

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## GOD AND THE ANT.

*God and the Ant.* By Coulson Kernahan. (London: Ward, Lock, & Bowden.)

MR. COULSON KERNAHAN is the author of two volumes of highly-praised fiction and one volume of highly-praised criticism. When we heard, therefore, that he was engaged on a kind of theological treatise, we looked forward to its publication with considerable interest. But now the much-heralded volume is before us we confess to a feeling of disappointment. To begin with, there is very little for the money. Sixty little rivulets of type flow through broad meadows of margin, and the price is one shilling. A vivacious reader could easily get to the end in ten minutes; a dull one could hardly need more than a quarter of an hour. In the next place—and this is far more serious—the booklet is an utter mistake. The problem of evil has exercised the keenest intellects and the greatest wits; it has also occasioned the writing of a multitude of treatises, which test the strength of the stoutest library-shelves. Little that is new can possibly remain to be said upon this theme. Yet, in reading Mr. Kernahan, one would think that the world was waiting for a word of reassurance, and that the problem was as virginal as the blank leaves before Mr. Kernahan's title-page.

Although his space is so limited, Mr. Kernahan goes to work very leisurely. He gives us two pages of Dedication to a friend and benefactor with whose name he begs to associate his "little booklet"—which is a nasty tautology; and to whom he expresses his "thanks and gratitude"—which is nearly as bad. Then comes a three-page Apologia, in which we hear of "the form and shape" of something, as though they were different. Such marks of carelessness are regrettable in a writer like Mr. Kernahan. For the rest, the Apologia is an absurdity. Mr. Kernahan says he dreamed what he relates; and he informs us, as though he were one of the prophets, that he "did not set to work to write it: it came." This is pretty enough, in its way; but, as a proem to an attempt to justify the ways of Providence, it is almost ludicrous.

Mr. Kernahan starts with the End of the World—just at the point where Prophet Baxter leaves off. The sea gives up its dead, and the graves discharge their occupants; who, by the way, would (most of them) *not be there*—as the Irishman said. Men were all ready for judgment, but God and the angels did not put in an appearance. The last day had indeed come, but "it was God and not man who was bidden to the bar of heaven," and the people called upon him to, "Come forth," as though he were another Lazarus, and make answer for the wrongs he had done to man. But the boss of the universe was in no hurry, and the millions of millions of resurrected ones begged to know why he had "awakened" them—which, again, is bad grammar. Then a woman has a go at him. She had worked hard for a little bread, and she was having a good rest in the grave, and why was *she* disturbed? Next a man wants to know whether the Great Derider is preparing a fresh diversion for himself. He is followed by another woman, who had been born amongst thieves and prostitutes; she inquires why God made any creature to perish everlastingly. Finally "one" spoke, who wanted to know why God makes the innocent suffer for the guilty, and visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. And once more all the people call upon God to stand in the dock

and answer his indictment. Evidently he has a lot to answer for, though it is all very familiar to Freethinkers; but he is still in no hurry, and keeps the court waiting.

In his absence, a woman attempts to justify the ways of God to man. Children suffer for their parents' sins; but they also profit by their parents' virtues; and six balances half-a-dozen. Besides, if misery did not overtake ill-doing, man had soon made a hell of earth. On the whole, life is good, not evil; and if there were no misery, and all were plain, where would then be "the test of our faith in God"? This lady barrister, pleading for the Almighty, reminds men that they cannot understand God, though *she* appears to be well up in the subject. "Can the ant," she asks, "crawl up into the brain of man to see man's world as man sees it? Yet has man, whose whole world is, in the eyes of God, but as one ant in a universe, thought to creep into God's brain, to think as He thinks, to see as He sees, and to judge the Omnipotent by man's little laws."

With some rather mixed imagery, this is an old story retold. Those who set out to explain evil always end by giving it up, and tell us not to criticise, but adore; which we might do before the argument as well as after it—perhaps a little better.

Mr. Kernahan imagines that God is exculpated because it was *man* who tempted the woman, seduced her, and brought her to prostitution. He forgets that God made the man to tempt, and the woman to be tempted; and that an omniscient creator is responsible to the uttermost for the faults of his creatures.

The impenitent thief upon the cross is the next person who addresses the multitude:—

"I am he who, when in like straits to yours, did blaspheme as you, O my brothers and sisters, have blasphemed; I am he who hung by the dying Savior—he who in the hour of death and judgment did revile that Divine Sufferer, even as you in your hour of judgment have blasphemed the most Holy Name of God. I am he whom, these many a hundred years, ye have called the 'impenitent thief,' knowing not the infinite mercy and power of God.

"For, be it known to you that, as I hung in that Sacred Presence, I saw, ere my spirit fled, the people mocking and reviling Him, even as I—foul sinner that I am—had mocked and reviled Him. And I saw that, even as He had answered me not, so He answered them never a word, but, lifting His eyes to heaven, He prayed to His God and theirs, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

"And as He thus prayed, He turned and bent on me—the outcast, the blasphemer, the vilest and most impenitent of all that vile and impenitent throng—such look of Divine dignity, such look of infinitely pitying and pardoning love, that, though my anguish-racked body, heavy with approaching death, hung, dragging its dead weight from the cross, I forgot the straining of my torn and quivering hands against the cruel nails, forgot the thousand tortures which each heart-throb sent through every nerve and limb; forgot shame and death and judgment, in wonder and worship and love.

"To your knees, O brothers and sisters, and sue for pardon, that even as I—outcast and blasphemer—obtained mercy at that last moment of my life, so may ye, blasphemers and impenitent, be forgiven by the intercession of the same Savior who laid down His life for us all!"

Finally, after a blasphemer has had an innings, ONE [thus, please] appeared with the features of a man and the face of a God. This is Jesus Christ himself, who harangues the people as follows:—

"Did you indeed think, beloved, that while you were suffering and sorrowing on earth, I, your elder Brother and Savior, could rest content in the bliss of heaven?—that I ceased to share your sorrows when my earthly life was at end?"

"O mothers, who mourned for your children, it was my heart that brake when you fell sobbing by that tiny bed! O little children! every hair of whose head is sacred unto me, to spare whose little feet one step on a thorny road, I would endure and gladly a Calvary of woes! O weary men! O lonely women! whose every sorrow I have known, at whose every tear this heart of mine has bled—think you that any nail which wounded these hands, these feet, on Calvary's Cross, stabbed me with so cruel a pang as that which pierces my soul at any sin or sorrow of thine?"

"You have suffered for a lifetime, but I, until time shall be no more; and even as every sorrow of yours has entered into my heart, so has every sorrow of mine entered into the heart of the Father.

"Said I not unto you that, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?' and thought you, that I could be with you, and not feel with you, sorrow with you, suffer with you?"

"But now is that end indeed accomplished; now are the powers of darkness for ever overcome; now is death, the last enemy, destroyed; and now render I up the Kingdom to my Father, that God may be All, and in All."

This kind of eloquence is about fit for a Sunday-school. What a grotesque notion underlies the pathetic phraseology! One is inclined to pity this Christ until one reflects that he is playing the fool. All the world suffered, and he suffered, and his Father suffered. And what for? Alas! we are not informed; the problem of evil is left where it was, and where it will always be while men personify the universe, make a deity of their own ignorance, and prate about "God."

Mr. Kernahan winds up with a *waking* dream. Looking out of his window in the early morning, he sees haggard men and careworn women hurrying to their work; but in every face he saw the sorrowful face of Christ, and over the great city of London he seemed to see resting THE SHADOW OF A CROSS. We also have seemed to see that shadow; but to us it was terrible—the shadow of priestly fraud over human misery.

G. W. FOOTE.

## MADAME BLAVATSKY.

(Concluded from page 243.)

REMINDED that she had been caught sometimes, and of her own carelessness and inattention, Helena Petrovna said:—

"Yes, I certainly am careless and inattentive; but others, with very, very rare exceptions, are far more inattentive than I am; they are just so many sleepy owls, so many blind men, and never observe anything at all. Would you believe that all this time, before and after the Theosophical Society's foundation, I have not met more than two or three men who knew how to observe and see and remark what was going on around them? It is simply amazing. At least nine out of ten people are entirely devoid of the capacity of observation, and of the power of remembering accurately what took place even a few hours before. How often it has happened that, under my direction and revision, minutes of various occurrences and phenomena have been drawn up; lo, the most innocent and conscientious people, even sceptics, even those who actually suspected me, have signed *en toutes lettres* as witnesses at the foot of the minutes. And all the time I knew that what had happened was not in the least what was stated in the minutes. Yes, my dear sir, I venture to assure you that in history, even the best attested, there is far more fancy than truth."

In such observations we may see not only the woman of the world, but the thinker, who was able to dupe even those with pretensions to culture and science.

Solovyoff asked her: "Are you alone the author of Koot Hoomi's letters, philosophical and otherwise?" "No; chelas used sometimes to help me—Damodar and Subba Rao and Mohini." "And Sinnett?" "Sinnett won't invent gunpowder; but he has a beautiful style, he is splendid at editing." "And Olcott?" "Olcott is not bad at editing either, when he understands what he is talking about. But one has always to chew everything for him till one is sick."

She showed Solovyoff the magic bell which he had already discovered. "Yes," she confessed, "that is my occult telegraph, through which I communicate with the 'master.'" She then asked him to prepare the ground for her to work in Russia. "Write more, louder, and 'create' Theosophical Society; rouse their interest, and 'create' Koot Hoomi Russian letters. I will give you all the materials for them." Instead of answering, Solovyoff fairly ran away. She immediately sent Bavaji after him with a note, in which she showed her whole hand, telling him that, if he would only trust her, and see in her a *résumé* of all the so-called, imaginary, many masters, "then you, as such a patriot, would perform an immense service to Russia also." Solovyoff interpreted this as an attempt to cover up her self-revealed exposure of fraud with a new mystification. He had previously deprecated the view of Mr. R. Hodgson that she was a Russian spy, "not," he is careful to say, "because I believe her incapable of playing such a part, but because, in the autumn of 1885, she was extremely anxious to become a secret agent of the Russian Government in India." "If she wished to become," he says, "it is plain that, up to that time, she was not." How naïve! Had M. Solovyoff known her American and Indian career, he might have seen a little further. Of course, having had to fly from India, Helena Petrovna was in disgrace with the controllers of the Secret Service, and wished to utilise Solovyoff to get reinstated.

This is how he reports what she said:—

"Look here, this is what it is," she began; "you are soon going to St. Petersburg; now do undertake a very important business of the greatest benefit to Russia. I wish to propose myself as a secret agent of the Russian Government in India. To promote the triumph of my country over those vile English I am capable of any thing. I hate the English Government in India, with its missionaries; they are all my personal enemies, thirsting for my destruction. That alone is reason enough why I should throw my whole soul into the struggle with them. And that I can do them immense harm in India is certain; and I alone can do it, no one else is capable of the task. My influence on the Hindus is enormous; of that I can easily produce as much evidence as you will. At a sign from me, millions of Hindus would follow me. I can easily organise a gigantic rebellion. I will guarantee that in a year's time the whole of India would be in Russian hands. Only they must give me the pecuniary means—I don't want much. You know how I am in this respect. And they must put it in my power to penetrate into India through Russia—for I can't go back there any other way since this affair of the Coulombs and the missionaries—and I will bring about one of the greatest events in history. I proposed the same thing before, some years ago, when Timasheff was still minister; but I did not receive any answer. But now, now it is much easier for me; I can arrange the whole thing in a year."

She thus confessed that she had years before offered her services as a secret agent to the Russian Government. It would have been unlike herself had she betrayed that the real purpose of the society was to spread in India a secret society with signs and pass words, and with the esoteric doctrine of the brotherhood of man, and the esoteric teaching, as expounded in the Introduction to the *Secret Doctrine*, p. xlv.: "We have not long to wait, and many of us will witness the Dawn of the New Cycle, and many of which not a few accounts will be settled and squared between the races."

