Montreal Daily Star* (January 24) says "Christian Science" was responsible for the death of Mrs. Hammel D. Moore, who committed suicide by drowning herself. "Christian Science" taught her that the mind had complete power over the body, but her corpse testifies to the contrary. The jury in the case found that she walked into the river "deliberately of her own will, the said Mrs. Moore not being of sound mind, but distracted and despondent. We, the said jury, further find that her despondency was caused by her having taken up with a pernicious and dangerous doctrine called 'Christian Science,' which said doctrine we, the jury, wish most emphatically to denounce and repudiate as delusive and dangerous in the extreme to any community."

Anna Boecker, the one lady rescued from the "Elbe," curiously displayed her piety in her letter to the captain of the "Wildflower," who picked her up. She said: "Next to our Heavenly Father, I owe my safety to you and the crew." Our Heavenly Father does not seem to have had much care for the immense majority of Miss Boecker's fellow passengers. One would think modesty would make her silent as to his special regard for herself while drowning so many others of his children.

The papers during the past week have been filled with accounts of heartrending sufferings through the severe weather. In several cases omnibus drivers and cabmen have been frozen to death in their seats, and numerous tramps have succumbed to the cold. Sheep and game have perished in large numbers, children have had to be dug out of their schools, and the ranks of the unemployed have been increased so much that the ordinary channels have been inadequate to cope with the distress.

Not only England has suffered from the weather's severity. In many countries it has been far worse. In Austria there have been forty degrees of frost. The dead birds fall from the trees, and many human beings have died from exposure. In Russia wolves have attacked women and children on their way to church, and in Poland also they attack the villages in herds, and carry off children and domestic animals. In America they have had severe blizzards, destroying many lives, an entire family being frozen to death in Nebraska. In Nova Scotia small houses and shops near the beach have been blown into the sea. A moderate estimate of the damage done to fruits and vegetables in Florida places the loss at ten million dollars. In Texas thousands of yearling cattle have perished. How any one can simply read the papers, and yet credit that all things are under the superintendence of a Divine Providence, is a mystery.

At Constantinople they have had a revival of cholera, and in Norway earthquake shocks, eleven persons having been killed by the fall of an avalanche.

Jesus Christ, in speaking of God's providential care for sparrows, showed a very limited acquaintance with the facts of natural history. It is now well established that birds perish wholesale in their annual migrations; they drop by millions, and God does not notice. In severe weather, such as we have had recently, birds are deprived of their sustenance; and the consequence is that myriads of myriads die of sheer starvation, while others are literally frozen to death by the intense cold.

Whittington Parish Church, St. Bartholomew, Chesterfield, has been completely destroyed by fire; the Lord letting the conflagration break out in his house when the roads were thickly covered with snow and all the hydrants were frozen. The safe in the vestry, containing valuable deeds, registers, and plate, was red-hot. Evidently there will be no books or papers in Hades, unless the characters are stamped on asbestos.

At another House of God, at Hucclecote, near Gloucester, the fumes from the coke stoves half suffocated the congregation. One lady screamed before fainting. Perhaps she thought Old Nick had come at last.

Some sorts of Christian charity are as cold as the weather. An Edmonton correspondent tells us of a poor woman whose husband was at home suffering from consumption, and who applied, not vainly, to a Freethinker for help. On being asked what the district visitor had done for her, she replied that she had called and left a Church magazine. This for a woman who had only one sheet to cover herself, her husband, and four children!

Jules Cæsar Aubourg, a Civil Service clerk who has been figuring in the Divorce Court, is a peculiar gentleman. Besides making his wife a drudge, keeping her short of money, and urging the children to treat her disrespectfully, he brought a Miss Sharp into the house. He used to go into Miss Sharp's room, but then it was only to read prayers! Pah! An ounce of civet, good apothecary!

The Rev. Herbert Gregory is a fit companion for Jules Cæsar Aubourg. This man of God, in defending himself against dreadful charges of cruelty and adultery brought against him by his wife, was pulled up by Lord Justice Lopes, who hinted something about perjury and the Public Prosecutor; whereupon Saint Gregory caved in, and a decree nisi was granted forthwith.

The Library and Arts Committee of the Liverpool Corporation, which refused the Picton Lecture Hall for the N.S.S. Conference, have let the Walker Art Gallery for an exhibition to further the objects of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. The Society has been misdescribed as the "London Jews' Society" in the announcements.

According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, the agents of the London Missionary Society do not stick at invoking the aid of the law to assist them in their gospel work among the Jews. In Poland, for instance, they always claim "police protection" for their blessed work as soon as they arrive. Accordingly, when a Jew thus coerced to accept a copy of the New Testament burns it, he is promptly arrested, and we are left to hope that he is not sent to Siberia.

"In Wolkovitz the missionaries put up at the Jewish hotel, and because the landlord refused to profane his Sabbath for the convenience of Christian visitors they apply to the police again. Those obliging authorities undertake to post up the bills 'inviting' Jews to attend the missionary service; and the Chief of Police himself attends to protect the good man from insult. So another Jew is arrested—for expressing his opinion to his own people on these doings, and the landlady tells her amiable guests to leave. Of course, they appeal to their powerful friends, 'and [it is from an English missionary journal that the *Jewish Chronicle* quotes] *volens volens* she was obliged, not only to keep us, but to find accommodation for the "accursed" books on her premises."

After this triumph, however, they feared that "the Jews would not accept our New Testaments, so gave several hundred over to the police, who would gradually get them into Jewish hands." Those hapless Russian Jews! Heathens and Atheists pity them, but these devoted Christians pile yet more trouble and sorrow on their heads.

Virchand R. Gandhi, the representative of the Jains of India at the Parliament of Religions, says that it is only among the lowest classes that the missionaries can make converts, for every intelligent Hindoo knows the spurious origin of Christianity, and that its precepts were borrowed from India.

Christianity is a divine religion, but it needs certain adjuncts to keep it afloat. The negroes of Hayti have been Christianised for a long while, yet, under native rule, thousands of them have given up Christianity and replaced it by Voodooism and fetish worship. Many think that, if the West Indies was deserted by the whites, the punctilious church attendance of the negroes would soon be replaced by savage fetish dances.

Another case of insane fanaticism is reported from Constantinople. A Turkish soldier suddenly sallied forth from his quarters with a naked sword in his hand. Uttering cries of "Allah!" he rushed through the crowded streets slashing madly at men and women alike. He was finally seized, but not until he had inflicted mortal wounds upon five men and serious injuries upon eleven men and three women. Unless diluted with Secularism, religion is about as virulent as typhoid fever.

