

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRAYING FOR INGERSOLL.

IN a great book, which has been the delight of millions of children, and full of suggestion to their elders, Man Friday asks Robinson Crusoe why God does not convert the Devil. It seemed as plain as daylight to that fine, unsophisticated fellow, that as sin came through temptation, and temptation came through the Devil, it would be an act of wisdom to convert Old Nick himself, and thus put a complete stop to the emigration from earth to hell. Not another sinner would exist, and therefore not another soul would be lost. Salvation would be effected wholesale instead of retail. Not one man, but all men, would be saved.

Robinson Crusoe was cornered, and, like other theologians in similar difficulties, he turned the conversation. Man Friday's question stands where it was raised by the wily Defoe. The clergy have never answered it. They have never *tried* to answer it. They never *will* try to answer it. It pays them better to pursue the policy of evasion.

Over in America there is a dreadful man called Ingersoll. He is the Devil of the United States. He goes up and down, like Satan in the book of Job, tempting people to desert God and join Humanity. A minister, the other day, said that he had two million followers in the land of the Stars and Stripes. All sorts of devices have been tried to stop his evil career. He has been slandered most outrageously, but pious filth falls off him like water from the back of a duck. It simply won't stick. The people look at "Bob's" face, and say "Lies! lies!" He has been challenged to mortal combat (with tongue or pen) by dozens of dirty little Christian apologists. He has been tackled by some superior men, such as Judge Black, Cardinal Manning, and Mr. Gladstone; and they soon had enough of it, leaving the "infidel" to look round the arena and wonder what had become of them. Some men of God have called him a fool; others have called him too clever by half, and said he would laugh the other side of his mouth when he found himself stewing in brimstone. Some have shouted "Police!" and begged the authorities to suppress this wicked "blasphemer." But it is all no good. "Bob" is jollier than ever. People flock to hear him in thousands. He is the most popular "devil" in the United States. It is said that people rub their hands with pleasure when they see him walking down the street.

Something must be done to save Christianity in America; and if natural means fail, resort must be had to miracles.

A brilliant idea occurred to the Christian Endeavor Society, which has members throughout the Union. It was an idea very much like Man Friday's. The way to save Christianity was to convert Ingersoll; and as *they* couldn't do it, they resolved to ask God to do it himself. Accordingly a midday prayer-meeting was arranged in all the Christian Endeavor churches. A quarter of a million people—mostly women, we suspect—assembled in the different cities, and offered a prayer of fifteen minutes' duration for the "conversion of Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous Atheist lecturer." We are not favored with the form of words used on this occasion. No doubt it would be very entertaining to every Rationalist.

Heine, in one of his most characteristic poems, depicts a young man standing by the seashore and asking a number of questions about the universe. And the end of it is this:—

The winds sweep, the waves scud,
The stars glitter indifferent and cold—
And a fool awaits an answer.

Were the witty poet alive now, he might say that, in America, a quarter of a million fools were awaiting an answer.

Have these people asked themselves *how* God could convert Ingersoll? There are only two possible ways—force or persuasion. Let us look at both.

Force might take several forms—internal or external, disease or violence. An apoplectic stroke, followed by softening of the brain, might be very efficacious. Or a sunstroke, such as Paul seems to have suffered near Damascus, might work wonders. It is astonishing what mental oddities are caused by sunstrokes. It is conceivable that a sunstroke might make even Ingersoll turn a Christian.

Persuasion is a different matter. It would leave Ingersoll's faculties intact. The appeal would be made to his intelligence. God, in short, would have to play the part of a Christian apologist. In that case, it is difficult to see how "Bob's" conversion could be effected. Infinite intellect is not required to prove the truth, and infinite intellect could not prove a falsehood. Take the Bible, for instance. Ingersoll points out its flagrant self-contradictions, absurdities, and immoralities. How in the name of common sense is he to see them otherwise, without a change in his mental vision or an alteration of his moral standard? And how is that to be brought about, unless God takes him to pieces and makes him up afresh?

These praying Christians might ask themselves whether there is *any* use in prayer. Some of us remember when all the churches in the United States were praying for the recovery of President Garfield, who fell by the bullet of a pious assassin. Prayers went up to heaven from all parts of the Union day after day, hour after hour; yet Garfield's life slowly ebbed away, and the only answer to millions of prayers was a cold white face upon the pillow.

Is it likely that prayers for Ingersoll will be heard and answered, when prayers for Garfield were neglected? Do the Christians of America fancy they have more influence with God at present than they had ten years ago?

Still, if the American Christians *must* pray, they should really ask God to supply the Church with a man of brains—equal to Ingersoll's; if, indeed, such a man could ever *enter* the Church. It is a scandal that they have not such a champion already. There are thousands of ministers, who are paid millions a year between them; yet none of them, nor all of them, can answer one "infidel," who has only his own mother-wit, without the assistance of inspiration.

This farce is a public confession of the weakness of Christianity. A miracle is the last resource of hard-pressed faith, and the miracle doesn't arrive. The game is up. Christian Evidences are played out. Christian apologists are at their wits' end—if they have any wits to get to the end of. Christianity in America cannot even stand up. It is on its knees, praying for Ingersoll.

G. W. FOOTE.

MOON-WORSHIP.