When the right moment came messages from the Mahatmas would have appeared, proclaiming a general rising. This is the established way in which political movements have been carried on in the East from time immemorial. Those have at best an imperfect comprehension of the Bible who do not recognise how much its prophecies were intended to bring about their own fulfilment.

M. Solovyoff admits that, in some respects, Madame Blavatsky appeared to be a subordinate. From his own book an impression is derived that she was something beyond the lying, fraudulent impostor which he nonetheless thoroughly proves her to have been. Despite her woeful failings, she was a woman of Titanic power, whose contempt for the mass of mankind was equalled by her own determination to make history. She has achieved a place beside her occult heroes, Cagliostro and St. Germain, and we can leave her with the charitable hope that, if her life could be seen from start to finish, she would be found more sinned against than sinning.

J. M. WHEELER.

## THE VALUE OF DOUBT.

RELIGIOUS people of the present time are no more disposed to give doubt and scepticism credit for any power for good than were those persons who two thousand years ago were said to have questioned that any good thing could come out of Nazareth. There is, however, much truth in Coleridge's remark that "the road to belief is through the portals of doubt"; and yet this word is dreaded by many individuals, not so much upon its own account as in consequence of what it may lead to. Doubt is known to be the innovator, the turbulent element, that disturbs the deep slumber in which faith, superstition, and despotism repose. As it is the parent of the changes and improvements that take place in long-standing institutions, those people who are wedded to things as they are are adverse to its advent among them. The worldly interests of men are bound up with the established order of things; hence, instead of doubting the wisdom of maintaining an unalterable state of affairs, the interested ones are opposed to whatever is likely to produce a change. This is particularly manifest in discussions upon questions of law, government, and religion. The retention upon our statute book of those laws which are a disgrace to the age is vehemently defended, old forms of government that are quite incompatible with the spirit of the times are tenaciously clung to, and orthodox views of religion are credulously adhered to by a large section of the religious world. So far as progress has been effected in reference to each and all of these subjects, it has been the result of doubt, and therefore to this force must we look for further advancement.

In the popular theological mind there is a much stronger feeling against doubt than there is against the acceptance and retention of the most glaring superstition. Notwithstanding this deplorable fact, men of thought know and acknowledge that there is no condition of mind so appropriate and useful, in a state of society like ours, as that of doubt. We are inundated with all sorts of theories and doctrines, and to implicitly accept all as being right would be impossible. So doubt affords time for investigation, whereby the true may be detected from the false. Of course, it does not follow that this result will always happen where examination takes place; still, it is more likely to occur in the region of doubt than under the influence of "blind belief." People who decline inquiry lack either adequate mental capacity, or that spirit of fairness which is so essential in the pursuit of truth. Why should any man fear to examine the foundation of his beliefs unless he be apprehensive that it may give way? No one whose opinions are based upon matured thought should object to submit them to the force of argument. As Bishop Watson aptly remarked: "Whoever is afraid of submitting any question, civil or religious, to the test of free discussion seems to me to be more in love with his own opinions than with truth." Yet this aversion to debating religious questions is very extensive among theologians and their supporters. If all that is new is not true, it is equally certain that much that is old is manifestly false. Many of the views held by our ancestors were founded upon insufficient data, and the chief reason given why such views should be received to-day is not their truth or utility, but their antiquity.

This theological dislike to doubt and free inquiry can be readily explained. As already intimated, fearless investigation tends to expose any unsound point in the armor that is supposed to shield orthodoxy from the attacks of its opponents. Moreover, there is the common habit of regarding some beliefs as if they were beyond the reach of the critical faculty, and of adhering to certain opinions because they are pleasant and consoling. To discover that such beliefs and opinions are false would be to destroy the tranquility in the minds of those persons who too often "purchase intellectual peace at the price of intellectual death." Let it once appear that certain views must be true, because they harmonise with one's cherished convictions; let it be thought that to learn that such views were false would cause an unhappy state of mind, then the desire to find and to adhere to truth for its own sake would never be fostered. It is this "base repose" and this preference for "the stillness of the swamp" that produce what Buckle calls the "protective spirit." It was this very intellectual subjection that in times past created a state of society in which the greatest absurdities and the

most palpable errors were believed to be solemn truths. It is only about two hundred years ago that such silly and preposterous notions as the existence of giants of enormous height, of devils and witches, of ghosts and of flying dragons, etc., began to be discarded. The drowning of so-called witches, the burning of heretics, and a host of other cruelties, were among the approved methods of our ancestors when doubt was condemned by "the powers that be," both temporal and spiritual. And to-day, in countries where doubt is prohibited, similar crude notions exist, and the same kind of mental stagnation and degradation obtains. Buckle truly observes: "It is necessary that men should learn to doubt before they begin to tolerate; and that they should recognise the fallibility of their own opinions before they respect the opinions of their opponents. This great process is far from being yet completed in any country; and the European mind, barely emerged from its early credulity, and from an over-weening confidence in its own belief, is still in a middle, and, so to say, a probationary, state. When that stage shall be finally passed, when we shall have learned to estimate men solely by their character and acts, and not at all by their theological dogmas, we shall then be able to form our religious opinions by that purely transcendental process of which in every age glimpses have been granted to a few gifted minds."

In considering the causes of the progress of nations, we recognise the vast importance of the acquirement and diffusion of that knowledge which is seminal and fruitful—a knowledge that results from the exercise of doubt and the carrying out of the principle of free inquiry. It is now granted that to most questions there are two sides; but in former times only one side, as a rule, was allowed to be published, and to doubt the truth of the popular side of the question was looked upon as a sin. It is only the antipathy produced by ignorance that causes an aversion to the investigation of every phase of a subject. No truth can be lessened in value, or lose any of its lustre, by repeatedly passing it through the ordeal of honest criticism. The spirit of doubt that has seized the minds of men in modern days has not only increased our general knowledge, but it has led to the adoption of new methods of inquiry that were only dimly seen by Aristotle, revived by Bacon, and matured by observation and experiment within the memory of living men. Those persons who are burdened with ancient prejudices are constantly dwelling upon the evils that doubt produces, and warning others against its dangers. It is, however, overlooked by these self-satisfied believers that stagnant ideas are useless; that a passive state of mind can give no security for the correctness of its opinions; and that, without change, no new truths can be established. People who passively submit to things as they are are not the promoters of commercial progress, or the guides in fresh enterprises. It is those who aim at improvement and advancement that should be looked upon as the real pioneers of the civilisation of the human race.

Men who feel sure that they have inherited the truth from their forefathers, who could not err, are not the persons upon whom we should rely for an increase in knowledge and the development of mental freedom. We prefer depending upon the heroes of doubt, men who are willing to grapple with the *pros* and *cons* of all subjects brought under their notice. Not to doubt is to ignore the advantages to be derived from the continual conflict going on between truth and error, and to lose the incalculable benefits arising from free and open discussion. As J. S. Mill, in his work *On Liberty* (p. 12), wrote: "Man is capable of rectifying his mistakes by discussion and experience. Not by experience alone. There must be discussion, to show how experience is to be interpreted. Wrong opinions and practices gradually yield to fact and argument; but facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it." To aid in this work is one of the functions of doubt, and herein lies its value.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

After a long drought there came a heavy rain, during which one farmer observed to another: "This is a providential rain. I hope it will bring up everything out of the ground." To this the other replied, with a dubious shake of the head: "I can't say as I agree with you there, neighbor, I've buried three wives in the ground, and I should mortally hate to see them all come up again."

## MAY DAY.

THE decoration of horses with rosettes, and an occasional "Jack in the Green," and girls with paper feathers dancing round a barrel organ, are all that remain to remind the Londoner of the old festival of May Day. When I was a youth it was still the custom to trip out early in the country to get the May dew and gather hawthorn. This interesting survival of an old Pagan practice is not quite extinct. Shakespeare, in his *Henry the Eighth*, alludes to it, saying it is impossible to make people sleep on May morning. And who does not remember that passage in *Midsommer Night's Dream* where Lysander appoints to meet Hermia

—In that wood, a league without the town,  
Where I did meet thee once with Helena  
To do observance to a morn of May?

Chaucer, in his "Court of Love," tells us that early on May morning "forth goeth all the court to fetch the flowers fresh, and branch, and bloom."

To this custom of early rising Herrick alludes, in his fine pastoral on "Corinna's Going a Maying":—

Get up, get up, for shame; the blooming morn  
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.  
See how Aurora throws her fair,  
Fresh-quilted colors through the air;  
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see  
The dew-bespangling herb and tree.

There's not a budding boy or girl, this day,  
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.  
A deal of youth, ere this, is come  
Back, and with white-thorn, laden home.

And in Tennyson's "May Queen":—

You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear.

This early rising itself was but a survival of a vigil in which the fun was kept up through the night. Stubbes, a Puritan writer of Queen Elizabeth's time, in his *Anatomic of Abuses*, published in 1585, says:—

"Against May, Whit-Sunday, or other time, all the yung men and maides, old men and wives, run gadding about over night to the woods, groves, hills, and mountains, where they spend all the night in pleasant pastimes; and in the morning they return, bringing with them birch and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall; and no meruaile for there is a great Lord present amongst them as superintendent and Lord of their sports—namely, Sathan, prince of hel. But the chiefest jewel they bring from thence is their May-pole (say rather their stinking poole), which they bring home with great veneration."

This interesting passage lets us know that the old Pagan rites were confounded with witchcraft, and confirms the evidence that the persecution of witches was the last act in the tragic suppression of Paganism. Stubbes remarks that, when the Maypole was reared, "they fall to banquet and feast, to leape and dance about it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idoles, whereof this is a perfect pattern, or, rather, the thing itself." The acrid old Puritan was quite right. The Maypole was a phallic emblem of the life and generation manifest in the flowering of vegetation. It was the symbol of the renewal of life, as was also Flora, or our Maid Marian, or the Queen of the May; while Jack-in-the-Green represents the tree spirit, whose rôle Mr. J. G. Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*, has shown to be so important in all the old religions.

Had the Puritans known the *Pervigilium Veneris*, a Latin poem ascribed by Erasmus to Catullus, but certainly later, it would have afforded them an additional text for invective against the Pagan superstitions which the May games were denounced as representing. The poem shows that the Romans, like our English ancestors, celebrated the season by betaking themselves to the woods for three nights, where they kept vigil in honor of Venus, to whom the month of April was dedicated, as being the universal generating and producing power. The poem seems to have been composed with a view to its being sung by a choir of maidens in their nocturnal rambles beneath the soft light of an Italian moon. All the signs of spring whisper of love, and the constant refrain comes in, *Cras amet, qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit, cras amet*.

Students of peasant customs and mythology—above all, students of the *Golden Bough*—will not be astonished at the suggestion that the three nights of vigil may have some

connection with the legend of Jesus being three days and nights in the heart of the earth.

Mr. Douce, in his *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, observes that, during the reign of Elizabeth, the Puritans made considerable havoc among the May games, by their preachings and invectives, and at length put Maypole and all to the rout. King James's *Book of Sports* restored some, but by an ordinance of the Long Parliament in April, 1644, all Maypoles were taken down, and the games suppressed. This, and the prohibition of Christmas festivities, contributed largely to bring the Puritans into disrepute, and at the Restoration the Maypoles were restored, and even the most complained of licentiousness returned, as may be guessed from Herrick's lines:—

Many a green-gown has been given;  
Many a kiss both odd and even;  
Many a glance, too, has been sent  
From out the eye, love's firmament;  
Many a jest told of the key's betraying  
This wight, and locks picked; yet we're not a-Maying.