According to some official data just published, it appears that during the ten years, 1884-94, no fewer than 178 German Lutheran pastors were placed upon their trial before the Baltic Criminal Courts on various alleged charges of infringement of the Russian State Church regulations. One pastor died in prison. A considerable number have

transferred their labors to the German side of the frontier to be out of the way of their fellow Christians of the orthodox Greek Church.

It was announced that the new Czar was going to be ever so much more Liberal than his father. It does not look like it. The *Ruskaia Zhizu*, one of the Liberal papers, has been suppressed. This journal had already suffered repeated penalties for its advocacy of reform, and finally called down upon itself the displeasure of the Government by protesting against the exclusion of Freethinkers from the benefits of a fund in aid of needy literary men.

According to the special correspondent whom Reuter's Agency sent to Armenia to report on the alleged atrocities, there is little or nothing to choose between Christian Armenians and Moslem Turks. They both want the influences of secular civilisation to moderate their fanaticism.

Thurgau is a small canton, but its folk have a great repute for a singular wit. The *Basler Nachrichten* supplies us with the latest instance of a "Thurgauer joke." A rich old bachelor died last December in a village in Canton Schaffhausen; and, as the story goes, he bequeathed all his property to three old friends, one of whom was a Züricher, the second a St. Galler, and a third a Thurgauer. He expressed a wish that they should all take a last look at his corpse before following him to the grave, and that each should deposit a sum of 200 francs in his coffin, to be buried with him, according to a pre-historic custom. After the funeral one of the three friends, the Züricher, was anxious to learn whether the other two had loyally complied with the wish of the departed. "I placed my 200 francs in the coffin," he said, "in five-franc pieces." "And I," said the St. Galler, "put in a 200-franc bank-note." "I am thoroughly convinced of your fidelity," said the Thurgauer, "for I have taken out your 400 francs, and have placed in the hand of our dear friend a cheque for 600 francs, payable in heaven." — *Westminster Gazette*.

A story is told of a Roman Catholic priest whose sermons are usually of a practical kind. On entering the pulpit he took with him a walnut to illustrate the character of the various Christian Churches. He told the people the shell was tasteless and valueless; that was the Wesleyan Church. The skin was nauseous, disagreeable, and worthless; that was the Presbyterian Church. He then said he would show them the holy Roman Apostolic Church. He cracked the nut for the kernel, and found it rotten. Then his reverence coughed violently and pronounced the benediction.

The Unitarians in connection with a "forward movement" have published *A Brief Account of Unitarianism*. We see that they claim among adherents the name of R. W. Emerson. A reference to the lives of Emerson, by either Cooke or Conway, will show that he was outside all the Churches. T. Jefferson is also claimed, and he was a Deist, though he doubtless attended Unitarian services occasionally.

In the good old gospel days circumstances were managed so "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by the prophet"; but now-a-days things go on without any regard to these gentry. Last year there were to have been lots of earthquakes, and this year no snow; while Prophet Baxter has to shift on his date for the great wars and confederacy of ten kingdoms. Baxter, however, only shares the fate of all the many of his predecessors who have predicted the end of the world. Even Paul, who in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians had declared that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," found it well to hedge, and to say that first of all the man of sin must be revealed—the son of perdition. Jesus Christ promised there were those standing around who should not taste of death till they saw him coming in his kingdom. As he was so egregiously mistaken, we cannot wonder at the minor delusions of his followers.

The *Progressive Thinker* asks: "Had six days been given to God and only one to productive labor, where would the money come from to pay the preacher? Things might be worse. One day in seven set apart to the service of God, six days in seven to practical life, is a great deal better than if all time was wasted on an abstraction."

Evidently there are some Americans who do not appreciate free institutions. There is, for instance, the Rev. Dr. Williams, who writes thus to the *Baltimore American* in regard to Ingersoll: "Now, considering the appalling wretchedness that a gifted writer and an attractive orator may bring to many, we think, no matter how much we believe in free speech and an untrammelled press, that his lips should be closed and his pen stopped in such terrible work."

The Rev. Dr. Williams ought to know that the only means to stop Freethinkers expressing their thoughts are those

used by the Inquisition. To close the lips of all the Freethinkers in the United States would be a task beyond the power of Mr. Williams and all his fellow sky-pilots. He is, we understand, a Presbyterian, and perhaps regrets the days when his leader, Jean Calvin, burnt Servetus at a green-tree fire. That was an effectual way of closing the lips of an opponent.

Local Vetoists sometimes assume that, once the question of Sunday closing is put to the decision of the popular vote, their object will sure to be attained. Let them look at Cardiff, where the *Western Mail* has just taken a house-to-house vote, by means of voting cards, with the result that, out of 18,606 electors whose names appear on the last municipal register of the town, 8,553 were in favor of "amending the Welsh Sunday Closing Act, so as to permit of the licensed houses in Cardiff being opened on Sundays for one hour at dinner time, and between the hours of eight and ten in the evening." The "Noes" only numbered 2,574, the remainder of the electorate being either neutral or giving no account of themselves. This plebiscite appears to have been conducted very carefully, and is certainly an index to public opinion on Sunday closing.

Arguing in favor of written as preferable to extempore sermons, though Baxter glories in the burning for witchcraft of "an old reading parson" in the days of Matthew Hopkins, the *Daily News* says: "A Scot has been heard to say, from the pulpit, that eternal punishment is 'exceeding abundant, above all we can ask or hope.' Another has invited Heaven to 'keep one eye on thy servant, the minister of this parish.' These things, and a great many others of the same sort, could never have been soberly written down, and then read."

Lord Grimthorpe, who is Vicar-General of the diocese of York, makes a strong attack upon his Archbishop in the *Nineteenth Century* anent the question of the re-marriage of innocent divorced persons. Christians have been quarrelling on the subject through the ages, and it is no wonder, for the Gospels themselves variously report the teachings of Jesus on the matter.

The *Church Times* has been noticing some cases of public penances performed at church within the present century. One which took place at Begeley, Pembrokeshire, is amusing. In 1844 the person who supplied the stone for the rectory had a dispute with the rector, and was abusive. As a punishment, he had the choice of doing penance or being prosecuted. He chose the former, and on Sunday walked down the church in a white sheet, saying three times, "I called the Rev. R. Buckley a rogue"; he added each time, *sotto voce*, "which is true enough."

The American men of God are entering on a crusade against the Sunday papers. From their pulpits and through the *Christian Statesman* they preach a boycott of those papers which issue a Sunday edition, and of the advertisers who patronise their columns. The effort is a good deal like that of Mrs. Partington to mop up the Atlantic.