I HAVE before now expressed the opinion that sun-worship as "the key to all the mythologies" has been considerably overdone. That it did have a large place in ancient religion is certain. Dupuis, Volney, Higgins, Dunlap, and others, have shown this long since, though in some instances their sun heroes were, in my opinion, side by side with lunar heroes, or themselves luni-solar; and what they ascribe to the sun I might, perhaps, rather attribute to the general principle of reproductive life. It is, however, the Aryan mythologists, of the school of Max Müller and Sir G. W. Cox, who, with greater philological knowledge, have yet gone furthest astray by resolving so many myths into those of the sun and dawn, simply because, not fully accepting the evolution theory, they are bent on interpreting the myths of archaic man in accordance with the construction put upon them by highly-developed races like the Greeks and Brahmans. When M. Gaidoz showed that the same myths and customs were found in Central Africa as in Rome, he put a pin hole into the Aryan theory, which Mr. J. G. Frazer, by his *Golden Bough*, enlarged into a big gap; and Mr. Hartland having, in his *Legend of Perseus*, traced the same beliefs in all continents, we may fairly say its bottom is knocked out. It is to be hoped the principle of interpreting early man by the higher Aryan types, which is only another instance of evolving the camel out of our own inner consciousness, will soon receive its quietus.

The solar theory of religion has had a number of books devoted to its advocacy. The late Orientalist and archæologist, John O'Neill, saw it was incomplete, and in his erudite *Night of the Gods*, a work the second volume of which, I hope, will soon be published, advocated a polar theory—the view that ancient religion largely concerned itself with the Pole Star as the Most High. As yet, the lunar theory has had, to my mind, altogether inadequate attention; Gerald Massey, Herr Roscher, and Ignaz Goldziher being almost the only persons who have brought out the importance which the moon must have possessed to ancient races. Since early man's worst dangers were in the dark, it was natural that the light of night should be to him almost as important as that of day. The sun becomes of the utmost importance to the settled agriculturist. But in the preceding pastoral nomadic stage the worship of the nocturnal sky and the stars, which guide the way, prevails. The crescent is still the symbol of the Asiatic races.

Wherever there is sun-worship there is a residuum of moon-worship, but not the converse. The lights of the night sky, forming a contrast to the darkness of the earth, attract a savage more than the familiar daylight. There is an ever-changing drama of growth and decay going on up there which falls in with the fantastic magical character of early faith. Dr. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture*, says:—

"In Africa moon-worship is prominent in an immense district where sun-worship is unknown or insignificant. Among south-central tribes men will watch for the first glimpse of the new moon, which they hail with shouts of 'Kua!' and vociferate prayers to it. On such an occasion Dr. Livingstone's Makololo prayed, 'Let our journey with the white man be prosperous,' etc. These people keep holiday at new moon, as, indeed, in many countries her worship is connected with the settlement of periodic festivals. Negro tribes seem almost universally to greet the new moon, whether in delight or disgust. The Guinea people sling themselves about with droll gestures, and pretend to throw firebrands at it; the Ashango men behold it with superstitious fear; the Fetu negroes jumped thrice into the air with hands together and gave thanks. The Congo people fell on their knees, or stood and clapped their hands, crying, 'So may I renew my life as thou art renewed!' The Hottentots are described early in the last century as dancing and singing all night at new and full moon, calling the moon the Great Captain, and crying to him, 'Be greeted! Let us get much honey! May our cattle get much to eat and give much milk!'"

The importance of moon-worship in the history of the past lies here. The moon, as night-god, is side by side with the sun as day-god; while the moon as month-god is known long before, and has festivals far more frequent than the sun as year-god. The lunar calendar, as I have shown in my "Note on the Calendar" in the *Secular Almanack for 1896*, long preceded the solar calendar.* The

* *Man* and *moon* are alike to be traced to the Ur-Aryan *ma*, to measure. Sanskrit, *mas*; Zend, *mao*; Persian, *mah*; Greek, *mene*;

importance of knowing the periodic recurrence of times and seasons set up customs and rites, added to the myths of the conflict of light and darkness, and was an integral part of much ancient religion. Dr. Tylor says:—

"The rude savages of Brazil seem to worship or respect the moon, by which they regulate their time and festivals and draw their omens. They would lift up their hands to the moon with wonder-struck exclamations of 'Teh! teh!' They would have children smoked by the sorcerers to preserve them from moon-given sickness, or the women would hold up their babes to the luminary. An old account of the Caribs describes them as esteeming the moon more than the sun, and at new moon coming out of their houses crying, 'Behold the moon!'"

As the time regulator, the moon naturally became the special object of worship to women. Luna, the moon goddess, is the same as Lucina, the goddess of light, who brings to light; just as *lumen* is the same as *lucmen*. Lucina presided over childbirth, and Juno and Diana are both called Lucinæ. In the Temple of Luna, on the Palatine Hill, she was worshipped as Noctiluca, and her temple was lighted up every night. This was a representative charm, similar to the dancing by torchlight of ruder peoples.

The moon-worship of the ancient Arabs, Phœnicians, and Carthaginians* is well attested. The adoption of the weekly Sabbath everywhere points to luniolatry; and that the Jews once worshipped sun and moon seems certain from Deuteronomy xvii. 3, Job xxxi. 36, and Jeremiah viii. 2. Anyway, the new moon made their most ancient festival.