The May festival is usually referred to the Floralia of the Romans, which commenced on April 27, and ended on the first of May. The people decked themselves with trees and flowers, and licentious dancing went on in the streets. But, in truth, festivals at the first risings of plant life, after the death of winter, and also when flowers open their buds, are natural everywhere and world wide. When nature assumes her bridal robes is a proper time for rejoicing. If Easter celebrates the resurrection of life from the underworld, Whitsuntide announces the coming of the Holy Spirit of Love. The Pagan observances still remaining in all Christian festivals sufficiently show how deeply rooted they were in nature worship.

The last Maypole in London was taken down in 1718. It was set up in Wansted Park, Essex, as a support to Sir Isaac Newton's large telescope. Pope thus perpetuates its remembrance:—

Amidst the area wide they took their stand,  
Where the tall Maypole o'erlook'd the Strand.

"The Mayings," says Strutt, in his *Sports and Pastimes*, 1801, "are in some sort yet kept up by the milkmaids at London, who go about the streets with their garlands and music, dancing." But the milkmaids gave place to the chimney-sweeps, as Maid Marian had to Malkin, a clown dressed in woman's clothes; and even the sooty sweeps have almost entirely abandoned the festival. Our country largely owed its title of "Merrie England" to its remnants of Paganism. Puritanism did much towards stamping these out, but Puritanism has in turn itself become almost as effete as Paganism.

J. M. WHEELER.

## INGERSOLL ON SHAKESPEARE.

If Shakespeare knew one fact, he knew its kindred and its neighbors. Looking at a coat of mail, he instantly imagined the society, the conditions that produced it, and what it in turn produced. He saw the castle, the moat, the draw-bridge, the lady in the tower, and the knightly lover spurring across the plain. He saw the bold baron and the rude retainer, the trampled serf, and all the glory and grief of feudal life. He was a man of imagination.

He lived the life of all.

He was a citizen of Athens in the days of Pericles. He listened to the eager eloquence of the great orators, and sat upon the cliffs, and with the tragic poet heard "the multitudinous laughter of the sea." He saw Socrates thrust the spear of question through the shield and heard of falsehood. He was present when the great man drank hemlock, and met the night of death, tranquil as a star meets morning. He listened to the peripatetic philosophers, and was unpuzzled by the sophists. He watched Phidias as he chiselled shapeless stone to forms of love and awe.

He lived by the mysterious Nile, amid the vast and monstrous. He knew the very thought that wrought the form and features of the Sphinx. He heard great Memnon's morning song when marble lips were smitten by the sun. He laid him down with the embalmed and waiting dead, and felt within their dust the expectation of another life, mingled with cold and suffocating doubts—the children born of long delay.

He walked the ways of mighty Rome, and saw great Caesar with his legions in the field. He stood with vast and motley throngs, and watched the triumphs given to victorious men, followed by uncrowned kings, the captured hosts, and all the spoils of ruthless war. He heard the shout that shook the Coliseum's roofless walls, when from the reeling gladiator's hand the short sword fell, while from his bosom gushed the stream of wasted life.

He lived the life of savage men. He trod the forest's silent depths, and in the desperate game of life or death he matched his thought against the instinct of the beast.

He knew all crimes and all regrets, all virtues and their rewards. He was victim and victor, pursuer and pursued, outcast and king. He heard the applause and curses of the world, and on his heart had fallen all the nights and noons of failure and success.

He knew the unspoken thoughts, the dumb desires, the wants and ways of beasts. He felt the crouching tiger's thrill, the terror of the ambushed prey, and with the eagles he had shared the ecstasy of flight and poise and swoop, and he had lain with sluggish serpents on the barren rocks uncoiling slowly in the heart of noon.

He sat beneath the bo-tree's contemplative shade, wrapped in Buddha's mighty thought, and dreamed all dreams that light, the alchemist, has wrought from dust and dew, and stored within the slumbrous poppy's subtle blood.

He knelt with awe and dread at every shrine; he offered every sacrifice and every prayer; felt the consolation and the shuddering fear; mocked and worshipped all the gods; enjoyed all heavens, and felt the pangs of every hell.

He lived all lives, and through his blood and brain there crept the shadow and the chill of every death; and his soul, like Mazeppa, was lashed naked to the wild horse of every fear and love and hate.

The imagination had a stage in Shakespeare's brain, whereon were set all scenes that lie between the morn of laughter and the night of tears, and where his players bodied forth the false and true, the joys and griefs, the careless shallows and the tragic deeps of universal life.

From Shakespeare's brain there poured a Niagara of gems spumed by fancy's seven-hued arch. He was as many-sided as clouds are many-formed. To him giving was hoarding—sowing was harvest—and waste itself the source of wealth. Within his marvellous mind were the fruits of all thought past, the seeds of all to be. As a drop of dew contains the image of the earth and sky, so all there is of life was mirrored forth in Shakespeare's brain.

Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean, whose waves touched all the shores of thought; within which were all the tides and waves of destiny and will; over which swept all the storms of fate, ambition, and revenge; upon which fell the gloom and darkness of despair and death, and all the sunlight of content and love; and within was the inverted sky, lit with the eternal stars. Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean, towards which all rivers run, and from which now the isles and continents of thought receive their dew and rain.

## DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

### A PUBLIC DISCUSSION.

BEING exceedingly fond of intellectual encounters upon the platform when they are conducted by gentlemen, I accompanied Mr. Foote last week to Kent, to listen to his debate, upon the above question, with the Rev. A. J. Waldron. It was the first time that I had heard my colleague in a regular set discussion; the event was therefore anticipated by me with great interest; and, to be frank, I may at once say that my anticipations, in some particulars, were more than realised. The local excitement was intense—the debate had been the talk among all sections of the neighborhood for weeks past; for a controversy upon such a subject as "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?" was an incident new to the majority of those who listened to it.

The discussion took place on the evenings of Wednesday and Thursday, April 17 and 18, in the Public Hall, New Brompton, before crowded audiences, the building being

packed each night in every part, including platform and an ante-room. Complete order was maintained throughout, and it was manifest that all present desired to hear both sides with patience and fairness. This is a striking indication of the progress of Freethought. Ten years ago Mr. Foote, or any other Secular advocate, would not have been listened to while boldly assailing orthodox pretensions. In my judgment, two-thirds of the audience were in favor of the Christian position, and one-third were Freethinkers and Secularists. I have faced many audiences in my time, but never more impartial ones than those at New Brompton. Both gentlemen were warmly received and enthusiastically applauded at the various points they made. Mr. A. J. Waldron won respect from our party for his earnestness and gentlemanly behavior; while Mr. Foote—in addition to these qualities—by his dialectical skill and his analytical reasoning, commanded the admiration of many who were opposed to him. Major Scott Moncrieff presided the first night, and I the second.

Personally, I did not regard the encounter as being a great one. The cause of this was to me obvious. The rev. gentleman was no match, intellectually, for Mr. Foote. Debate is an art, and, in addition to a person having the gift to master it, practice is required. Now, it appeared to me that Mr. Waldron was deficient in each of these requisites. He possesses, no doubt, many qualifications as a speaker, and probably as a preacher he is above the average; but as a philosophical debater he is not great. He seemed not only to fail to grasp the nature of his opponent's arguments, but also to possess a very limited supply of his own. Hence he too frequently resorted to preaching, and to introducing matter that had nothing to do with the question in debate. Of course, this at the moment captivated the thoughtless believer; but it could not convince the judicious inquirer.

The rev. gentleman's contentions were practically three—namely, (1) That Christ must have arisen, because St. Paul and "others" saw him after he rose from the dead; (2) that the New Testament records the event as a fact; and (3) that the early Church was founded upon the belief that the Resurrection really took place.

It will be seen, by those who understand the subject, what an opportunity was here given to Mr. Foote to show his debating power, and to expose the fallacies thus expounded. And he was not slow to avail himself of the chance thus given. A more crushing reply I have never heard. He showed (1) The utter absence of any adequate evidence that Christ rose from the dead. (2) That, if Paul "saw" Jesus at all, it was subjectively, not objectively—that is, while Paul was suffering from a sunstroke, or some other mental derangement. (3) That no other writer in the New Testament says, "I saw the risen Christ"; it is only alleged that "he was seen," but there is not a particle of first-hand testimony. (4) That the documents which relate the story of the Resurrection are so contradictory that they would not be accepted as evidence in any court of law. (5) That many sections of the early Church did not believe in the Resurrection.

Upon all these points Mr. Foote dwelt with a precision and force which must have greatly surprised some of the audience who differed from him. His exposition and *exposé* were couched in language so pertinent, and delivered with such force, that even Mr. Waldron referred more than once to the eloquence of his opponent. To me it appears marvellous how independent thinkers can believe in the story of the resurrection of Christ; for, as Mr. Foote demonstrated, the Christian version of the delusion is only a reproduction of older legends. We are not surprised, however, that the multitude, who have been trained from their infancy to regard the myth as a fact, still cling to the error. It would be well if a verbatim report of what Mr. Foote said upon this point could be published. It would be an "eye-opener" to many of the faithful.

There is no doubt that the debate will prove a great advantage to the cause of Freethought in New Brompton. I noticed how elated the Secular friends were at the result of the discussion, and how many congratulations Mr. Foote received from them. I am pleased to be able to sincerely join in the general verdict, that he did his work well.

CHARLES WATTS.

The human race, in all countries, has become the prey of the priests.—*D'Holbach.*

### FREE WILL.

Now, what does the Bible teach? Does it endorse the doctrine of the free will, or is it opposed to it? If the Bible teaches anything, it is that man is the subject of an eternal strife between God and the Devil, and whoever happens to be the stronger wins the game, and poor, suffering man has to put up with the consequences. If Christ taught anything at all, he taught the doctrine of predestination. He speaks of the elect, and compares them with a fold of sheep which knows its shepherd's voice, and which cannot be taken from him. Again, "None can come to the Father but by me, and none can come to me except the Father draw him." What, I ask, if Christians believe their own doctrine, has become of the free will?—Nil. But do the Christians really believe that the will is the predominant power of the human mind? Have you not heard them comment as follows, criticising other people's morality: "O, one can easily understand his being a bad fellow, for I have known his father and grandfather, and they were both like it"? Or: "One can't expect him to be better, for he has never seen any good in his home." Or: "Don't expect too much of him, poor fellow; the world has been against him." I have repeatedly heard these remarks from exponents of the "free-will" theory; nay, I have actually heard exclamations of surprise at an isolated individual who has deviated from the rule. Does not this show that they know better than they will admit, and that the Christians are practically Freethinkers, not knowing it in their ignorance? Further, why are the clerical shepherds so anxious to seize hold of the children, and cram their religion down their throats, while they are yet young? Is it not because the cunning are Freethinkers, though they will not admit it? Is it not all admission of the truth of my argument that atavism, education, and environment mould our character and build up our lives?

I am well aware that the champions of religion make a laughing-stock of this view. The thief will say: "I could not help stealing the watch," and the policeman replies: "I cannot help locking you up"; and the thief gets punished for not helping his action, and so forth. These ridiculous fools have not ascended high enough in the scale of development to understand that it is not for the sake of revenge and punishment that the criminal is punished. They have still the brute-passion of revenge in them, and cannot comprehend that the idea of punishment is to reform and to deter from repetition of the act, thus counteracting the causes which stimulate to crime. They forget that society imposed responsibility upon its members by submitting them to certain restrictions long before they invented their God to give his ten commandments. If not, why was it that Moses fled when he had killed the Egyptian? Was it not because he knew that the law, "Thou shalt not kill," was already in force?