A curious one-act play by the well-known Neapolitan dramatist, Signor Antona-Traversi, has been put on the stage of the Sannazzaro Theatre at Naples. An Atheist father and Catholic mother, workpeople, have lost their only son, an infant who has not been baptised; and, while the little corpse is awaiting burial, the parents argue as to whether it shall have Christian sepulture or be cremated, as the father wishes. The deep grief of the mother prevails. A parish priest comes to bless the house, as is the custom at Easter. He bestows a benediction on the corpse (behind the scenes), and the father yields to the prayers of his wife. The artistic value of the piece (writes our correspondent) consists in the psychological condition of a wife who passionately loves her Atheist, or rather free-thinking, husband, who is herself a sincere Christian, and who is full of anxiety for the future of her child in the other world. The language of the married couple is necessarily too elevated for people of the class they are represented to be. The short piece was enthusiastically applauded by a full house, and the author called before the curtain eight times. — *Daily News*.

In Egypt, Tanta, "the city of healing," is yearly visited by over 200,000 pilgrims. This Lourdes of the East is the tomb of Seyvid, a Moslem saint, that has for 800 years stood in the mosque, and to which every day a crowd of halt and blind are led. Credulity is the same among all peoples, and doubtless the list of miraculous cures at the tomb of Seyvid is a pretentious one.

The saying, "The better the day, the better the deed," hardly applies to dairymen, for, according to the Analyst's Report, while the percentage of adulterated milk supplied on week days is only 5½, on Sundays it rises to 20. We suppose the inspector is not expected round on the Lord's Day.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 17, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London :—
7, "Mr. Balfour's Plea for Belief."

Wednesday, February 20, Hall of Science, Old-street, E.C. :—
8, 15, "Shakespeare's Golden Comedy of *As You Like It*."

February 24, Hall of Science.

March 3, Camberwell ; 10, Sunderland.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—February 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.

J. G. FISHER.—Thanks. May be useful.

W. SIMONS.—Obliged. See paragraphs.

H. G.—The Church accommodation in Wales, as given in the
Official Year Book of the Church of England, is no more than
416,000.

W. L.—Carlyle meant, of course, that it was scepticism which had
"abolished hell-fire." Not the *thing*, but the *belief* in it, which
is after all the practical reality, so far as this life is concerned.

W. D. ROLLEY.—The passage occurs in Mill's essay, *On Liberty*.

J. K. MAAGAARD.—There is some truth in your observations, but
you do not sufficiently allow for the great differences in the two
nations. Our Churches have, all of them, fixed creeds, to which
ministers must subscribe. Besides, there are enormous vested
interests bound up with orthodoxy.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks for cuttings.

S. F. GRAY.—See "Acid Drops."

H. COURTNEY.—You have not sent the address.

GUILDFORD, SURREY.—Are there any saints in this neighborhood?
A London lecturer is there for a few weeks, and should be utilised
if there is an opportunity. We shall be glad to forward his
address to any Freethinker in the neighborhood.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges :—
Wood Green Branch, 10s.; J. D. Feilding, 10s.; W. Clarkson,
£1; H. A. Lupton, 10s. Cast-off clothing is greatly needed.

CHARLES WATTS'S ELECTION FUND.—G. Ward, treasurer, acknow-
ledges :—Per Miss Vance, W. Clarkson, £1.

J. W. C. STAFFORD.—Shall appear.

WATTS ELECTION FUND DEFICIT.—E. P. 42 sends us a second
subscription of £1.

E. P. 42.—Thanks for your assistance. It is a wonder the London
friends do not wipe off the deficit on the Watts Election Fund.
The letter by Mr. Gladstone, which you refer to, was used on
behalf of Mr. Watts's candidature in Finsbury, and will be
used again in future struggles.

J. THACKRAY.—You had better trust to the figures in the "Bible
Absurdities" part of our *Bible Handbook*.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Cape Times—Reading Observer—Two Worlds
—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Western Figaro—Melbourne
Ago—Irish Weekly—Ulster Examiner—Lindsey Star—Montreal
Daily Star—Progressive Thinker—Truthseeker—Le Bleu—
Secular Thought—Blackpool Gazette and News—Isle of Man
Times—Crescent—Islamic World.

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 Stone-
cutter-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 suc-
ceeding 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.

It being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the
wrapper when the subscription is duo, subscribers will receive
the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription
expires.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Owing to the time taken by cases before it on the list, the
Libel Case affecting the London Hall of Science has not yet
been reached. Notice that it will be heard some time on
Wednesday or Thursday (February 13, 14) reaches us as we
are preparing to go to press with this number of the

Freethinker. The full report of the proceedings, which we
have arranged for, cannot therefore appear until our next
issue.

Mr. Robert Forder took Mr. Foote's place at the London
Hall of Science on Sunday evening, the latter having caught
a cold, which, though not serious, was quite sufficient to keep
him indoors, and certainly from lecturing in such bitter
weather. Mr. Foote expects to be all right for platform
work again this evening (February 17), when he will
discourse on "Mr. Balfour's Plea for Belief." The Rt. Hon.
A. J. Balfour, the Tory leader in the House of Commons, has
just issued a big and costly book, entitled *The Foundations
of Belief*, and it is this book which Mr. Foote will criticise.

On the following Wednesday (February 20) Mr. Foote will
lecture upon, and give selections from, "Shakespeare's
Golden Comedy of *As You Like It*."

Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience and a most
enthusiastic reception last Sunday evening at the Camber-
well Branch of the N.S.S. At the conclusion of his lecture
he received quite an ovation, and was urged to visit the
Branch again at an early date. The Camberwell friends
deserve support, for they have an attractive hall and many
active workers.

To-day (Sunday, February 17) Mr. Watts lectures three
times at Plymouth.

Leave has been asked to form an N.S.S. Branch in Burma,
where clericalism is creeping along stealthily, and where
education—with the exception of a neutral Government
college—is entirely in the hands of the religious parties.
There seems to be a number of Freethinkers scattered over
Burma, and it is believed that, if they were united, they
would be able to wield some influence.

Bishop Gimyo Adache, a Buddhist missionary from Japan,
has arrived at San Francisco. His object is to preach the
faith as it is in Gautama the enlightened, and to bring
benighted Christians to the practice of virtue without hope
of reward. Gimyo Adache is but only twenty-five years
old, but he has already built one temple at Kioto, and
intends to erect one in America. He says: "When
Americans see the beauty and goodness of my faith, they
will wish to learn it, and many will become Buddhists of my
order." Incidentally he will prevent Japanese in America
from seceding to the Christian faith.