It is just possible that the Yahu or IAO of the Jews originally, like Io, represented a soli-lunar deity, the lord god of the Sabbath. Certainly his early festivals were those of the new moon. His function of opening and closing the womb (Genesis xx. 18, xxix. 31; 1 Samuel i. 6; Isaiah lxvi. 9) was especially that of "the Lord of growth." Ioh, in Egyptian, is the moon, and Ehe the cow. When Jeroboam made two golden calves and said, "Behold thy gods, O Israel" (1 Kings xii. 28), the calves were just as likely symbols of the sun and moon as of the sun in Taurus. The altar was decorated with horns, emblems of power, and also of the moon. Cedrenus tells us that "Iao is, among the Chaldæans, interpreted as meaning Intelligent Light in the Phœnician tongue, and Sabaoth as meaning Over the Seven Heavens." The Assyrian moon-god is Sin, whose name probably appears in Sinai and Sennacherib. The expression, "from the origin of the god Sin," was used to mark remote antiquity. Samus, the sun, is called in the Assyrian epic of Ishtar "The Son of Sin," the moon-god (iv. 2); and this points, as Schröder observes, "to a veneration of the moon-god in Babylonia earlier than that of the sun-god," or else to a conception of night preceding the day. Speaking of Mount Sinai, the learned Ignaz Goldziher writes: "The mountain must in ancient times have been consecrated to the moon. The beginning of the Hebrew religion, which, we shall see, was connected with the phenomena of the night sky, germinated first during the residence in Egypt on the foundation of an ancient myth. The recollection of this occasioned them to call the part of Egypt which they had long inhabited *eres sinim*, 'Moonland' (Isaiah xlix. 12)" (*Mythology among the Hebrews*, p. 160).

In China, as in Syria and Rome, the priests celebrated the new and full moon feasts. The birthday of the emperor in olden times was always fixed for the first day of a new moon. In Goa and other parts of India the natives prostrate themselves at the appearance of a new moon. "Monotheist as he is," says Dr. Tylor (*P. C.*, ii. 302), "the Moslem still claps his hands at sight of the new moon, and says a

Latin, *mensis*; Saxon, *mona*. Man is the time-measurer, the moon the month-measurer. Strabo tells us that the cult of the moon-god *Men*, the Lunus of the Roman, was widely established in Asia Minor. The first man among the Maories was Maui, who has been compared to Menes, Manu, Minos, Minyas, and Mannus.

* That great writer, Gustave Flaubert, at once poet and realist, in his splendid reconstruction of Carthage, thus makes his heroine, Salammbô, address the moon with an ancient hymn: "Les épouses hurlent ton nom dans la douleurs des enfantelements! Tu gonflés les coquillages! Tu fais bouillonner les vins. Tu putréfies les cadavres! Tu forme les perles au fond de la mer! Et tous les germes, ô Déesse, fermentent dans les obscures profondeurs de ton humidité. Quand tu paraîs, il s'épand une quietude sur la terre; les fleurs se ferment, les flots s'apaisent, les hommes fatigués s'étendent la poitrine vers toi, et le monde avec ses océans et ses montagnes, comme on une miroir, se regarde dans ta figure. Tu es blanche, douce, lumineuse, immaculée, auxiliaresse, purifiante, seroïne!"

prayer." According to Vallency, the Irish, on seeing the new moon, immediately knelt down and repeated the Lord's Prayer. But moon-lore is so extensive that its further consideration must be deferred. The fact that among all peoples there are more remnants of superstitions about the moon than concerning the sun, affords, I think, support to my contention.

J. M. WHEELER.

A GLOOMY ASPECT OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE Christian scheme of salvation is pronounced by its exponents as "glad tidings to man," but we regard it as presenting an exceedingly gloomy aspect of a most perplexing faith. The scheme is based upon the assumption that, in consequence of an event that is said to have occurred thousands of years ago, over which the human race had no control, mankind became sinners, and thereby rendered themselves liable to eternal misery and suffering in a future, and to us an unknown, state of existence. According to this scheme, the "everlasting destruction" of some people is a certainty, and this from no fault of their own. Hence we read in the New Testament: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.....By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.....For, by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. By man came death..... in Adam all die" (Romans v. 12-18, 19; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22). This appears to have been Calvin's view, for he says: "We derive an innate depravity from our very birth; the denial of this is an instance of consummate impudence.....All children, without a single exception, are polluted as soon as they exist. Infants themselves, as they bring their condemnation into the world with them, are rendered obnoxious to punishment by their own sinfulness. For, though they have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, yet they have the whole seed of it in them; their whole nature cannot but be odious to God" (*Institutes*, book ii., sections 5, 6, and 8).

That the number to be saved by this scheme is limited is evident, for we read in the New Testament: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 24). "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14). We are also told in Ephesians that some were predestined to be the children of Christ; and in Romans (ix.) it is said that others were made "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." In the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England it is stated: "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind."

The gloomy feature in this scheme is, that it is impossible for us to save ourselves; we are helpless and entirely dependent upon other resources for our salvation. Hence we read: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Romans iii. 20, 27, and 28; Romans iv. 2 and 3; Galatians ii. 16). The 9th, 10th, and 11th articles of the national religion plainly state that "Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and, therefore, in every person born in the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." "The condition of man is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power

to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God." "We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings."