Responsibility between man and man we do not deny. The feeling of this responsibility is heightened, and our sympathy towards our fellow beings is intensified, in proportion as we realise that what we are we have been made through causes which are too strong for the individual, but which can be counteracted by mutual aid and combined effort. In proportion as he realises that what we are we have been made by causes which we do not know, so will man begin to investigate into the conditions of his fellow men, be kind, generous, and ready to forgive his brothers, and reach the weaker a helping hand. But what we will not recognise is the responsibility to God. As the chief duty lies with the parents towards their offspring, so lies the duty with him towards us. He has called us into being without consulting us. He has, if he exists and is all-powerful, made us as we are, created the causes and circumstances which constitute our misfortunes and shortcomings. Consequently, he has no right to inflict eternal suffering upon us for being as he created us, and as an all-good God he will not do so. Therefore, we say hell is a cruel, malicious invention, a scarecrow invented by a tyrannical clergy, imposed upon the ignorant in an age of superstition, for the purpose of forcing them into mental submission. Finally, when hell is gone, we have no use for the Christ to save us from it, and Christianity is exploded. Up to the present, mankind has worked out its own salvation step by step. What it has gained it has gained without any supernatural intervention. This is an

established fact, which ought to be an inducement to self-reliance, and to refrain from cherishing any vain illusions about any kind of superhuman assistance.

J. K. MAAGAARD.

### ACID DROPS.

MRS. BESANT is home in London again, and is going to enlighten (or darken) the world on the subject of Mahatmas. She will first have to satisfy the world that she acted squarely in regard to the Judge forgeries. Before she left for Australia she made it up with Judge, and accepted a resolution of the Theosophical Society expressing "pleasure" that the matter had been finally settled. But during her absence Mr. Garrett published his crushing exposure in the *Westminster Gazette*, which gave Mrs. Besant to see that the hushing-up game was no longer playable. Accordingly she finds it prudent to go upon the war-path again after Judge's blood. She informs the *Chronicle* interviewer that three out of the four "sections," into which the handful of Theosophists in the world are divided, will vote for Judge's expulsion.

Mrs. Besant doesn't want Judge now. She did at first for he had a Mahatma in tow; but she has since found one of her own, and with that fine imagination which is characteristic of mystery-mongers, she locates her first acquaintance with him before she so much as knew Judge. Of course she adduces no corroborative evidence. We have only her word for it; and, unfortunately, her word is contradicted by the facts.

"I got my first absolute proof of the existence of Mahatmas," she says, "in 1889, before I had met Mr. Judge at all. From 1889 onward I both saw the master and he talked to me, taught me, and told me what was to happen. By him I was forewarned of Mr. Bradlaugh's death, which, occurring somewhat suddenly, would otherwise have come to me as a great shock."

It is easy enough to talk in this fashion. Anybody can wait until an event has happened, and then say "I knew it beforehand." Unless it is said beforehand, the statement is incapable of proof or disproof. It is only another form of the old confidence trick.

We never saw a Mahatma, and no Mahatma told us that Bradlaugh was going to die. Yet we knew it. He was a broken man before he went to India, he presumed upon his strength when he returned, and it required no "super-normal" wisdom to see that he would in all probability succumb to the next attack of his malady, especially if it happened in the depth of the winter. To talk of his death as "sudden" is an abuse of the English language, or an abuse of something still more universal.

Mrs. Besant did not know a Mahatma in 1889. At least, we assume that she is mistaken; otherwise we should have to say that she was juggling when she delivered her farewell address at the London Hall of Science in 1891. On that occasion she said nothing about knowing a Mahatma. She declared that, since Madame Blavatsky's death, she had received "letters in the same writing and from the same person." Nay, more; she said that her knowledge of Mahatmas had been secondhand during Madame Blavatsky's life; but, she added, "it is not so now, and it has not been so for many months." This chronology quite excludes her personal acquaintance with a Mahatma in 1889. As a matter of fact, she did not leave the National Secular Society until Bradlaugh resigned the presidency in 1890.

Mrs. Besant played those mysterious Mahatma letters ("on my honor as a lady") for all they were worth. Her announcement about them was the sensation of the day. Since then she has had to admit—under pressure—that the letters she trumpeted in this style were forgeries; and now she says that her reference to them was "altogether incidental."

The High Priestess of Theosophy does not wait till she has been in Devachan for a fresh incarnation. She has lots of new avatars on this side of the tomb. Having played out the old drama, she has started a new one, to fill up the empty benches. First, she played Madame Blavatsky and her Mahatmas; then she played Judge's forged Mahatma letters; and now she is playing a Mahatma of her own. It has taken her just four years to appropriate the Blavatsky's mantle.

Mrs. Besant will never equal that clever charlatan. She has not the necessary gifts for the part. Still, she is making

as much progress as can be expected; and there is every likelihood of her drinking the cup of imposture to the very dregs.

A few months back the Australian press teemed with Theosophic and Spiritualistic rubbish. Mrs. Besant, who had been despised and hated most bitterly while she followed an honest and useful course of life, was now praised up and paraded before the public as an Eighth Wonder of the world, for no other reason than that she had made herself respectable by allying herself with a most transparent humbug—and humbug is the only respectable thing, as our readers know. She gave her sanction to one of Mrs. Mellon's open tricks, in Sydney; and a little later that dealer in spooks was most thoroughly exposed. A month or two passed, and Mrs. Besant was compelled to expose herself, and to inform the world that the stuff she had staked everything upon, stuff she had been as confident of as of her own existence, was—what? forgery! Still Theosophists and Spiritualists, like Adam and Eve, are "not ashamed." They brazen it out with a boldness worthy of a Catholic priest or a Salvationist. And the Ghosts and Mahatmas, like God and Christ, and the other Saints and Bugbears, decline to come to the rescue! This is extremely unkind of them. And it must be admitted that "Geordie" and "Koot Hoomi" are anything but gentlemen so to leave their lady friends in the lurch.—*Liberator*.

Archdeacon Farrar has had a plum from Lord Rosebery. He is appointed Dean of Canterbury. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Dr. Farrar is on the road to one of them—as a Bishop.

Dr. Farrar has made a lot of money by supplementing Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. His *Life of Christ* is said to have brought him over £2,000. Lucky man! Judas Iscariot, the cashier of the J. C. company, sold the entire business for £3 15s. There's more money in it now.

The following answer is said to have been given to a Cambridge Examiner: "We know little of the childhood of Christ; what knowledge we have we derive from Archdeacon Farrar."

The merry May Meetings, the *Christian World* list of which extends from April 1 to July 16, are now on, and parsons are almost as plentiful in the Strand as ballet girls. It gives them a nice outing, and all the religious societies an opportunity for crying out for funds, even while they proclaim the condition of London rivals that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The small hall at St. Martin's Town Hall more than sufficed for the very small meeting of old ladies and young workers of the Christian Evidence Society. The report was rather doleful. Though the income, thanks to "the fact that the money contributed for the Special Provincial Lecturers' Fund has been temporarily appropriated to other departments," reached a total of £1,472 3s. 3d., yet of this the secretaries and clerk took £519, besides office-rent and other expenses.

In the items for Secretaries there follows the words for "Administration, Correspondence, and Interviews with Sceptics, Examinations, etc." We fancy the interviews with sceptics must be most trying, and well worth all the money they receive, for we note that they do not report a single case of their having converted a recognisable sceptic.

The Report says: "The very heavy losses and depreciation of investments, the general tendency to give to the relief of physical necessities, and the large multiplication of new organisations of different kinds, will account for the straitness in finances of almost all religious societies." If the public knew what return they get for their money, there would probably be further straitness. We note that the C. E. S. Committee "constantly and earnestly urge their agents to maintain a Christian spirit and bearing." The reports from our outdoor stations elucidate what sort of spirit and bearing this is.

The Protestant Church of Ireland has sat upon the Rev. James Hunt, rector of Donogore, for having taught doctrines contrary to the Articles in the Prayer Book. Mr. Hunt has signed a recantation. Three hundred years ago he would have been burnt first, and allowed time for recantation afterwards.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the veteran associate of Ernestine Rose in the advocacy of woman's rights, says: "During the fifty years since I went before the Legislature of New York to urge the rights of women, I have seen that the greatest trouble was that women believe themselves cursed of God, that they were the origin of sin, and that maternity is a curse, marriage a condition of slavery."

These ideas are Bible sanctioned. Mrs. Stanton thought a remedy might be found in a revision of the Bible.

Had Mrs. Stanton tackled this business herself, giving her own comments on passages of the Bible affecting women, the probability is her work would have been a real instrument of woman's emancipation. But she formed a committee, associating with herself such persons as the Rev. Olympia Brown, Rev. Phœbe Hanaford, Mrs. Lord, Frances Ellen Burr, and Lady Somerset. The result appears mainly to be that these ladies revise the Bible to say what they wish it to say. They point to the first chapter of Genesis as showing the equal creation of man and woman, while dismissing the rib story in the second chapter as contradictory and belittling the story of the first chapter. On the third chapter they point out "the worthy ambition of the first woman for knowledge." Altogether the woman's revision of the Bible is likely to be a curiosity.

The inhabitants of Rockford, Illinois, are still concerned about Christ Schweinfurth, who is said to have over forty young women in his "Heaven" adjacent to their city. These "handmaidens of the Lord," as Christ Schweinfurth calls them, are said to occasionally have children by the Holy Ghost, for the followers of Schweinfurth hold that the age of miracles is not past, the arm of the Lord is not shortened, neither is his power less than in the days of the Apostles.

A new Messiah, or rather a new deity, has arisen in America. Of course the new deity is feminine; Mrs. Eddy is her name. She is said to be a manifestation of the feminine deity, the only begotten daughter of the bi-sexual He-She. It is said that the Christian scientists have put up for her a church in Boston, having stained-glass windows with portraits of the lady with a halo, and representing her in conversation with God.

Matthew Arnold said: "There is nothing one would more desire for a person or a document one greatly values than to make them independent of miracles." In pursuance of this idea, "advanced" men of God talk much of the natural foundations of Christianity. They either discard or slur over the miraculous, evidently thinking their faith will float more buoyantly were the supernatural element thrown overboard. But to do this consistently, it must be done wholesale. If, for instance, the temptation by the devil and perching on the pinnacle of the temple is only an allegory, may not the resurrection be an allegory? The Gospels without the miraculous would be more barren than the play of *Hamlet* with the character of the Prince of Denmark omitted.

The story of Saul and his *séance* with the witch of Endor has often been cited as confirmatory of Spiritism. But R. Phillips, writing in the Spiritist *Two Worlds*, rejects it as unhistorical. He says: "Now, we do not believe that the spirit world is a subterranean one, or that the departed exist in a state of drowsy oblivion. The very opposite is the truth, and, so far from regarding intercourse with us as an operation which disturbs and annoys them, our spirit friends unanimously tell us that it is one of their greatest pleasures, and we have no reason to doubt it."

If the greatest pleasure of the spirit world is to turn earthly tables and play the banjo in dark cabinets, all we can say is that we sympathise with the ghost of Samuel, who asked, "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" The poor old prophet had been buried at Ramah, forty miles distant, and was calmly snoozing in Sheol when the witch trotted him out to meet Saul. He did not like it, though his visitor was a king. Yet the Spiritists want us to credit that the greatest pleasure of the defunct Shakespeare is to come back and talk through a medium to John Snooks!

American cities have been deluged with tracts with such taking titles as "Flee from the Wrath to Come," "The Terrors of an Endless Hell," "The Misery of the Damned," "The Eternity of Punishment," "A Lost Soul," "Do You Love Jesus?" and so on. "These tracts," says the *Progressive Thinker*, "were bought in immense quantities by religious fanatics, and were freely distributed among the people, with the avowed purpose to save poor, lost souls from endless woe. A recent trial at law in New York court has taken us behind the curtains. A party testified that he made a fortune in the manufacture and sale of these frightful tracts; that he engaged with another party in a speculative project purchasing whiskey; that his partner had diverted a portion of the money from its intended use; and that the action was brought to right the grievance." The union of hell-fire with the whiskey business has occasioned much comment; but, after all, it is a natural affinity.