The Buddhist faith has no sacrifices or atonement; no
Jew Shylock God, who will have his pound of flesh, even if
he takes it out of his own begotten son. Such salvation as
it offers has to be achieved by each individual for him or
herself, and not in reliance on the merits of any other
person. Altogether we fancy the Americans will be none
the worse for the preaching of Bishop Gimyo Adache.

The Rev. R. C. Fillingham, who is vicar of Hexton,
Amphill, Bedfordshire, is an almost solitary advocate of
Disestablishment among the clergy. In a letter to the
Daily News, after citing the Acts of Elizabeth, whereby all
who remained members of the pre-Reformation Church were
deprived of their benefices, dignities, and emoluments, and
these were handed over to the post-Reformation Church
(which declared her predecessors to have been sunk in
"damnable idolatry," and rejected her principal services as
"blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits"), he says:
"Those who are content to enjoy the proceeds of the dis-
endowment of the Church of Rome must not, for very
shame's sake, talk of sacrilege when it is proposed to deal
similarly with the Church of England."

We think Mr. Fillingham and Lord Rosebery are both at
sea in alluding to the claims of the Roman Church to English
religious endowments. The true position is that the nation
can at any time do what it likes with its own. Even Bishop
Butler saw, and said, that no property could be gifted in
perpetuity irrespective of the needs of posterity. "Property
in general," he says, "is, and must be, regulated by the laws
of the community." The statutes of mortmain suffice to
show that the State has ever held religious endowments
under stricter conditions than any other kind of property.

Miss Susan B. Anthony, who has been re-elected President
of the National Woman Suffrage Association of America,
is seventy-four years of age, but does not look it. Her figure
is still as straight as a dart, and her eyes alert and bright.
The oldest thing about her is the way she wears her heavy
load of hair, which is combed, in soft white folds, over the
tips of her ears, in the manner of a former generation.
Her manners are charmingly fresh and young, and her
enthusiasm for women's rights undimmed. Like her
veteran colleague, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she is a down-
right Freethinker.

A Bill has been brought before the Legislature of Michigan proposing that churches shall be taxed the same as other property. This is a step in the right direction, for, although there is said to be no connection between Church and State, the Church virtually obtains millions of dollars by its exemption from taxation.

The *Daily News*, noticing Mr. Dobell's edition of the complete works of James Thomson, says of his *City of Dreadful Night*: "It ranks with Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* as a lyrical expression of despair, and it strikes a deeper note."

In the western part of Washington Territory there is a grand mountain, about 5,000 feet high, known as Mount Ingersoll. Locally it bears the appellation of "Colonel Bob."

Colonel Ingersoll's lecture, "Which Way?" recently delivered to a crowded audience in Columbia Theatre, Chicago, will be reprinted in an early issue of the *Freethinker* from the *Progressive Thinker*. The report seems to be verbatim as far as it goes, but it can hardly contain all the Colonel's afternoon lecture. Probably it comprises the freshest and most important passages.

A PARSON.

A PARSON is a person, mild and bland,
Who's paid to preach what none can understand;
He undertakes to solve divine enigmas,
And rescue souls from Satan's sinful stigmata;
All free of charge, eternal-life he's giving
To dying men, from whom he seeks his living;
He booms the heav'n above, to which they'll go
If they'll provide for him on earth below.
Says he: "Our home's in heav'n, there's not a doubt of it!
But, meanwhile, do your best to keep me—out of it."

The book he calls the "Word of God" he reads
For texts to sanction all his words and deeds;
To whatsoever his heart may be inclined
A friendly text within the book he'll find:
Ev'n texts that seem to contradict his thesis
Support it, when illumined by exegesis;
The handy texts need no illumination,
The awkward ones require interpretation.
Approving texts are always clear and logical;
The doubtful ones are always anagogical.

He turns a page to find a friendly text,
But sees a hostile one, so turns the next;
If Paul condemns, so much the worse for Paul—
He passes on, nor quotes from him at all.
To hide's discreet, when quoting's not discreeter.
So Paul's suppressed for James, or John, or Peter.
If Gospel-texts condemn his pet behavior,
He quotes from Paul to controvert his Savior.
If critics quote from Moses, he'll reply
By quoting Christ, whom erst he did deny;
And if they quote from Christ, he'll quote from Paul,
And yet maintain that Christ is all-in-all!
Quote 'gainst him Christ, Paul, Peter, John, and James,
He'll say you're "dead in sin," and call you names,
Or say, with pious pity in his eye,
"You'll see your error when you come to die!"

His Book's to "all men, all things," so he finds
For ev'ry text that loosens one that binds.
Whate'er he does or says—resists, s'ants—
In Holy Writ he finds a verse that fits.
The Book's convenient, so's a feather-bed;
You squeeze it here, it bulges there instead,
And shapes itself to every drowsy head.

He'll praise a bad deed, or a good asperse,
With warranty of chapter and of verse;
Through all the ethic gamut he will run
Amuck, and wash himself with texts, when done;
And say, should any stains persist uncleaned and ugly:
"Christ's precious blood will wash them!" smiling smugly.

A parson is a person mild and bland,
The sweetest-mannered humbug in the land!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Only a few weeks ago a lecturer at a big meeting gave utterance to the following: "All along the untrodden paths of the future we can see the hidden footprints of an unseen Hand."

SOME LITTLE-KNOWN FREETHINKERS.—III.

WILLIAM JOHN BIRCH.

It was only in his old age that I had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Birch. His appearance was truly venerable, and his portrait (which adorns my room) is always remarked as that of an extremely fine-looking old man. Mr. Birch was born of a well-to-do family on January 4, 1811. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, and graduated M.A. at New Inn Hall. He became a barrister-at-law, but was never under the necessity of practising for a livelihood.

During the prosecution of the *Oracle of Reason*, in 1842, Mr. Birch came forward as a generous supporter of that paper and of the Anti-Persecution Union. He contributed to C. Southwell's *Investigator* valuable articles on "The Blasphemy Laws" and on "Money the Motive in the History of England." He also wrote in the *Movement*, the *Reasoner*, and the *National Reformer*. To him Mr. Holyoake dedicated his *Last Trial for Atheism*, as "a friend who was twice a friend, who helped us when we were unknown and struggling." Through his liberality "The Library of Reason"—a valuable set of reprints from Hume, Spinoza, Hibbert, Ensor, Burdon, Southwell, Strauss, Lyell, etc.—was issued, edited by W. Chilton. The *Reasoner* and the publications of the Fleet-street House, under Mr. Holyoake, were also aided by his ever generous assistance. On one occasion he gave Mr. Holyoake 600 acres of land in Canada, with the purpose of forwarding Secularism; but when the bulk of Mr. Birch's large fortune was lost Mr. Holyoake returned the land-script.