The Bible represents man as being so thoroughly bad that self-salvation is impossible. Its words are: "And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis viii. 21). "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm xiv. 2, 3). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah xvii. 9). "For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing; for the good that I would," says St. Paul, "I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans vii. 18, 19, 20). It is useless to urge that the difficulty is removed by the invitation to go to Christ for salvation, for we cannot go to him by our own exertions. Here is a dilemma in which a poor helpless sinner is placed. In St. John's Gospel (xiv. 6) we read that Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me"; and in St. John (vi. 44) it also alleges that Jesus stated, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him." Thus we cannot be saved except we go to Christ; but we cannot go to Christ unless the Father draw us. This cheerless scheme amounts to this: if the Father draws us, we must go; and if he does not draw us, we cannot go, and then we are to be damned for not doing what God has prevented us from accomplishing. This is "glad tidings" with a vengeance! Briefly the matter stands thus: "We cannot do good if we would, for there is no help in us; we cannot be saved unless we have faith; but we cannot have faith unless we pray for it; but we cannot pray unless we have grace; but we cannot have grace unless God gives it; but he will not give it unless we ask it; and we cannot ask it unless he inclines us to do so." May it never be our fate to profess to believe in such theological metaphysics as Christianity here presents.

The question which should now be asked is: If the Christian scheme of salvation was necessary to regenerate the world, why was it not declared immediately after Adam's alleged transgression, so that it might have prevented a single generation going to the grave with the curse of original sin unremoved? But, according to Bible chronology, God allowed 4,000 years to elapse, and numbers of generations not only to live and die, but to run riot in all descriptions of ignorance and iniquity, ere the reparation was made. Why was this? Did it take God—to whom consideration of time is said to be as nothing—four thousand years to determine how to get out of the difficulty which he himself had created? If none could be saved except those who believed in Christ, what became of those millions of human beings who passed away prior to his birth? and what will be the fate of those now living who have never heard, and probably never will hear, the name of Jesus of Nazareth? Were the former saved by anticipation, and will the latter be excused on account of their ignorance? If so, where was the necessity of the atonement at all? If men could enter heaven without the crucifixion, then Christ need not have suffered. His sorrow, agony, and bloody sweat might all have been avoided, and numbers of human beings might have died quietly in their beds, instead of enduring tortures at the stake or on the rack. Besides, if ignorance of this scheme will save people from damnation, is it not useless and cruel to send missionaries to the heathen with the "glad tidings"? Let them not know of it, and they will be punished for rejecting it; inform them of it, and their eternal happiness becomes at least doubtful, for their diversity of organisation and their environment make it impossible that all can accept it as true.

This scheme of salvation is indeed a mystery, and it almost inclines one to believe with St. Mark that "all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark iv. 11, 12); or with St. Matthew, that "narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 14).

CHARLES WATTS.

INGERSOLL'S NEW LECTURE.

(Further Extracts.)

THE AGE OF THE WORLD AND MAN.

THE geologists demonstrated that the author of Genesis was mistaken as to the age of the world, and that the story of the universe having been created in six days, about six thousand years ago, could not be true. The theologians then took the ground that the "days" spoken of in Genesis were periods of time, epochs, six "long whiles," and that the work of creation might have been commenced millions of years ago. The change of days into epochs was considered by the believers of the Bible as a great triumph over the hosts of Infidelity. The fact that Jehovah had ordered the Jews to keep the Sabbath, giving as a reason that he had made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, did not interfere with the acceptance of the "epoch" theory.

According to the Bible, Adam was certainly the first man, and in his case the epoch theory cannot change the account. The Bible gives the age at which Adam died, and gives the generations to the flood—then to Abraham and so on, and shows that from the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ it was about four thousand and four years.

According to the sacred scriptures, man has been on this earth five thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine years, and no more. Is this true?

Let me give you a fact: The Egyptians were astronomers. A few years ago representations of the stars were found on the walls of an old temple, and it was discovered by calculating backward that the stars did occupy the exact positions as represented about seven hundred and fifty years before Christ. Afterwards another representation of the stars was found, and, by calculating in the same way, it was found that the stars did occupy the exact positions represented about three thousand eight hundred years before Christ.

According to the Bible, the first man was created four thousand and four years before Christ. If this is true, then Egypt was founded, its language formed, its arts cultivated, its astronomical discoveries made and recorded about two hundred years after the creation of the first man.

In other words, Adam was two or three hundred years old when the Egyptian astronomers made these representations. Nothing can be more absurd.

TWO REST DAYS.

According to the Bible, Jehovah made the world in six days, and the work done each day is described. What did Jehovah do on the second day? This is the record: "And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so, and God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."

Now, we know that there is no firmament, and we know that the waters are not divided by a firmament. Consequently we know that, according to the Bible, Jehovah did nothing on the second day. He must have rested on Tuesday. This being so, we ought to have two Sundays a week.

DAVID AS A COLLECTOR.

We are told by this inspired book of the gold and silver collected by King David for the temple—the temple afterwards completed by the virtuous Solomon. According to the blessed Bible, David collected about two thousand million dollars in silver, and five thousand million dollars in gold, making a total of seven thousand million dollars. Is this true? There is in the Bank of France at the present time (1895) nearly six hundred million dollars, and, so far as we know, it is the greatest amount that was ever gathered together. All the gold now known, coined and in bullion, does not amount to much more than the sum collected by David. Seven thousand millions! Where did David get this gold? The Jews had no commerce. They owned no ships. They had no great factories; they produced nothing for other countries. There were no gold or silver mines in Palestine. Where, then, was this gold, this silver, found? I will tell you:

in the imagination of a writer who had more patriotism than intelligence, and who wrote, not for the sake of truth, but for the glory of the Jews. Is it possible that David collected nearly eight thousand tons of gold—that he by economy got together about sixty thousand tons of silver, making a total of gold and silver of sixty-eight thousand tons?