Professor Flinders Petrie, on taking the honorary degree of LL.D. at Edinburgh, told of a new race he had

discovered as living in Egypt, thirty miles North of Thebes, on the western side of the Nile. They had a custom of cutting off the head at burial. The race knew and venerated the dog. He believed the race existed 3000 B.C., or before the time of Noah's deluge, which evidently did not affect Egypt.

Max O'Rell says that in France there are many men who can swear and many who can sing hymns; but the Anglo-Saxon seems to have developed a capacity for doing both.

The Rev. George W. West, of the Episcopal Church of Manville, Rhode Island, has been forced to resign. This is not a case of heresy, for Mr. West is said to have an excellent reputation as a preacher and worker; but he was too fond of whist, tennis, and tobacco to please the candidates for white shirts, wings, and golden harps and crowns. The *Chicago Tribune* says this West case reminds it of the more pronounced weakness of the Kansas preacher, who was forced to resign because, while he was a strong exhorter, an eloquent preacher, and a man of great gifts in prayer, he was "apt to be quarrelsome when he was drunk!"

William Purkis, a Truro "Court Hairdresser," who was superintendent of the Congregational Church Sunday-school, has been arrested for selling bicycles, which he had never paid for, at less than cost price.

In Oklahoma there is a town called Tipperusalem. One founder wanted it called "Jerusalem," and the other "Tipperary," and in order to avoid a row they compromised.

It is recorded that, once upon a time, the parish minister of Lochnaben prayed for the Town Council, "such as they are." Last Sunday another minister, preaching in the same place upon Peter's denial of Christ, said: "He cursed and swore just like one of your Commissioners." That is bringing the Gospels up to date.

The clergyman at Barrow-on-Soar will not officiate at the new cemetery because it has not been consecrated, and the Home Secretary also will not permit its being simply dedicated. The consecration is only a pretext for getting more clerical fees. Can any superstition be more foolish than that of fancying that the earth in which one is buried needs holy water or prayers?

A Wesleyan trustee writes to the *Times* urging that Wesleyans should oppose the disestablishment of the Welsh Church, because otherwise the principle of secular application may some day be applied to Wesleyan trust property, which, he shows, is often held as a public charitable trust.

The Opium Commission has at last issued its report, which quite goes against the missionary view of the drug. The Commissioners say that it is considered the common domestic medicine of the people of India; that, taken in moderation, it is not attended with ill effects, and that excess is exceptional.

The Girls' Friendly Society is a philanthropic institution, receiving subscriptions from all quarters; but it appears that Nonconformists are debarred from all share in the management. If run on sectarian lines, it should appeal for support only to those in the Church of England.

The bubonic plague at Hong Kong has been followed by a similar or worse outbreak at the Portuguese settlement in Macao. Truly, the tender mercies of the Lord are manifold.

A Russian journal reports that the town of Kutschan, in Khorasan, has been swallowed up by an earthquake. It is said that, at a second shock, the already shattered town disappeared into an immense chasm in the earth. The number of victims of this visitation of God must be many thousands.

Further shocks of earthquake in Central Europe killed a good number, and drove many fairly out of their minds. At Laibach more than 20,000 persons camped out. There was a severe frost, and the women and children suffered greatly from the cold. Any human person guilty of such wanton destruction and cruelty would be considered a monster unfit to live. Yet we are told to credit everything to an all-good God.

An Ohio preacher said, "Chicago is the nearest approach to hell we have upon this earth." He got a call from the pork city at a larger salary, and made haste to go to the terrestrial Sheol.

The Archbishop of Paris has given the blessing of the Church upon the French invasion of Madagascar. He says the mission of France is that of Christianity and civilisation. Probably some of his hearers do not know that the Hovas,

against whom the expedition is directed, are much better Christians than the majority of Frenchmen are.

Is fetishism extinct in the Church of England? Some people see distinct traces of fetishism in the rite of Holy Communion. Idolatry is yet more evident in the "Adoration of the Cross," which was performed at various Ritualistic churches on Good Friday. At St. Margaret's, Anfield, Liverpool, there was a procession of the cross. The hymn sung was the Christian version of the old phallicon:—

Faithful Cross! above all other  
One and only noble Tree!  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit thy peers may be.  
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,  
Sweetest weight is hung on thee.

The physicians of a new hospital erected in Brunswick are said to have been much vexed by the Minister of the Interior, a very High Churchman, having ordered that religious mottoes should be painted on the walls. They say that patients who see such mottoes constantly before them are easily excited, and their cure is hindered. They have had such mottoes banished at least from the operation-room. Fancy sick people being greeted with "Prepare to meet thy God," or "Where will you spend Eternity?"

Religion crystallises even commendable principles into a narrow and irrational form. Thus Dr. Hendley says that Jains of the strictest kind will not even drink water from the spring, because it contains life, but use that which has been drawn by other people from the wells, as the sin of destroying life then falls on the latter instead of on themselves. The idea of passing on sins and disorders to others is common to all Hindus.

Dr. F. Peake, the secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, has been going out of his way, or perhaps all bigotry is in his way, in urging people to write to members of Parliament in opposition to the Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bill, which is set down for second reading on the 26th instant.

The first day of April was appropriately chosen by the Rev. Jacob Primmer, the Dunfermline anti-Romanist prophet, for a visit to the Vatican. He did not see the Scarlet Woman, but her influence was there; for while denouncing "a glaring imposture" placarded on the wall of the Mamertine Prison, which says that Paul was immured there, his feet slipped, and he fell headlong into the dungeon. Doubtless the monkish guide regarded this as a judgment on his unbelief, and will henceforth hold up the reverend anti-Romanist as a warning to sceptics. The *Aberdeen Evening Express*, which tells the tale with wicked glee, says: "The sooner that Jacob scuttles beyond the precincts of Rome and its sphere of influence the better, and he would be wisely advised were he to become of the same mind as Baillie Nicol Jarvie regarding his Hielan' kinsfolk, that his 'buits might be foo o' boilin' het parritch ere he again sets foot in such a — country.'"

There have been a lot of disturbances at the Vestry meetings this Easter. The laity are not so subservient to the men of God as in days of yore. In some cases they objected to their ritualism; in others to high-handed proceedings in other directions; and at the parish church of Ogle Hay, Brownhills, they passed a resolution unanimously protesting against the attitude of the vicar (the Rev. S. F. Arrowsmith) in stifling discussion, and also "against the un-Christianlike and ungentlemanly conduct shown by him at the funeral of the late Mr. J. Poole, who had resided in the parish for thirty years, and was highly respected."

Mr. A. E. Fletcher, who retired from the editorial conduct of the *Daily Chronicle*, and is seeking the suffrages of the electors of Greenock, says he wants Government to be carried on "in accordance with the Ten Commandments and the doctrines of the Sermon on the Mount." We could understand this if he were an Anarchist, desiring no Government at all, for the doctrines he esteems would certainly reduce it to a minimum. Army and navy, judges, magistrates, and policemen would be abolished, and, with these gone, people might find out they could even, at a pinch, dispense with members of Parliament.

Talking about religious folks, we are reminded that "knee drill," which is supposed to be a very cheerful and elevating form of devotional exercise, much appreciated by members of the Salvation Army, has led to the suppression of the Army in Toulon, the Sub-Prefect of that particular French town having issued an order in which he says "knee drills" are manifestations of a religion which is not recognised by the State. Perhaps the "General" will find a more commonplace and sensible description of this special form of religious evolution.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

*Sunday*, April 28, Victoria Hall, Toward-road, Sunderland: 11, "The Shadow of the Sword"; 3, "Was Shakespeare a Christian?" 7, "The Philosophy of Secularism."  
*Tuesday*, April 30, Athenaeum, Godolphin-road, Goldhawk-road, Shepherd's Bush, W.: 8.30, "How the Bible Stands Now."

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

**MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.**—April 28, Hall of Science, London. May 5, Glasgow; 6, 7, 8, and 9, debate at Glasgow with Dr. Jamieson; 12, Dundee; 19, Cumberwell; 26, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

**A. BROADBENT**, 9 Peter-street, Manchester, repeats his offer to send vegetarian recipes free to any reader of the *Freethinker*.

**A. G. LEVETT**.—Thanks for your batches of cuttings.

**WELL WISHER**.—Mr. Foote could not allow Mr. Watts to bear the responsibility of any deficit arising from his School Board contest in Finsbury, which was undertaken at the desire of the N.S.S. Executive. He has just paid the balance of £11 and closed the account.

**W. H. SPIVEY**.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. It is pleasant to find the Huddersfield friends keep a warm place in their hearts for Mr. Foote, who wishes he could visit them more frequently.

**N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.**—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Blackburn Branch, 3s. 6d.

**W. CLOGG**.—Your suggestion shall be considered.

**P. BRAHAM**.—Your friend is about right.

**J. HAYES**.—It is enough if all assist to the extent of their power.

**INGERSOLL ADMIRER**.—Colonel Ingersoll is under no obligation to reply to any and every Christian who likes to attack him. He has replied to Judge Black, Dr. Field, Talmage, Mr. Gladstone, and Cardinal Manning. He has not replied to Father Lambert, and no doubt for very good reasons.

**R. J. MURRAY**.—Thanks for your letter. Mr. Foote did mention the matter to your Committee when he was with you, and said there was no time to lose. If Nottingham is nominated next year, we shall feel bound to use our influence on its behalf.

**W. SIMONS**.—Glad to see the Kingsland open-air work is to be continued.

**LIVERPOOL ATHEIST**.—We value your appreciation of our treatment of the *Liverpool Pulpit* attack on Bradlaugh.

**E. SMEDLEY**.—(1) We did not preserve the report, and cannot now check the references. Of course we should be sorry to do the reverend gentleman an injustice. (2) There was certainly no ban upon the Christian religion for 250 years. The story of the Christian persecutions is, for the most part, a monstrous mass of falsehood. (3) The savage act of Nero, if it really happened, was confined to Rome. There was no general persecution of Christians at that time, as Gibbon clearly shows.

**MEMO.**—Send the Frothought literature to Mr. Ford. He will see to its judicious distribution. Thanks for the cutting. Glad to hear you will send what you can in answer to our appeal.

**ISOLATED FREETHINKER**.—Pleased to hear we have aided in your mental emancipation. We do not know whether there are Freethinkers enough at Worcester to form and maintain a Branch. The Leicester Secular Society does not send us a lecture notice; of course we should gladly insert it. Any Freethinker can attend the Bristol Conference, sitting behind the N.S.S. members, and taking no part in discussing the Society's business. Why not join before then?

**PAPERS RECEIVED.**—New York Herald—Literary Digest—Clarion—Two Worlds—British Temperance Advocate—Darwen News—Isle of Man Times—Liberty—Lucifer—Nya Sanningar—Open Court—Liberator—Royal Cornwall Gazette—Huddersfield Daily Examiner—Echo—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Solidarity—Aberdeen Express—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—Blue Grass Blade—Sporting Chronicle—Birmingham Daily Post—Financial Weekly Bulletin—Northern Gossip.

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

**HALL OF SCIENCE.**

I do not know whether I shall be able to raise the £600 necessary to extinguish Mr. R. O. Smith's mortgage (as vendor) upon the London Hall of Science; but if I do not succeed it will not be my fault. Very little time remains, and those who mean to help must do so by next Tuesday. None of the money sent in will be lost. Not a single share will be allotted unless we are in a position to settle with Mr. Smith. If we have to say to him: "Well, you must exercise your rights as mortgagee"—every penny of

share-application money, and every penny of donation, will be returned.