In 1848 Mr. Birch published his principal work, *An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare*. Mr. Birch held that Shakespeare was a sceptic in regard to a future life, and devoid of reverence for the fundamental dogmas of religion. This position he endeavors to substantiate by a thorough examination both of his dramas and poems. He also wrote a work on *The Real and the Ideal*; and in a pamphlet, *Paulan Idea not a Fact*, first questioned the existence of the Apostles to the Gentiles. In 1856 he published *An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of the Bible*. In his preface he states: "The principal inquiries in this book are the sum of what is taught in the Bible about a God, a Providence, and a future state; the Messianic idea, religion, and morality; the nature of things and of men. We still inquire whether God and Christ are ideas or facts, or, in other words, whether they personally existed. We shall inquire whether the Bible is a revelation of a God, or a revelation that we know nothing about him." In this book Mr. Birch strongly contended that education should be in morality, and not in religion. He says: "Nothing creates such a difference between mankind as religion. There often would be nothing but love between individuals, arising from their natural disposition, if they were not severed by religion. As there is said to be no morality without religion, unbelievers are treated as having no morality, and believers are absolved from morality towards them. We believe there can be no morality with religion."

Mr. Birch published through Mr. Truelove, in 1870, *The Jesus Christ of John Stuart Mill*, by "Antichrist," quoting on the title-page, "He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son, and confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (1 John ii. 22, iv. 2, 3, and 2 John 7). This showed his standpoint. Like all Mr. Birch's productions, it was somewhat desultory. He wrote, like St. Paul, in an unconnected way, but he culled good things from all quarters. The work was adversely criticised in the *National Reformer*, and did not sell well. He also published anonymously *Bible Bestiality and Filth from the Fathers*, and a little book with much information on nicknames, entitled *Tom Paine, Charlie Bradlaugh, and Bob Ingersoll*.

Mr. Birch had a fine library and was a voluminous reader. He carried to excess the good habit of taking notes of what he read. To this I ascribe the fact that, although reading and writing all his long life, he never attained concise statement. He was always reminded of what others had said, and this led to over-much quotation and digression. Every theme elaborated itself to huge dimensions. To me he confided, when he went to Italy, the whole of his manuscripts, weighing many hundred-weight. They are full of rare information; yet no publisher would venture to print them.

As a gentleman of means and leisure, Mr. Birch collected, read, and made notes upon, I think, every work on the subject of Christian origins and early Christianity, published either in English, French, or Italian. His conclusions, though expressed on many points with the caution of one who had a legal training, was emphatic on the crucial question. He held that no such person as the Jesus Christ of the Gospels ever lived. He thought the character an ideal, amalgamating Pagan myths on a Jewish basis. To the subject of the existence of Jesus, and cognate questions of Pagan religion and mythology, Josephus, Philo, the early Christian Fathers, etc., he devoted immense research, to which at least one individual (and that the present writer) is much indebted.

Mr. Birch, in the days of Garibaldi and Mazzini, had been a generous supporter of the cause of Italian freedom. He usually spent the winter in Florence, where he was well known both to the English colony and to the leading Italian Freethinkers and men of letters, such as Count Ricciardi and Angelo de Gubernatis. His wide reading was always at the service of others; and several of the Freethinking writers who gathered round Thomas Scott were indebted to him for assistance with their works. He died at Florence on April 4, 1891; and it is simple truth to say he was deeply lamented by all who knew him. J. M. W.

MAHATMAISM DEAD.

THE die is cast, the bubble's burst,
Theosophists look gloomy,
And dupes no longer conjure up
That King of sprites, Koothoomee.

Take Vitchli—Putzli, Jupiter,
Beelzebub, or Jesus;
They're nothing but exploded gods:
Koothoomee alone could please us.

Grand letters did he write to Judge,
And spicy ones to Besant;
But when compelled to "show the hand,"
Things turned out most unpleasant.

I do not blame the cunning rogues
Who gather in the honey;
I only laugh at silly fools
Who contribute their money.

The fool crop is perennial:
By spider-webs surrounded,
The silly flies are quickly caught,
And utterly confounded.

Oh, for a little common sense
To guide us in our actions!
That dreary spell, Theosophy,
Must lose its chief attractions.

I.

LUTHER AND THE DEVIL.

Is the contribution of "Lucianus" upon this subject he has omitted the coarsest expressions of Luther in regard to the Devil, and, indeed, they are not fit for the columns of the *Freethinker*. For Luther was coarse, and, as Mr. David Masson notices in the work, *The Three Devils: Luther's, Milton's, and Goethe's*, he illustrated the Evil Being of Scripture to himself by means of his personal experience. As Mr. Masson says (p. 48): "The narrative of his life abounds in anecdotes showing that the Devil with him was no chimera, no mere orthodoxy, no fiction. In every page of his writings we have the word *Teufel, Teufel*, repeated again and again."

"Lucianus" has also refrained from giving the moral of the subject, which is, indeed, sufficiently obvious. But I find it very well expressed in *Flowers of Freethought* (First Series, p. 136), and take the liberty of transcribing it: "Here is a case in which the Doctor of Divinity, though naturally a kind man, is quite ready to take human life at the behest of a devilish superstition, while the less fanatical laymen shrink from such inhumanity. The only devil in the story is the devil of fearful ignorance and misbelief in Brother Martin. He it was who needed the exorcist, although the truth would have greatly surprised him."

LUCIFER.

CHILDREN'S PARTY.

MANY thanks to the friends who have enabled us to give a most successful party to the little ones. I am glad to say that from sale of gallery tickets and programs, we have received sufficient to meet expenses. This is due to the kindness of Mr. W. Bell, of Drury-lane, who has done the entire printing gratuitously, as in past years. The cake, etc., acknowledged last week from Mr. Godwin, Hackney, should have been Mr. Goodwin, of Shoreditch. A balance-sheet will appear next week.

R. FORDER, Treasurer.

Brain and Mind.

No fact in our constitution can be considered more certain than this, that the brain is the chief organ of mind, and has mind for its principal function. As we descend in the animal scale, through quadruped, birds, reptiles, fishes, etc., the nervous system dwindles according to the decreasing measure of mental endowment.—*Professor A. Bain, "The Senses and the Intellect," 4th edition, p. 11.*

The Gospel of John a Forgery.