The average freight car carries about fifteen tons. David's gold and silver would load about four thousand five hundred and thirty-three cars, making a train about thirty-two miles in length. And all this for the temple at Jerusalem, a building ninety feet long and forty-five feet high and thirty feet wide, to which was attached a porch thirty feet wide, ninety feet long, and one hundred and eighty feet high. Probably the architect was inspired.

Is there a sensible man in the world who believes that David collected seven thousand million dollars' worth of gold or silver? There is hardly five thousand million dollars of gold now used as money in the whole world. Think of the millions taken from the mines of California, Australia, and Africa during the present century, and yet the total scarcely exceeds the amount collected by King David more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ. Evidently the inspired historian made a mistake.

THE WISE MEN.

Matthew says: "Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

Matthew does not tell us who these wise men were, from what country they came, to what race they belonged. He did not even know their names. We are also informed that, when Herod heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; that he gathered the chief priests and asked of them where Christ should be born, and they told him that he was to be born in Bethlehem. Then Herod called the wise men and asked them when the star appeared, and told them to go to Bethlehem and report to him. When they left Herod, the star again appeared and went before them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they came to the child they worshipped him, gave him gifts, and, being warned by God in a dream, they went back to their own country without calling on Herod.

Is this story true? Must we believe in the star and the wise men? Who were these wise men? From what country did they come? What interest had they in the birth of the king of the Jews? What became of them and their star? Of course I know that the holy Catholic Church has in her keeping the three skulls that belonged to these wise men, but I do not know where the Church obtained these relics, nor exactly how their genuineness has been established.

AN ANACHRONISM.

We are told in Matthew xxiii. 35 that Christ said: "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

It is certain that these words were not spoken by Christ. He could not by any possibility have known that the blood of Zacharias had been shed. As a matter of fact, Zacharias was killed by the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, and this siege took place seventy-one years after the birth of Christ, thirty-eight years after he was dead.

There is still another mistake.

Zacharias was not the son of Barachias—no such Zacharias was killed. The Zacharias that was slain was the son of Baruch.

But we must not expect the "inspired" to be accurate.

POLITE SAINTS.

Matthew says that at the time of the crucifixion "the graves were opened, and that many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." According to this, the graves were opened at the time of the crucifixion, but the dead did not arise and come out until after the resurrection of Christ.

They were polite enough to sit in their open graves and wait for Christ to rise first.

JUDAS.

Besides, it is hard to see why Christians hate, loathe, and despise Judas. According to their scheme of salvation, it was absolutely necessary that Christ should be killed—necessary that he should be betrayed; and had it not been for Judas, all the world, including Christ's mother, and the part of Christ that was human, would have gone to hell. Yet, according to the New Testament, Christ did not know that one of his disciples was to betray him. Jesus, when on his way to Jerusalem, for the last time, said, speaking to the twelve disciples, Judas being present, that they, the disciples, should thereafter sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet, more than a year before this journey, John says that Christ said, speaking to the twelve disciples: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" And John adds: "He spake of Judas Iscariot, for it was he that should betray him." Why did Christ, a year afterwards, tell Judas that he should sit on a throne and judge one of the tribes of Israel? There is still another trouble. Paul says that Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to the twelve disciples. According to Paul, Jesus appeared to Judas with the rest. Certainly Paul had not heard the story of the betrayal.

Why did Christ select Judas as one of his disciples, knowing that he would betray him? Did he desire to be betrayed? Was it his intention to be put to death? Why did he fail to defend himself before Pilate?

According to the accounts, Pilate wanted to save him. Did Christ wish to be convicted?

The Christians are compelled to say that Christ intended to be sacrificed—that he selected Judas with that end in view, and that he refused to defend himself because he desired to be crucified. All this is in accordance with the horrible idea that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

THE INCARNATION.

The New Testament informs us that Christ was the son of Joseph and the son of God, and that Mary was his mother. How is it established that Christ was the son of God? It is said that Joseph was told so in a dream by an angel. But Joseph wrote nothing on that subject—said nothing, so far as we know. Mary wrote nothing, said nothing. The angel that appeared to Joseph, or that informed Joseph, said nothing to anybody else. Neither has the Holy Ghost, the supposed father, ever said or written one word. We have received no information from the parties who could have known anything on the subject. We get all our facts from those who could not have known. How is it possible to prove that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ? Who knows that such a being as the Holy Ghost ever existed? How was it possible for Mary to know anything about the Holy Ghost? How could Joseph know that he had been visited by an angel in a dream? Could he know that the visitor was an angel? It all occurred in a dream when poor Joseph was asleep. What is the testimony of one who was asleep worth? All the evidence we have is that somebody who wrote part of the New Testament says that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ, and that somebody who wrote another part of the New Testament says that Joseph was the father of Christ. Matthew and Luke give the genealogy, and both show that Christ was the son of Joseph. The "Incarnation" has to be believed without evidence. There is no way in which it can be established. It is beyond the reach and realm of reason. It defies observation, and is independent of experience.

THE TRINITY.