Applications have been received, either by the National Secular Hall Society's secretary or by myself, for about 120 fresh shares. I cannot print a complete list of these applications. The best plan is to give a few items from the correspondence.

Mr. Samuel Seal sends me a cheque for £30 for as many shares, which is a sufficient pledge of his sympathy. I know some other Freethinkers who could easily spare as much. Will they send it?

Mr. William Clarkson sends me a cheque for £15; £10 for as many shares in his own name, and £5 as a donation. "The necessity of having headquarters," he says, "must be apparent to every member of the Secular Society." This gentleman lives in Scotland, and his example should stimulate the Londoners, who have hardly done their duty in this matter.

Mr. C. J. Pottage, who is a Londoner, sends me £5 for five shares in my own name.

G. R., another Londoner, who was such a good friend of our cause in the old Bradlaugh days, sends £2 as a donation, and writes: "I hope you will soon be able to collect the necessary amount for such a very important object."

A sailor on board a steamship, just about to sail, having seen our appeal, sends a donation of 10s. before leaving old England's shores. He thinks that if the Secularists are in earnest about the honor of Charles Bradlaugh they will find the money for a splendid memorial in London.

A Cheltenham friend applies for a share in token of "my esteem for you and our late leader."

A Torquay friend applies for four shares, and wishes he could take more. He is in a priest-ridden place, but he is glad to help Freethought where it has a better chance.

Mr. W. H. Spivey, of Huddersfield, thinks the party ought to seize this opportunity. He applies for two new shares, and says that other Huddersfield friends will do something. He wants to know why every Freethinker cannot take at least one share. We should then have splendid headquarters in the metropolis.

Mr. J. Partridge, secretary of the Birmingham Branch, applies for four more shares; another friend will apply for five, and the members are to see what can be done at their meeting on Thursday (April 25).

Mr. C. Heaton, a working man at Woodville, Burton-on-Trent, applies for one share, and calls upon five hundred working men to do the same "as a proof of gratitude to Charles Bradlaugh and our present leader."

Mr. John Hughes, whose donation of £1 was the first received, trusts that "one thousand others will do likewise."

Mr. G. F. Wenborn, a Londoner, takes five shares, and says he will take twenty, or even a hundred.

The donations I have to acknowledge are as follows: G. W. Foote, £5; C. J. Pottage, £5; G. R., £2; J. Hayes, 1s.; John Hughes, £1; W. O. Hawes, £2; J. Bevins, 5s.; John and James McGlashan, £2; Isolated Freethinker, 1s.; T. H. Elwen, £1; Old Shellback, 10s.; William Clarkson, £5.

I have now to make a final appeal. Those who can take shares, even if they cannot pay up at once, should do so immediately. Those who prefer to send donations, to be invested in shares in the name of the N.S.S., or in that of any person they indicate, should send their cheques or postal orders without a moment's delay. Those who prefer to make a promise, on condition that the attempt is successful, are invited to communicate with me. Even the "rank and file"—and there are thousands of them—might bestir themselves. Every one who reads this should decide at once what he can afford to give, however small the sum may be, even if only a shilling; then he (or she) should go to the post-office, obtain an order for the amount, and forward it to me. I will acknowledge every penny in next week's *Freethinker*.  
 G. W. FOOTE.

The *Buffalo Express* gives the following as the subjects of Sunday pulpit discourses in that city: "Is the Trilby Craze Dying Out?" "Fitzsimmons v. Corbett," "How the Parson Spends his Vocation," "Should our Daughters Marry Foreign Noblemen?" and "High Sleeves and Theatre Hats." It wants to know if the Gospel and the old scheme of salvation have clean gone out of fashion.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE'S morning and afternoon audiences at Glasgow on Sunday were (for him) only fair; partly, perhaps, owing to the number of friends who were finishing a holiday at the seaside. In the evening, however, the hall was crowded, many persons even standing in the lower passages. The third lecture was much applauded. Mr. Gilmour, who was in the chair, strongly invited discussion, but no one responded to the invitation. "General" Evans, late of the Salvation Army, but now on his own account, was present in the afternoon taking notes, but he did not raise any opposition. A collection was taken for the N.S.S. General Fund.

The Glasgow Branch, we are glad to hear, is stronger than ever in its membership. This is very gratifying and encouraging after such a long spell of hard weather and commercial adversity.

Mr. Gilmour will be known to the N.S.S. delegates and members who attended the Newcastle and Hanley Conferences. We are much pleased to hear that he thinks of travelling south in July or August. He will have three or four Sundays to spare, which should be greedily snapped up by Branches between Glasgow and London. We shall see, if he does come south, that our London friends have an opportunity of hearing him. Mr. Gilmour is a man of high ability and many accomplishments; he is also a capital speaker.

Mr. Foote lectures at Sunderland again to-day (April 28). Since his previous visit the proprietors and lessees of halls have been more or less intimidated by the bigots. One refused to let unless the police guaranteed the lectures as "all right." Even the lessee of the hall which is engaged stipulated for the mildest subjects. The Victoria Hall is the largest in Sunderland, seating about 4,000 people. It is to be hoped that every local Freethinker will do his best to secure large meetings.

On Tuesday evening (April 30) Mr. Foote lectures for the West London Branch in the Athenæum, Godolphin-road, Shepherd's Bush, on "How the Bible Stands Now." Complimentary tickets have been sent to many of the local clergy.

Last Sunday morning Mr. Charles Watts lectured, to a crowded audience, for the Walworth Liberal and Radical Club, taking for his subject "The French Revolution." Mr. W. M. Thompson, L.C.C., editor of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, presided. Several questions were asked and answered at the close of the lecture, and a hearty vote of thanks was given to the lecturer.

In the evening Mr. Watts had a capital audience at the Hall of Science. Mr. Rowney, as usual, made an excellent chairman. Unfortunately, soon after Mr. Watts's arrival at the Hall he was suddenly seized with a most severe attack of cramp in his left leg. He had, in consequence, to abbreviate his lecture to three-quarters of an hour. The audience deeply sympathised with him, and two medical gentlemen present rendered valuable aid. It is the first attack of the kind our colleague has had, and we hope it will be the last. We are glad to report his entire recovery.

This Sunday evening (April 28) Mr. Watts will again occupy the platform at the Hall of Science, taking for his subject "Man and the Universe, from a Christian and Secular Standpoint."

Mr. S. P. Putnam's engagements are completed for his Sunday evening lectures during his coming visit to this country. There are, however, several week-nights for which arrangements can be made for a visit from him. Applications should be made at once to Mr. Charles Watts for vacant dates. In all cases a stamped and directed envelope must be enclosed for a reply.

"Nunquam" devotes another pretty column to the *Methodist Times*, which started the rumor that the editor of the *Clarion* had been captured by the High Church party. After some excellent chaff, Mr. Blatchford says frankly: "My religion is the religion of humanity. God has never revealed himself to me. Perhaps because I am too small for his notice; perhaps because he is too great for my understanding."

"Nunquam" says he doesn't know the difference between High Church and Low Church. He doesn't even know what Evangelical Christianity is. "Because," he adds, "I never thought it worth while to inquire." His conclusion is as follows: "Let the *Methodist Times* go on its way rejoicing; the *Clarion* is not to be caught with chaff."

The *Nya Sanningar*, the new organ of the Swedish Freethinkers, presents a very creditable appearance, and shows its decided character by reproducing a number of sketches from the French Comic Bible. Petrus Asplund is the editor, and we wish him all success in his venture.

Mr. Symes, noticing the *Literary World* review of our book on Voltaire, says: "Could we have better signs and proofs that Secularism, as the antithesis of Christianity, is gaining the ascendancy than these two facts—namely, that our universities are adopting the very views which Voltaire and Paine promulgated, and that these two men are now honored by Christians, after the churches have heaped upon them unlimited and horrible abuse for more than one hundred years? So bitterly and terribly were Voltaire and Paine abused, in my hearing, by parsons, by Sunday-school bosses, by pious tract writers and others, in my early days, that I felt a perfect horror of them; and long after I became un-Christianised I found it impossible to quell the old prejudice against those good and most useful men. Now we find Christians speaking in decent terms of them, and even hinting at an admiration for them which they can hardly venture to express just yet. To me nothing can be more encouraging than these facts, for they show the trend of modern thought and sentiment to be directly away from Christianity, and in favor of the forces which have rendered that superstition effete."

*Secular Thought*, of Toronto, devotes nearly the whole of its issue of April 6 to the Manitoba School Question, which is creating great excitement throughout the Dominion. It is felt that if the Catholics carry their point and compel the Manitobans to support their schools, they will virtually be masters of Canada. It is likely, however, that their claims will give an impetus in the direction of secular education. Messrs. Ellis, Adams, & Pringle have very good articles on the subject.

In Scranton, Pennsylvania, Judge Gunster decided that Bible reading and exposition in the public schools was in contravention of the law of the State.

Mr. Forder will lecture at Camberwell on Sunday evening, the lecture arranged for having fallen through. His subject will be "Science and Christianity."

The secretary of the Wood Green Branch asks us to announce that they begin their course of week-night lectures on Thursday, May 2. Mr. Cohen is to be the speaker, and as this is his first lecture after his absence in the north, we hope he will be well supported. The secretary does not inform us of the exact time and place of the meetings, but we presume those in the district will know.

The Finsbury Park Branch will hold a meeting at 91 Mildmay-park, N., on Sunday, at 3 p.m., when matters for the Conference Agenda will be considered. A full attendance of members is particularly requested.

Kingsland Freethinkers are requested to meet at Mr. Davey's, 21 Castle-street, to-day (April 28) at 12 noon, to make final arrangements for the open-air lectures at Ridley-road. The first lecture will be delivered on the following Sunday morning by Mr. P. H. Snelling, on "Secularism and Citizenship."

The Edmonton Branch begins open-air work to-day (April 28) at 7 o'clock, when Mr. James will lecture on "Still It Moves." Local Freethinkers should attend and support the speaker.

Mr. A. B. Moss, who is a member of the new Camberwell Vestry, was actually proposed as a churchwarden. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! The clergymen on the Board were smitten with amazement. There was some humorous speechifying, in which Mr. Moss took part. He said he felt quite qualified for that high function, but on the whole he would rather not stand. Mr. Moss, therefore, is not a churchwarden.

Mr. C. Cohen completes his month's mission at Newcastle-on-Tyne to-day (April 28). We hope the local Freethinkers will rally round him in strong force on this occasion. After the evening lecture he will address the Branch members on a matter of great importance to them.

The Committee of the West Ham Public Libraries send us "sincere thanks" for our donation of the *Freethinker*. We hope it will do good in Mr. Keir Hardie's constituency.

Crowded meetings listened to the debate at New Brompton between Mr. Foote and the Rev. A. J. Waldron. There were two chairmen, but not work enough for one, as the debaters kept the peace, and the audience was most orderly. Major Scott Moncrieff presided the first evening, and Mr. Charles Watts the second. The major, of course,

was well known already; Mr. Watts was a stranger, but his appearance was a good enough introduction. Mr. Waldron is popular among the Christians at New Brompton. He is certainly a fluent and capable speaker. Of course he had the last speech; Christians generally manage to get that, and they generally abuse the opportunity. Mr. Waldron's last speech was a long way off the Resurrection. It was a general panegyric on Christianity, supported by recitations from Browning, Tennyson, and Newman. Still, it satisfied the Christians, and the Freethinkers did not care to interrupt.