The author meant his work to be taken for the apostles' He intimates that he was an immediate disciple of the Lord, the beloved disciple, who was none other than the apostle John, and avoids all mention of the name. Instead of employing a direct method, he is contented with an indirect process, which served his purpose more effectually. John's authorship is but delicately hinted. To make his character correspond with the nature of the gospel, the writer idealised the apostle to a certain extent. . . . Under the inspiration of a philosophical Hellenist the Jewish Christian apostle—impetuous, ambitious, intolerant—becomes the calm preacher of love, the speculative disciple whose heart is as large as his view is extended; the expounder of a new and absolute religion, founded by the only-begotten Son.—*Dr. S. Davidson, "Introduction to the Study of the New Testament," vol. ii., pp. 495, 497; 1894.*

Imitating God.

Plato has said that "virtue consists in resembling God." But how is man to resemble a being who, it is acknowledged, is incomprehensible to mankind, who cannot be conceived by any of those means by which he is alone capable of having perceptions? If this being, who is shown to man under such various aspects, who is said to owe nothing to his creatures, is the author of all the good as well as all the evil that takes place, how can he be the model for the conduct of the human race living together in society? At most, he can only follow one side of the character, because among his fellows he alone is reputed virtuous who does not deviate in his conduct from justice; who abstains from evil; who performs with punctuality those duties he owes to his fellows. If it be taken up, and insisted he is not the author of evil—only of the good, I say, Very well; that is precisely what I wanted to know. You thereby acknowledge he is not the author of everything. We are no longer at issue; you are inconclusive to your own premises, consequently ought not to demand an implicit reliance on what you choose to assert.—*D'Holbach, "System of Nature," part ii., chap. viii.*

About the Holy Bible.

Is anything to be learned from Hosea and his wife? Is there anything of use in Joel, in Amos, in Obadiah? Can we get any good from Jonah and his gourd? Is it possible that God is the real author of Micah and Nahum, of Habakkuk and Zephaniah, of Haggai and Malachi and Zechariah, with his red horses, his four horns, his four carpenters, his flying roll, his mountains of brass, and the stone with four eyes? Is there anything in these "inspired" books that has been of benefit to man?

Have they taught us how to cultivate the earth, to build houses, to weave cloth, to prepare food? Have they taught us to paint pictures, to chisel statues, to build bridges, or ships, or anything of beauty or of use? Did we get our ideas of government, of religious freedom, of the liberty of thought, from the Old Testament? Did we get from any of these books a hint of any science? Is there in the "sacred volume" a word, a line, that has added to the wealth, the intelligence, and the happiness of mankind? Is there one of the books of the Old Testament as entertaining as *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Travels of Gulliver*, or *Peter Wilkins and his Flying Wife*? Did the author of Genesis know as much about nature as Humboldt, or Darwin, or Haeckel? Is what is called the Mosaic Code as wise or as merciful as the code of any civilised nation? Were the writers of Kings and Chronicles as great historians, as great writers, as Gibbon and Draper? Is Jeremiah or Habakkuk equal to Dickens or Thackeray? Can the authors of Job and the Psalms be compared with Shakespeare? Why should we attribute the best to man and the worst to God?—*R. G. Ingersoll.*

THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS.—Their credulity was unbounded. They had a sublime disregard for truth; not so much from perversity as from carelessness and indifference to its sacred character. Their unscrupulousness when seeking for arguments to enforce their positions is notorious; as well as the prevalence among them of what are known as pious frauds.—*Judge C. B. Waite, "History of the Christian Religion to the Year 200," p. 432; Chicago.*

BOOK CHAT.

THE Danish critic and Freethinker, Dr. Georg Brandes, is finishing a book on Shakespeare, which will appear in German at Paris.

* * *

Herbert Spencer has reprinted his essay on Weismannism from the *Contemporary Review*, and it is now published with a postscript. Mr. Spencer rightly says that, "as influencing men's view about Education, Ethics, Sociology, and Politics, the question whether acquired characters are inherited is the most important question before the scientific world." The question still remains an open one, though Mr. Spencer ably sustains the affirmative, while the case for a negative conclusion is strongly presented by Mr. W. P. Ball in his book, *Are the Effects of Use and Disuse Inherited?*

* * *

Dr. J. R. Monroe, the founder of the *Ironclad Age*, who died in 1891, at the age of sixty-eight, wrote, when in his teens, a Byronic skit entitled *Will Cobbett's Vision; or, the Devil and Tom Paine*. It has been reprinted by his daughter, and is published at the office of the *Ironclad Age* (Indianapolis) at 25 cents. Like all Dr. Monroe's writings, it is full of gay wisdom. In portraying his Satanic Majesty and his abode there are opportunities for much fun and satire upon orthodox doctrines, of which Dr. Monroe fully avails himself.

* * *

An English translation of Dr. Max Nordau's pessimistic work, *Degeneration*, will be published shortly. Those who know his *Conventional Lies of Our Civilisation* are aware of the iconoclastic character of the writings of this Hungarian Freethinker of Jewish birth. Among the subjects which come under his lash, as symptoms of the sickness of the *fin de siècle*, are Tolstoism, pre-Raphaelism, Wagnerism, and Ibsenism.

* * *

Lives of Christ are as numerous as blackberries, and as divergent as Christian creeds. Many have lamented that Jesus Christ never left any records himself, or even any instructions to his disciples to do so for him. It seems that at last—can it be owing to disgust at Farrar's gush?—J. C. has determined to rectify the omission; and an *Autobiography by Jesus of Nazareth* is published by J. P. Cooke, of Boston. One Olive G. Pettis is the "humble instrument" of this revelation. Olive declares: "Sentence by sentence it has been printed before me in bright electric letters ere I consigned them to paper, and every expression was as new to me as to the reader from first to last." We have not yet seen the book, but only its announcement in the *Two Worlds*. If, however, the revelation reveals anything, it will be vastly different from others of its species.

* * *

Some time ago a Glasgow Spiritist published the revelations of *Hafed, Prince of Persia*, supposed to be a contemporary of J. C., who gave particulars of his early life. The revelations came through the influence of Mr. David Duguid, a touch-up of photos to Mr. Bowman, a leading Glasgow Spiritist—this "mejum" being also celebrated for skimbleskamble pictures, attributed to the spirits of Jan Steen or Turner. It appears from *Hafed* that both the Prince of Persia and Jesus Christ talked in the Scots tongue, using "will" for "shall," etc. This revelation, however, was surpassed by that vouchsafed to a member of the French Academy, who was a great collector of autographs, and purchased a letter signed by Jesus Christ, written in excellent French. Why not?