Christ, according to the faith, is the second person in the Trinity, the Father being the first and the Holy Ghost the third. Each of these three persons is God. Christ is his own father and his own son. The Holy Ghost is neither father nor son, but both. The son was begotten by the father, but existed before he was begotten—just the same before as after. Christ is just as old as his father, and the father is just as young as his son. The Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and Son, but was equal to the Father and Son before he proceeded—that is to say, before he existed; but he is of the same age as the other two. So, it is declared that the Father is God, and the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, and that these three Gods make one God. According to the celestial multiplication table, once one is three, and three times one is one; and, according to

heavenly subtraction, if we take two from three, three are left. The addition is equally peculiar; if we add two to one, we have but one. Each one is equal to himself and the other two. Nothing ever was, nothing ever can be, more perfectly idiotic and absurd than the dogma of the Trinity.

Is it possible for a human being, who has been born but once, to comprehend or to imagine the existence of three beings, each of whom is equal to the three? Think of one of these beings as the father of one, and think of that one as half human and all God, and think of the third as having proceeded from the other two, and then think of all three as one. Think that, after the father begot the son, the father was still alone, and after the Holy Ghost proceeded from the father and the son, the father was still alone—because there never was, and never will be, but one God. At this point, absurdity having reached its limit, nothing more can be said except: "Let us pray."

SACRIFICE.

A man steals, and then sacrifices a dove or gives a lamb to a priest. His crime remains the same. He need not kill something. Let him give back the thing stolen, and in future live an honest life.

A man slanders his neighbor, and then kills an ox. What has that to do with the slander? Let him take back his slander, make all the reparation that he can, and let the ox alone.

There is no sense in sacrifice, never was, and never will be.

Make restitution, reparation, undo the wrong, and you need shed no blood.

THE INFINITE WILD BEAST.

If Christianity were only stupid and unscientific, if its God were ignorant and kind, if it promised eternal joy to believers, and if the believers practised the forgiveness they teach, for one I should let the faith alone.

But there is another side to Christianity. It is not only stupid, but malicious. It is not only unscientific, but it is heartless. Its God is not only ignorant, but infinitely cruel. It not only promises the faithful an eternal reward, but declares that nearly all of the children of men, imprisoned in the dungeons of God, will suffer eternal pain. This is the savagery of Christianity. This is why I hate its unthinkable God, its impossible Christ, its inspired lies, and its selfish, heartless heaven. . . .

That word [hell] drove pity from the hearts of men, stained countless swords with blood, lighted fagots, forged chains, built dungeons, erected scaffolds, and filled the world with poverty and pain. That word is a coiled serpent in the mother's breast, that lifts its fanged head and hisses in her ear: "Your child will be the fuel of eternal fire."

That word blots from the firmament the star of hope and leaves the heavens black. That word makes the Christian's God an eternal torturer, an everlasting inquisitor—an infinite wild beast.

THE PERORATION.

But, says the prejudiced priest, the malicious minister, "You take away a future life." I am not trying to destroy another world, but I am endeavoring to prevent the theologians from destroying this. If we are immortal, it is a fact in nature, and that fact does not depend on Bibles or Christs, on priests or creeds. The hope of another life was in the heart long before the "sacred books" were written, and will remain there long after all the "sacred books" are known to be the work of savage and superstitious men. Hope is the consolation of the world.

The wanderers hope for home. Hope builds the house and plants the flowers and fills the air with song.

The sick and suffering hope for health. Hope gives them health and paints the roses in their cheeks.

The lonely, the forsaken, hope for love.—Hope brings the lover to their arms. They feel the kisses on their eager lips, though they may die alone.

The poor in tenements and huts, in spite of rags and hunger, hope for wealth.—Hope fills their thin and trembling hands with gold.

The dying hopes that death is but another birth, and love leans above the pallid face and whispers, "We shall meet again."

Hope is the consolation of the world. Let us hope that if there be a God he is wise and good. Let us hope that

if there be another life it will bring peace and joy to all the children of men. And let us hope that this poor earth on which we live may be a perfect world—a world without a crime, without a tear.

—*Truthseeker.*

CURIOSITIES OF THE HEBREW BIBLE.

To most of us a Hebrew Bible is an unintelligible collection of cabalistic characters written topsy-turvey. But, after the student has mastered its backward alphabet, he finds that it contains curious anomalies of its own. In some places he finds a letter printed unusually large; in others unnecessarily small. If his copy be vocalised—that is, having a cloud of small marks attached to the letters—he will occasionally meet with words without vowels; or, still stranger, vowels without words. Sometimes a letter is printed upside down, or out of its place, and above the general line. The student may think that all these things are due to errors of that much-blamed being, the compositor, or he may have suspicions that the printer has been indulging in the culinary pastime of “making pie.” But he will discover that these self-same errors are religiously repeated in every edition of the book to which he has access, whether it be in print or manuscript; and they are even older than the division of the Bible into chapters and verses.

The explanation lies in the fact that the Hebrew text was settled by the Jewish scholars of about the eighth century A.D.; and these scholars, instead of striving to produce a pure text by study and comparison of different manuscripts, simply took one MS. and made every other conform to it. This standard MS. was so servilely copied that the printed Hebrew Bibles of to-day reproduce the clerical errors of their prototype of the eighth century; and, unless they contain these errors, they are considered incorrect.

In many early manuscripts we find the first letter of a page written large, in order to give a good effect to the book; and this is the origin of our capitals. The prototype of the Hebrew Bible was evidently decorated in the same way, for we find initial letters of words still printed in larger type, although these words are now printed in the middle, or at the bottom of a page. Thus in Deuteronomy xviii. 13 and xxxii. 6 we find these “great letters” much larger than the rest of the text, not to mention many other places.