### A MINISTER'S FUNCTIONS.

THE Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott, a Broad Church minister, who is said to be the most popular reverend in America since the death of Henry Ward Beecher, writes in the *Forum Library* on "What are a Christian Preacher's Functions?" He notices that the preacher is getting to be looked on mainly as an entertainer, and he does not like it. "The preacher's function," he says, "is not that of a play actor or orator, or even a moral reformer, but that of a messenger of God." He justifies denominationalism on the ground that "experience has proved the truth of Christ's prophecy, that each shepherd would have his own flock, who would hear his voice, but would not hear the voice of a stranger." This citation shows Mr. Abbott's own methods of dealing with the Bible. There is no such prophecy as Mr. Abbott speaks of, but in the very same chapter where Jesus is made to say, "The sheep follow their own shepherd, for they know his voice," he says, "There shall be one fold and one shepherd," which Catholics rightly cite as a condemnation of denominationalism.

Dr. Lyman Abbott wants to sell a new article under the old label, to offer evolutionism under the guise of Christianity. He says: "It is useless for the ministry to go on preaching a catastrophic theology to an age which has adopted an evolutionary philosophy; and it is a great deal worse than useless for the ministry to identify religion with a catastrophic philosophy, and so incite the thoughtful men and women of the age to relegate religion with that philosophy to the lumber room where old and cast-off furniture is kept." "Religion," he virtually says, "must follow science. Formerly science was catastrophic; it is now evolutionary. The change began, at least it was emphasised, in geology, which half a century or more ago taught that the world was brought into its present shape by forces now operative, and through phenomena akin to those of comparatively recent history. The nebular hypothesis carried back this evolutionary theory of world-building to very remote ages. Philology undertook to account for the difference of tongues by an analogous, natural, and long-continued process. Historical science was re-created on a new basis, upon the hypothesis that epochs created men rather than men epochs. Anthropology traced all variations of race upon the earth back to a single pair, denying the theory of special creations. Zoology and embryology carried the process further back, claiming to explain the differentiation of the different animal species, and then the difference between men and the other animals, and, finally, the difference between the animal and the vegetable, as due, in a similar manner, to gradual growth, not to sudden and divine interventions. The scientific thought of the present age is as truly constructed on this evolutionary theory of change by growth as the astronomical thought is on the Copernican theory."

Religion formerly taught a God who came from nowhere, who at some moment of time made all things out of nothing, man from dust and woman from his rib. The function of the modern messenger of God is to give a totally different message, but one in which the difference is wrapped up in a mass of verbiage and duplicity. After this, we are not surprised that Dr. Abbott concludes by saying: "I add, to any young man who may read these pages, and who is deliberating the question of his profession, that never was 'the cloth' or 'the pulpit' less venerated than now, never was so scant respect paid to the more vestment and standing place; but never did an age or a nation so greatly need the prophet as this age and this American people, and never was age or nation more ready to hear and heed the prophet, if he comes to it inspired by the consciousness of a divine message." Since, evidently,

the men of God are not inspired by the consciousness of a divine message, but palpably eager to put new wine into old bottles and palm it off as the original article, we do not wonder that the cloth has fallen into disrespect.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

### SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

THE French writer who laid it down that *science is bankrupt*, probably only meant to express his own inaptitude for, and indifference to, the serious investigation of facts, and his preference for the realm of imagination, wherein he can build what castles in the air he pleases. If he came calmly to consider matters, he might find that it is science, or systematised knowledge, which has given him the possibility of leisure to indulge his fancy. Nay, he might discover that the actual facts of science—the ascertained distance of the stars, for instance—are so stupendous as not only to outsoar his imagination, but absolutely to pass beyond his conception. Religion has myriads of ministers who every week extol its triumphs, yet the fact remains that all we call civilisation is due, not to religion, but to science. There is plenty of religion among savages; indeed, it may be said the more barbarous a nation is, the more attention it will bestow on religion; but not until it has some systematised knowledge will it make progress. Abyssinia is a Christian country, as much as, or more so, than England. What makes the difference but the acquisitions of science? All the preaching in the world has not done so much in the interests of peace and civilisation as the mere intercommunication of peoples, brought about by science. And there is this difference between science and religion: the one is constantly expanding, the other constantly contracting. Religion was first in the field, and claimed all the ground. It pretended to settle every question in regard to world-making and man- and woman-making. It laid down the laws for human life here, and pretended to tell our destiny hereafter. But exactly as science has extended, as knowledge of nature has increased, so have religious pretensions been forced to retire. Religious teachings have been found to be in contradiction to the conclusions of geology, of astronomy, and of biology. The religious account of the origin of the world and of man is found to be incorrect; and, now being found in error upon things upon which we are capable of judging, it asks to be credited unreservedly upon things which no human person can possibly decide.

The men of God now speak of the reconciliation of science and religion. They are like the Chinese saying to the Japanese, "Let us be at peace," since they have found themselves beaten at every encounter. But they cry "peace, peace," where there is no peace. The basis and method of science is entirely different from that of religion. Religion rests on authority; science on investigation. Religion is stationary; science progressive. The one starts with a *a priori* assumption of a God; the other works inductively, and questions all assumptions. Religion is based on some supposed revelation, either universal or special; science upon reason. Religion pre-supposes the inefficiency of the human faculties; science their relative sufficiency. The only peace possible is by the constant surrender of religion to science, and the accommodation of the theories of the former to those of the latter. The surrender may make for a time a *modus vivendi*; but science as it advances soon makes fresh demands, and religion again has to retire.

To reserve some territory to itself, religion has now to live entirely in castles in the air. It rests not on verifiable facts, but on an assumption of supernatural existences and an after-life altogether too nebulous to be brought within the domain of science. In plain terms, it has to do with fictions, while reason has to do with facts. The one points to an imaginary cloudland hereafter; the other deals with the actualities of the present world. Religion gives no guarantee for human progress, for, if evil and misery were once compatible with the existence of God, they may be so for ever; but science, by the gradual accumulation of knowledge, and consequently of power, gives assurance of the amelioration of human destiny. It is science which has taught us to manfully grapple with the evils that surround us, and to overcome them, instead of prostrating ourselves

before them in a spirit of prayer and abject submission. It substitutes work for prayer, conduct for creed, and the service of man for the vain worship of God.

LUCIANUS.

## BOOK CHAT.

MR. KENNETH FFARINGTON BELLAIRES, who has published a pamphlet entitled *Is Christianity a Forgery? Is English History a Fraud?* is a thorough-going disciple of Professor Edwin Johnson. He holds that all Church history prior to the invention of printing is forged; that the painted missals are no earlier than oil paintings; that the oldest abbeys and churches are but between 400 and 500 years old, as proved by the age of the trees around them; and that the whole pretence of antiquity was part of a scheme to despoil the people.

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Mr. Bellairs further holds that the Romans were not long in Britain, and that when they left they were followed by gangs of continental adventurers and monks, who subdued the barbarous people and backed up their pretensions by fraud. He discredits the story of the battle of Hastings, no bodies ever having been recovered there. Battle Abbey—dated nearly three hundred years after the battle it was to commemorate—he dates about 1600. Domesday Book, which, everyone knows, is written in an Italian hand, he says is in Dog Latin of the Tudor period; and, in short, he regards all history prior to the invention of printing as legendary.

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Mr. Bellairs has visited a number of places of alleged antiquity, whose pretensions he finds break down under scrutiny. His conclusions are given in a rough and ready style, and are none the less likely to be acceptable to those who only know the facts that the Church somehow got possession of the best lands, and has ever since batted on the tithes. If Bishop Stubbs is too busy to refute Mr. Bellairs, perhaps some antiquarian like the Rev. Augustus Jessop will come forward and do so, for he professes himself only anxious to arrive at the truth.

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Dr. P. S. George, of Lincoln, Nebraska, proposes to compile and publish a book detailing accounts of the religious insanity of the present time. It is likely to be a big work. The superintendents of lunatic asylums could give much information on the pernicious character of the vaunted faith in another world, though too often cases of religious insanity are registered as simply melancholia with delusions.

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Messrs. George Bell & Sons propose to add to "Bohn's Library" an illustrated edition of Motley's *History of the Rise of the Dutch Republic*, with an introduction by Moncure D. Conway; and Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, as translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau, with an introduction by Mr. Frederic Harrison. Each of these will be in three volumes.

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A new English Dialect Dictionary is announced. It is to be a complete vocabulary of all dialect words still in use, or known to have been in use during the last two hundred years. It will be edited by Professor Joseph Wright, and issued to subscribers only. Subscription of a guinea a year to be remitted to the Rev. Prof. Skeat, 2 Salisbury-villas, Cambridge.

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The catalogues of Mr. Bertram Dobell, of 75 Charing Cross-road, the publisher of the complete poetical works of James Thomson, are always interesting. The one just issued, besides having many interesting and special items, such as first editions of Fielding, Swinburne, Landor, etc., has some interesting notes, one given to *An Essay on Government*, the now scarce work of Mrs. Lee, the Female Infidel, of whom a sketch is given in the *Secular Almanack* of this year.

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The *Daily News*, reviewing Madame du Hausset's *Private Memoirs of Louis XV.*, says: "In that Court of King Louis all is corruption. The palace is a moral pesthouse under the thinnest varnish. Take away one or two honest people—such as Dr. Quesnay and M. de Morigny, the Pompadour's brother—and the brilliant swarms of courtiers are for the most part pimps, panders, procuresses, adulterers, spies, intriguers, liars, swindlers. One of their most curious characteristics is their combination of a scrupulous regard for the forms of religion, with an utter indifference to its spirit." From the king downward they were childish superstitions, and also selfish and sensual. They were all horrified at Frederick the Great's "irreligion."

In these memoirs of Madame de Pompadour's lady's maid, says the *Daily News*, "the arch-impostor, the Count de St. Germain, is pretty fully described. A Cagliostro of an earlier time, the Count had, according to his own account, already lived two thousand years. He expected to live five hundred more. He laid claim to the power of conferring long life. He resisted the temptation of living five years longer and seeing the Revolution. He died in 1784, 'in the midst of his enthusiastic disciples, and to their infinite astonishment at his sharing the common lot.' As a miracle worker he could have put the Blavatskyite congregation to shame. But there was this difference between him and the thaumaturgists of our own day—he was clever, amusing and accomplished."

## TRIA JUNCTA IN UNO.

"According to Luke, Jesus, having been born in Bethlehem, was taken, after forty days, to Jerusalem, and there publicly presented in the temple; after which his parents returned with him to Nazareth. On the other hand, according to Matthew, after the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, his parents were warned to flee with him into Egypt, since Herod, at Jerusalem, would be lying in wait for the child to destroy him. This warning was obeyed; hence, according to Luke, Jesus was publicly presented in Jerusalem at the very time when, according to Matthew, he was carried to Egypt to avoid being seen in Jerusalem."—Judge C. B. Waite, in the "Investigator."

THE Judge, perhaps from weariness, has not disclosed all the strange things that crowded themselves into the little space covered by his remarks. Not only was the youngster in two or three places at once, but he was there for as many different reasons. Of course he went to Egypt to escape the slaughter of innocents, and he had to be in Jerusalem for presentation at the altar (circumcision?); but the Egyptian excursion was for still another purpose—namely, that of fulfilling prophecy—"Out of Egypt have I called my son"—though no such prophecy had ever been made about him; neither does it fit the case, as Jesus was not called out of Egypt, but out of Galilee into Egypt. Incidentally, he must be conveyed to Nazareth to verify another prophecy—"He shall be called a Nazarene"—though the prophets never spoke these words of anybody. Matthew, who makes this queer break, appears not to have been aware that Nazareth was the habitat of Joseph; that an angel had visited Mary there; and that when Joseph, with his female and young, "turned aside into Galilee," and "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth," he was merely going home. Matthew and Luke should have "got together." Some of our Irish citizens, who, two weeks ago, celebrated Sunday and Monday, March 17 and 18, to the glory of their patron saint, explain that St. Patrick had two birthdays "because he was twins." In view of the variety of localities occupied simultaneously by the subject of these remarks, there seems to be no escape from the conclusion that he was triplets. I charge the Christian world nothing for this prop to the doctrine of the Trinity.