* * *

In Mr. Wheeler's pamphlet on *The Christian Doctrine of Hell* he has given many citations from the old divines to the effect that one of the enjoyments of heaven will be to witness the torments of the damned. To these might be added the Scotch poet, Sir David Lindsay, of the Mount, 1490-1567, who says of the blessed:—

They sall rejois to se the great dolour
Of dampnit folk in Hell, and thair torment,
Because of God it is the juste judgement.

* * *

Professor C. H. Tawney's translation of the collection of Jain stories, entitled *Kathakosa*, for the New Oriental Translation Fund (at the rooms of the Royal Asiatic Society, 22 Albemarle-street, London, W.), will be ready in the course of the present month. Students of comparative folk-tales must be eager to have this work in their hands, as Mr. Tawney's notes of variants of the tales in different countries of India, as well as in Europe, cannot fail to prove both interesting and useful.

* * *

The Religions of the World, by G. M. Grant, D.D. (A. & C. Black), is a very different production from the *Religions*

Systems of the World published by Sonnenschein, which attempted to give a view of various faiths from the standpoint of those who hold them. Dr. Grant's work should be entitled "Other Religions as Seen by Christian Eyes." The book, nevertheless, gives much information in a cheap form, and will help to open eyes to the fact that there are other religions besides Christianity which can claim to have done good among the races who have held them.

WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW.

IN these modern times of misery, daily trouble, pain, and strife,
While the poor class toil and labor in the struggle for dear life,

We are taught that a Creator, an essence of sweet love,
With fond sympathy and pity regards us from above.
We are told that on Mount Sinai the just Jehovah said
That the father's sins should rightly be heaped on their children's heads.

For what did this God create us all to suffer here below?
That's what I cannot comprehend, but what I'd like to know.

With infallible foreknowledge, why made he Mother Eve,
And, knowing well what would ensue, let the Devil her deceive?

Did he desire mankind's fall when, with his endless might,
With ease he could have kept the fiend from Eden's holy site?

Then, not content with having to degradation brought the pair,
He blessed them with two children, their misery to share.

Why Cain should hate his brother, and slay him as a foe,
Perhaps his God could comprehend, but I should like to know.

Then Cain he set his mark upon, and banished him to Nod,
Where, strange to say, he found a spouse, provided by his God,

That this pair they might propagate sin *in infinitum ad-*
For the world it got so wicked that it made Jehovah mad.
Said he, "Of you I've had enough; I'm sorry I'm your God!"
(Which speech, for the Almighty, seems just a trifle odd).

"I'll drown the cursed lot of you, then send you down below!"

Why God made man to drown and roast is what I want to know.

"But no," said God, "this will not do; you're getting off too cheap;

I formed and put this race of man on earth to wail and weep:

If I the lot exterminate, the fiend will only grin
And say the great 'I am' has had to knuckle down to him."

So he commanded patriarch Noah to build a boat so huge
That he and household (pets as well) could float on the deluge.

But how they from all parts of earth into the ark did go
Is one of those great mysteries that I should like to know.

As years rolled by, strange to relate, the world grew worse than ever;

"Confound it all," said Pater G., "Old Nick's for me too clever;

I'll go on earth, in form of man—save them by hook or crook:

Beelzebub, mine enemy, now to your laurels look!"

But Satan only laughed with scorn, he knew his "biz" too well

To fear that such a helpless God could thin the ranks of hell.

He tried; but how the universe fared with its God below
Is what I cannot comprehend, but what I'd like to know.

Now, faithful all, just ponder deep before you bend the knee

To that imaginary God, the father of J. C.
Can he be kind and loving who could mankind create

To torture in this world and next with endless fiery fate?
The profligate, the wealthy, the good, the poor, and all:

Rascality predominant—the weakest to the wall.
Say rather, to yourselves be true, as through this life you go,
And since you cannot comprehend you need not seek to know

know

ALEX. MITCHELL.

Pupil Teacher (to little Isaacstein, who is learning the Ten Plagues)—"Now, Master Joseph, what would you have done had you been in the thick darkness, that might be felt? Master Jo—" Vat might be felt? Vy, I would start a hat factory."

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

I AM quite amazed to discover the extraordinary greediness and facility with which men assert, believe, and reassert, and are believed.—*George Grote.*

WE ask for long life, but 'tis deep life, or grand moments that signify. Let the measure of time be spiritual, not mechanical. Moments of insight, of fine personal relation, a smile, a glance, what ample borrowers of eternity they are! —*Emerson.*

NO truth can, properly speaking, be apprehended and made a portion of our mental acquisitions which cannot be verified when told to us; and any proposition which we can verify we could discover—that is, what man can verify man could have reached and worked out for himself.—*W. Rathbone Greg.*

WE have never witnessed the construction of a world. We only perceive the everlasting flux and reflux of phenomena, the ceaseless pulsation of nature and life, evolution, transformation, birth, death, and birth again. But nature herself is dumb as to her whence or whither.—*Professor W. Knight.*

CASTING OUT DEVILS.—It is important to remember that the theory of demoniacal possession, and its supposed cure by means of exorcism and invocations, was most common among the Jews long before the Christian era. As casting out devils was the most common type of Christian miracles, so it was the commonest belief and practice of the Jewish nation. Christianity merely shared the national superstition, and changed nothing but the form of exorcism.—*"Supernatural Religion," vol. i., p. 145.*

THE Church has not allowed women to inherit or hold property. It was a general ecclesiastical rule that a woman could never take part of an inheritance with a man unless by the particular and ancient customs of certain towns and cities. This restriction upon woman's right of property so obliterated the sense of justice in men's mind that husbands have not hesitated to use property coming to them through wives in the maintenance of a second or illegal family, while denying the legal wife and children the commonest necessities of life. As late as 1878, when a law was enacted in one of the Swiss cantons allowing sisters to share inheritances with brothers, it met with great opposition from such brothers, many of whom protested their own ruin would follow.—*Matilda Joselyn Gage, in "The Truth Seeker Annual for 1895."*

PROTESTANT PERSECUTION.—But while the pre-eminent atrocity of the persecutions of the Church of Rome is fully admitted, nothing can be more grossly disingenuous or untrue than to represent persecution as her peculiar taint. She persecuted to the full extent of the power of her clergy, and that power was very great. The persecution of which every Protestant Church was guilty was measured by the same rule, but clerical influence in Protestant countries was comparatively weak. The Protestant persecutions were never so sanguinary as those of the Catholics, but the principle was affirmed quite as strongly, was acted on quite as constantly, and was defended quite as pertinaciously by the clergy.—*W. E. H. Lecky, M.A., "History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe," chap. iv., part ii., pp. 42, 43, vol. ii.*

"It was in the War of the Rebellion," said the diffident and blushing assistant rector. "A company of Union soldiers were ordered to take a Rebel battery. Quickly they sprang to the charge; but, alas! before they reached the guns they broke and fled. All, that is, except one corporal, who rushed in, seized a gunner, and carried him off captive. When the company reached the little clump of trees from whose shelter they had started, they gathered round the gallant corporal, and asked how he managed to capture his prisoner.