Again, in ancient manuscripts we find the last letters of a line compressed together, and some written small in order to get them in. If we turn to Genesis ii. 4, we see that the *h* of *Behibaram* is printed small; in xxiii. 2 the *k* of *Welibkothah*; in xxvii. 46 the *q* of *Qasthi*; and the same peculiarity occurs again and again without rhyme or reason.

When we are writing, and leave out a letter by accident, we write that letter above the word, and mark its place

n

by a caret—thus Maasseh. The same thing was done in

A

ancient MSS., except that they had no caret, and contented themselves with writing the letter above the line. In Judges xviii. 30 the letter *n* of the word *Manasseh* is “suspended” above the line. Without the *n* the name is *Moses*; and as the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and all other early versions read *Moses*, it is clear that this “suspended letter” is merely the result of Rabbinical ingenuity. In Psalm lxxx. 14 one of the letters of the word “wood” is suspended; and this appears to be a genuine correction. But Job xxxviii. 13 and 15 may have been emendations for doctrinal reasons.

If we turn to Psalm xxvii. 13 in the English Bible, we read, “*I had fainted unless,*” etc. The italics of “*I had fainted*” show that they are not present in the Hebrew. They are merely put in to excuse “*unless,*” which has a row of dots over it in the original. A comparison of old writings shows us that it was the general custom to cancel a word written in error by putting a dot over each letter. Now-a-days we run the pen through the word. This word, “*unless,*” is unnecessary to the Psalm, and, in order to bring it in, scholars who deny the possibility of errors in the holy scriptures are obliged to read into the text something that is not there. [Ezekiel xli. 20 contains a still

more glaring instance. The first word of verse 21 (*ha-hekel*, the temple) was written twice over by mistake, and the scribe dotted the first *ha-hekel* to show that it was to be struck out. But the two words, dots and all, have been carefully copied into every known Hebrew Bible; and, consequently, scholars have sought to make sense of them in both verses. In Genesis xxxiii. 4 we read that Esau fell upon Jacob’s neck and kissed him. It may have struck the reader that it is somewhat difficult to kiss a person by falling on his neck. But in the Hebrew the words, “and kissed him,” are all dotted, so that it is a mistake to suppose that Jacob was kissed on that occasion. Esau fell on his neck and wept. (Compare Genesis xlv. 14.)

All the above peculiarities belong to the consonantal text; but when the vowels were invented and added to the consonants other remarkable features were developed. In vocalised books a word is sometimes met with unvocalised. This is a sign that it is not to be read at all. Occasionally a word is written with the vowels of another word. Thus “*Yahveh*” is generally adorned with the vowels of “*Adonai*”; or, when *Adonai* already precedes *Yahveh*, the latter is vocalised as “*Elohim*”—which, of course, means that the divine name *Yahveh* is not to be pronounced, but *Adonai* or *Elohim* substituted. Ignorance of this fact caused the translators of the English Bible to read the consonants and vowels together, as they were written, and gave us the form, “*Jehovah.*” The word “*Molech*” arose in the same way. The Hebrew text has *Melech* = “king”; but the vowel points of *Bosheth* = “abomination,” are written upon it as a sign for the reader to say “abomination” instead of “king.”

There are a few places in the Old Testament (such as Jeremiah xxxviii. 16, Ezekiel xlvi. 16, etc.) where words are not vocalised, and are not read, because their insertion is ungrammatical. But there are other still more interesting instances where vowels are written where there are no consonants to attach them to. In the English Bible we read in 2 Kings xix. 37 that Sennacherib was slain by Adrammelech and Sharezer, “his sons.” But the words, “his sons,” are not in the Hebrew text. The vowels have been written in to make the passage correspond with the later corrupted text of Isaiah. It would have saved our Assyriologists from making themselves ridiculous if they had noted this fact, and not attempted to read on the monuments what was neither there nor in the book of Kings. Similarly, in 2 Samuel viii. 3, we read of David recovering his border at the “river Euphrates.” There is no such word as “*Euphrates*” in the Hebrew text. The mediæval Rabbins wrote in the vowels of the word as a sign for the reader to pronounce it, although it is not in the text. It is evident from the names mentioned in the narrative that David was nowhere near the Euphrates in this campaign. Although the Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages were debarred by superstition from interfering with the text of the Bible as it was handed down to them, yet they had no scruples against touching it up here and there in order to enhance the glories of the Hebrew race.

CHILPERIC.

It Came Back.

At the parish church of Black River special sermons were to be preached and collections made on behalf of the Home and Foreign Missionary Society. To remind them of the annual effort, and to request their attendance in church, Archdeacon Ramson visited many of his flock for some time previously.

A few days after the event had transpired the worthy archdeacon walked into the shop of an old woman, a somewhat hardened case, whom he had seen at church on that day for the first time. Judge of his surprise and amusement when, before he could utter a word of greeting, she startled him by jerking out in great wrath: “Ah, you’ve come; I tho’t you would. But I’ll give no more to your missions, not I. Why, look at that,” reaching down a nickel penny from the shelf. “I put that in the plate, and it has come back to me. I marked it, I did, for I knowed well them niggers never got the money.”

Be to the best thou knowest ever true,
Is all the creed.
Then, be thy talisman of rosy hue,
Or fenced with thorns that wearing thou must bleed,
Or gentle pledge of love’s prophetic view,
Thy faithful steps it will securely lead.