GEO. E. MACDONALD.

## Belief Not of the Will.

Said Sir Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, three and a half centuries ago: "I am fully persuaded it is not in man's power to believe what he list."

Go to the jury room, where a dozen men are collected to render a verdict on important issues. They are honest, conscientious men, who have been selected with greatest care from the people, men of character and probity which the tongue of slander cannot assail. They are under oath to render an honest verdict. They have already heard the evidence, the arguments of counsel, the instructions of the judge. But note their variant opinions, as revealed in their first ballot. They may agree in the end; but each must surrender somewhat his own convictions.

More was the oldest jurist of his day on the King's Bench of England. It was his special duty to know of these conflicting views of persons whose opinions were based on the same facts. He knew it was impossible for a man to believe as he wished, contrary to evidence, or in the absence of evidence. But the Son of God, yea, God himself, according to orthodoxy, demands the world to believe in him or be damned, and this on conflicting hearsay evidence only. Is there not some mistake about it?—*Progressive Thinker*.

I am quite sure, from my own experience of children who have been allowed to learn penitential psalms and hymns, that they think of wickedness as a sort of thing which gives them self-importance.—Mrs. Jameson, "Commonplace Book," p. 223.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BIBLE GOD PUZZLED.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Yesterday (April 21st, not the *first, bien entendu*) Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, caused prayers to be offered up in the principal churches for the success of the French forces in Madagascar, where they have embarked upon a policy of spoliation and plunder. The pious Cardinal is not ashamed to say that "by a secret instinct (*sic*) France, in going to Madagascar, is accomplishing one of the acts of the providential mission (*sic*) with which she was entrusted (*sic*) at her baptism [oh!—to spread Christian civilisation [with syphilis to boot, till then unknown] throughout the world!" What would Arouet de Voltaire say to this impudent lie? "*O, grand homme, tu dois rougir dans ton tombeau!*" The Queen of Madagascar, *per contra*, has also solicited prayers in England and elsewhere for the success of her soldiers, who not only fight *pro aris et focis*, but for a hybrid Christian religion, very much in vogue among the canting, ranting, hypocritical humbugs of dear old England.

CHARLES KROLL LAPORTE.

A STRAIGHT LETTER.

35a Great George Street, Westminster, S.W.,  
London, April 18, 1895.

The Assistant Secretary, Railway Department,  
Board of Trade, Whitehall, S.W.

SUNDAY PHILHARMONIC UNION.

SIR,—I am informed that the Department has received numerous petitions from many distant towns against the application of the above for a licence to give performances on Sunday.

I am seventy-three years of age, have travelled a good deal on the European Continent, have noticed the behavior of Continentals on Sunday where museums and music are to be had. I am also well acquainted with the behavior of our own people both in England and Scotland, and I unhesitatingly give superiority to the Continentals.

I consider it grossly impertinent for provincials to interfere in the matter of how Londoners shall spend Sunday, and I trust your Board will be of a similar opinion.

The above Union desires to elevate the tastes of the people. Our lower classes are far from green lanes and shady walks, and have only the churches and the public-houses to resort to. Many of them would prefer music or lectures to elevate the taste and the understanding, and the "Union" desires to give the opportunity.

The sanctioning the application of the Union will interfere with the rights of no one, while it will supply a want felt by many who are, in my opinion, better subjects of her Majesty than those who, seemingly having what they want, are intolerant enough not to grant a similar boon to others.

Trusting that the application of the Sunday Philharmonic Union will be granted by your Department,—I am, Sir,  
Yours,  
GEORGE ANDERSON.

Causes and Effects.

Dr. Hutchinson Stirling, following Hegel, seeks to overthrow Hume by asserting the identity of cause and effect. Does he not see that this overthrows his own argument for a deity? If the universe is material, then must God be material. If it is conditioned, then must he be conditioned. If there is evil in the world, then first must there be evil in the cause of the world. The deity must be in essence just such a compound as is the universe. Is it not, then, easier to suppose, as Hume pointed out, that the universe itself is the one necessary existence than to hunt outside the universe for a cause that is as difficult to explain as the universe itself?—*Bion*.

Michael Angelo as a Rationalist.

Scarcely any other great painter so completely eliminated the religious sentiment from art, and it was reserved for him to destroy the most fearful of all the conceptions by which the early painters had thrilled the people. By making the Last Judgment a study of naked figures, and by introducing into it Charon and his boat, he most effectually destroyed all sense of its reality, and reduced it to the province of artistic criticism.—*W. E. H. Lecky, "Rationalism in Europe," vol. i., p. 277.*

RELIGION AND COMMON SENSE

WE hear a great deal about "pure religion," and the phrase seems to be an admission that all religion is not pure, which is no doubt the fact; but what quality of religion is genuine, or who possess it, may be difficult to decide. And even if we knew, how much better off should we be? For what is religion, in itself considered, and separate from morality, to which it has no just or proper claim? It is a system of faith in, and worship of, supernatural agencies and beings. That is about all there is of it, when summed up in brief. It may exist, no doubt, in the character of a good man, but it is no proof of goodness in the individual, nor that he is laboring for the welfare of humanity. It is only, as we have said, a system of faith and worship having reference to the supernatural. That is religion, and all that rightly belongs to it. We fail to see wherein it can be of any benefit to this world, and as for another, it is not settled yet whether there is one.

Now, in order to have a system that is useful and practical it ought not to consist in unmeaning phrases, forms, and ceremonies, but in the unceasing practice of promoting the happiness of every human being, without regard to sex, party, country, or color, and confine its labors entirely to this world, depending on knowledge rather than faith, and human efforts instead of prayers to a supernatural deity. This is a common-sense system or philosophy, and one in which there are no metaphysical difficulties or mystery, and which every child even, who is properly educated, will be taught to practise through life, and which he will necessarily practise, as no incentive to injure his fellow-man will then exist, such as forms an inherent and essential part of the present order of society. Under the common-sense system to which we allude, there would not be the slightest pretext for keeping up those holy bugbears which are supposed by many Christians to be so indispensable at present to control the vicious inclinations of human beings, such as avenging Gods, devils, priestly prayers, and denunciations; but mankind will be governed by reason, and learn their duty by obeying the laws of nature, which are the only true guides.—*Horace Seaver, "Occasional Thoughts."*

RECOMPENSE.

THE wine-flushed monarch slept; but in his ear  
An angel breathed, "Repent; or choose the flame  
Quenchless." In dread he woke, but not in shame,  
Deep musing, "Sin I love, yet Hell I fear."  
Wherefore he left his feasts, and minions dear,  
And justly ruled, and died a saint in name.  
But when his hasting spirit heavenward came  
A stern Voice cried, "Oh Soul! what dost thou here?"

"Love I forswore, and wine, and kept my vow  
To live a just and joyless life, and now  
I crave reward." The Voice came like a knell,  
"Fool! dost thou hope to find again thy mirth,  
And those foul joys thou didst renounce on earth?  
Yea, enter in! My Heaven shall be thy Hell!"

—*Constance Naden.*

PROFANE JOKES.

Alice (to her sweetheart)—"How did you like the vicar's sermon, Will?" Will—"Excellent! Why, it sent me off to sleep in less than five minutes."

An Italian priest, reading the passage of Scripture, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," commented, "Yes, to be sure; it is too sweet for any mortal."

Professor Von Gookhenheimer, they say, is a marvellous mind-reader and hypnotist. Yes; he claims he can attract the attention of a restaurant waiter by merely looking at him steadily for half-an-hour.

"The timprance man had a wondherful glass that made iverything a thousand million times as big. What's this he called it? Ye're right, 'twas a my-cross-scope; ye hit it to a pop; bedad 'tis yerself has the larnin'; an' the people looked through it at the wather he put in a glass, an' they seen the wather all swimmin' wid snakes an' scorpions; 'twas enough to terrify the mortal sowl out o' ye. An' so Sheela looked in an' saw them. An' the man put in the wather a good dhrop o' whiskey, an' he says, says he, 'Now ye'll see the effect on animal life,' says he. An' Sheela looked in again, an' she seen the snakes all doubled up, an' kilt, an' murdered, an' says Sheela, says she: 'May the Devil fly away wid me (says she) if, I ever touch wather agin till I first put in whiskey to kill them fellows!'"

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

## LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.C.): 7, musical selections; 7.30, Charles Watts, "Man and the Universe, from a Christian and Secular Standpoint." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.)

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Musical and dramatic entertainment. (Free.) Tuesday, at 8, dancing.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, R. Forder, "Science and Christianity."

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH: 3, members' meeting at 91 Mildmay-park

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Rights of Animals."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Athenaeum, Godolphin-road, Goldhawk-road, Shepherd's Bush): Tuesday, at 8.30, G. W. Foote, "How the Bible Stands Now."

WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, A Member, "Is Life an Entity?"

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Stanley Jones, "The Bible."

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, Arthur B. Moss, "Man and Evolution."

DEPTFORD BROADWAY: 6.30, W. J. Ramsey, "A New Gospel Harmony."

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, Lucretius Keen, "Atheism and the Hour of Death"; concluding with an original Romance. Thursday, at 8.30, St. John will lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Lucretius Keen, "Atheism and the Hour of Death"; concluding with an original Romance; 3.30, "What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?" Wednesday, at 8, S. E. Easton will lecture.

MILE END WASTE: 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The Atonement."

OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Where will you Spend Your Eternity?"

VICTORIA PARK: 11.15, W. Heaford will lecture; 3, Stanley Jones will lecture.

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. Lewis will lecture; 7, S. R. Thompson, "Christianity and Slavery." Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen will lecture.

## COUNTRY.

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

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, J. Keast, "Saviors of Mankind."

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, C. James, "The Star of Science in the Night of Faith."

GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion class; 6.30, Neuron, "Bible Fictions and Malay Archipelago Facts."

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Sketchley, "Rome and the Revolution."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, John Walter, B.A., "Herbert Spencer" (II.). Adjourned committee meeting after lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, S. H. Allison, "The Gospel of Socialism"; 3, "The Bible and Modern Thought"; 6.30, "The Evolution of Theology." (Admission 3d. and 6d.)

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street): 3, C. Cohen, "The Origin of Species"; 7, "Science and Supernaturalism."

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, special meeting, social, and business.

ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street): 6.30, Sam Standing, "How they Make Priests"; 8, Branch meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, musical and other recitals.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting.

SUNDERLAND (Victoria Hall, Toward-road): 11, G. W. Foote, "The Shadow of the Sword"; 3, "Was Shakespeare a Christian?" 7, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

DERBY (Market-place): 6.45, Mr. Briggs will lecture.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside—weather permitting): 11, O. Cohen will lecture.

ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): 11, Sam Standing, "The Temptation"; 3, "The Four Gospels, their Dates and Authors."

## Lecture 3' Engagements.

STEPHEN H. ALISON, Sunnyside, 72 Union-grove, Clapham, London, S.W.—April 28, Manchester. May 5, Sheffield.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—April 28, Newcastle-on-Tyne. May 2, Wood Green; 5, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 9, Wood Green; 12, Sheffield; 13, Manchester; 23, Wood Green; 26, m. Finsbury Park, a. Victoria Park, e. Wood Green; 30, Wood Green.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London.—April 28, m. Battersea, a. Victoria Park. May 5, m. Finsbury Park, e. Battersea; 12, m. Wood Green, e. Edmonton; 19, m. Finsbury, e. Deptford; 22, Hyde Park.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London.—April 28, m. Camberwell. May 5, a. Finsbury Park; 12, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park; 19, m. and a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith; 26, Clerkenwell.

T. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, E.—May 19, m. Kingsland. June 2, m. Finsbury Park; 19, m. Kingsland. July 17, m. Kingsland.

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