"I just went in and took him," said the hero, modestly. "Ah, boys, why didn't you all keep on? There was a man for every one of you there!"

"And so I say to you, my dear young Christian soldiers. There is a man for every one in this world.

"Yes, my dear young brothers; there is a man for every one of you here.

"Yes, my dear young sisters; there is—er—there is—er—there is work for you all in the vineyard of the Lord if you only seek it. Let us now sing the 425th hymn:—

"Oh, save me from the careless word,
The swift, unbidden thought,
And make me always think and speak
Exactly as I ought."

And the young assistant sat down with an intensely relieved expression, and mopped his burning brow.

PROFANE JOKES.

"Is the bishop a broad man, and liberal in his views?" "O my, yes. He's abroad most of the time, and in giving his views he is most prodigal."

A gentleman dined one day with a dull preacher. Dinner was scarcely over before the gentleman fell asleep, but was awakened by the divine, and invited to go and hear him preach. "I beseech you, sir," said he, "to excuse me; I can sleep very well where I am."

Jenkins—"Great stroke of luck for Brownley. I knew him when he was a poor theological student, and he has just been selected as pastor of one of the most fashionable churches in the city." Mrs. Jenkins—"So I understand. Rich congregation, isn't it?" Jenkins—"Rich? They have special monthly prayer-meetings to pray for a tight money market."

A "hard case" was interrogated the other Sunday by a friend who had just seen him at church, but whom he now found swallowing a glass of brandy and water at a public bar-room. "I saw you in church this morning listening to a discourse upon righteousness and temperance. How comes it that I now see you here drinking?" "I always thirst after righteousness," was the reply.

Two colored men took refuge under a tree in a violent thunderstorm. "Julius, can you pray?" "No, Sam," was the reply; "nebber prayed in my life." "Well, can't you sing a hymn?" Just then the lightning struck a tree near by, shivering it, when the first speaker exclaimed: "See heah, honey, sunfin' 'ligious has got to be done, an' dat mighty suddin', too; s'pose you pass around de hat."

A Scotch minister, who was very fond of using the personal pronoun, often placed it wrongly. While preaching in London he once took for his text, "The devil he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." "My friends," he said, "we will divide our subject into three headings. Firstly, who the devil he was; secondly, who the devil he was seeking; and thirdly, what the devil he was roaring about." The congregation also roared, but with laughter.

Darwin's Opponents.

One eminent clerical reviewer, in spite of Darwin's thirty years of quiet labor, and in spite of the powerful summing-up of his book, prefaced a diatribe by saying that Darwin "might have been more modest had he given some slight reason for dissenting from the views generally entertained." Another distinguished clergyman, vice-president of a Protestant institute to combat "dangerous science," declared Darwinism "an attempt to dethrone God." Another critic spoke of persons accepting the Darwinian views as "under the frenzied inspiration of the inhaler of mephitic gas," and of Darwin's argument as a "jungle of fanciful assumptions." Another spoke of Darwin's views as suggesting that "God is dead," and declared that Darwin's work "does open violence to everything which the Creator himself has told us in the Scriptures of the methods and results of his work." Still another theological authority declares: "If the Darwinian theory is true, Genesis is a lie, the whole framework of the book of life falls to pieces, and the revelation of God to man, as we Christians know it, is a delusion and a snare."—*Andrew D. White, in "The Popular Science Monthly."*

Obituary.

On Sunday morning I had the melancholy duty of conducting the funeral, at Finchley, of Frederick Wilkinson, the grandson of our late much-respected friend, Mr. Trevillion. The deceased was a young man of great promise and ability, cut off at the early age of nineteen. All friends will condole with the bereaved mother and other relatives.—*R. FORDER.*

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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, a lecture. (Free.) 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Balfour's Plea for Belief." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Tuesday, at 8.30, dramatic class rehearsals. Wednesday, at 8.30, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's Golden Comedy of *As You Like It*."

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Robert Shore, "Why Secularists are Not Socialists." (Free.) Tuesday, at 8, dancing for N.S.S. members and friends. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic club.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. James, "The Star of Science in the Night of Faith." (Preceded by vocal and instrumental music.) Thursday, at 7.30, free science classes.

MILTON HALL (Hawley-crescent, 89 Kentish Town-road): 7.30, Rev. Stewart Headlam, "The County Council and the Ballet." (Free.)

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Empire of the Dead Over the Living."

WOOD GREEN (Star Coffee House, High-street): 7, W. J. Heath, "What Caused the French Revolution?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey will lecture.

COUNTRY.

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

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, J. P. Cogito, "Knowledge *v.* Belief."

DUNDEE (City Assembly Rooms): 11, Stanley Jones, "God, Man, and Design"; 2.30, "The Doctrines of Christianity"; 6.30, "Woman: Past, Present, and Future."

GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 11.30, J. M. Robertson, "Mr. Mallock and Socialism"; 2.30, "Mr. Gladstone on the Atonement"; 6.30, "The Failure of Christianity."

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Monro, "Christ and the Twelve Apostles a Myth."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 3, philosophy class—Ernest Newman, "Kant"; 7, C. Doeg, "Religion *v.* Superstition."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, Leonard Hall, "The Unemployed: the Problem Stated and Solved"; 3, "Twelve Months of Liberal-cum-Toryism"; 6.30, "From Slavery to Socialism." (Free.)

ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street): 6.30, Orris Kaye, "Cremation," with limelight illustrations.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, W. Dyson, "The Divine Sacrifice in its Newest Light—A Criticism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane): 11, C. Cohen, "Population and the Social Question"; 7, "Christianity: its Progress."

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (32 Dovecote-street): 6, business meeting—friends invited.

SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, opposite *Echo* office): 7, Robert Weightman, "Thomas Paine."

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. 24, Edinburgh. March 3, Hull; 10, Sheffield; 11, Chesterfield.

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

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