—*Sarah Margaret Fuller.*

ACID DROPS.

LORD ROSEBERY has given another alarm to the Nonconformist Conscience. He has actually bought the fine portrait of Gibbon by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the papers say he is very proud of possessing it. A man who prides himself on having the portrait of Gibbon cannot be a fit and proper person to lead a great political party in the "most Christian" nation in the world.

Keir Hardie's *Labor Leader* is not infallible. In some respects it is not even fairly accurate. It says that "The Secularist movement has died, and is getting itself buried." What a curious confusion! Surely the writer must be Irish. Whoever heard of a dead person superintending his own funeral.

Some time ago Keir Hardie announced that the *Labor Leader* would have to be dropped in consequence of inadequate circulation. How he got out of the difficulty we don't know, though we hear it was through *bourgeois* assistance. The *Freethinker* is not dropping in consequence of inadequate circulation, and it does not depend on anybody's cheques.

The Nonconformists are very indignant with Lord Salisbury for pointing out that Board schools had been worked in their interest. Dr. Guinness Rogers declares that in ten thousand rural parishes throughout this country the children of Nonconformist parents are practically driven into Church schools, and are shut out from the chances of entering the teaching career in the places where they live unless they join a Church which is not the Church of their fathers. The Nonconformist deputation to Lord Salisbury, too, pointed out the practical uselessness in such schools of the Conscience Clause. Yet they unite with the Churchmen in thinking that Secularists should be satisfied with such a fraud. All the trouble which the Nonconformists see in front of them arises from their having deserted their old principle, that the State should have nothing whatever to do with the teaching of religion.

The Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley writes in the December number of the *Nineteenth Century* on "Reopening the Education Settlement of 1870." One of his illustrations of the management of Church schools is very edifying. It is the case of St. John's National School, Birkenhead. "The report on this school," Mr. Stanley says, "for the year ending the 31st of December, 1894, shows that the average attendance was 1,140; that the voluntary subscriptions were £77s.; the fees paid by parents were £272; that the total expenditure for the year was £1,780; about £130 was deducted under the 17s. 6d. limit, on account of the failure of local income. Nevertheless, the income for the year exceeded the expenditure by £100, and in spite of this surplus income the managers failed to pay attention to the demand made by the department that certain defective galleries should be improved, and that cloak rooms should be provided."

The State pays 3½ millions for the support of denominational schools, and the subscribers contribute £800,000; a large part of the latter amount being given to avoid the levying of a school rate. In 1893 no less than 1,061 denominational schools had no subscriptions; while in 674 others the subscriptions amounted to less than 1s. per child.

The Church schools of the 32 Lancashire boroughs raised only £24,532 in subscriptions; while the school fees amounted to £22,364, and the Government grants to £211,879. The Churchmen of Birmingham raise less than £3,000 a year for the maintenance of their schools; while the State contributes over £22,000.

Here are some figures showing what the State pays and what Church people pay for a number of Church schools in London:—

	GRANTS.	SUBSCRIPTIONS.
St. Thomas, Charterhouse ...	£557 19 0	£2 2 0
St. Barnabas, Holloway ...	866 2 0	27 19 8
St. Thomas, Islington ...	675 18 4	3 5 0
St. George's, Camberwell ...	1,995 4 9	58 2 3
St. Peter's, Battersea ...	189 17 0	0 8 6
St. John's, Walworth ...	754 11 10	33 7 7

At Rochdale, for every shilling paid by the State to Church schools the subscribers give less than a penny. At Burslem there is a school with only £6 16s. 6d. subscriptions against Government grants of £856 10s. At Ashton-under-Lyne the subscribers to Church schools pay only one-seventeenth of the whole expenditure. The largest Church school in Southampton (Holy Trinity) has a total income of £1,200; of this the subscribers contribute only £25. The Church school of St. John, Birkenhead, receives from Government

£1,577 14s. 10d., and from subscribers £7 7s. The Church school of St. Andrew, Derby, receives from Government £1,236 7s. 8d., and from subscribers £20. The seventeen Church schools in Birkenhead receive from subscribers £633, from Government £7,853. The subscribers contributed 1s. 5½d. per child; the Government 18s. 1d.

Jabez Balfour, the pious scoundrel, who was so fond of reading the Bible, is now doing fourteen years' penal servitude. "Observer," writing to the *Standard*, says: "A short time ago I happened to be at West Croydon, and heard a beautiful peal of bells at the West Croydon Congregational Chapel. This peal of bells, I am informed, was presented by Mr. Jabez Balfour, and cost between £700 and £800. I cannot help thinking that if those in authority among the congregation at West Croydon wish for the luxury of such a peal of bells, they should be in a position to pay for them, and it seems to me that it would only be a Christian action on their part either to sell these bells or to subscribe their value, and devote the proceeds to the relief of the poor 'Liberator' victims."

The following paragraph appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* of Wednesday, November 27: "Secularism in the Colonies.—The Secularists of Sydney do not appear to be making much headway. According to the *Sydney Telegraph*, in 1892 they opened their Lyceum Freethought Hall in Campbell-street, costing £4,500, and dedicated it to the destruction of Christianity and Godism in Sydney. Last month the building was purchased by the Church of Christ for £2,200. At the opening services Mr. James Smith, now laboring for the City Mission, who was vice-president of the Secularists' Society when the hall was built, was among the speakers, and the first person to profess conversion to Christianity was a gentleman until recently secretary of the Freethought party."

This sort of thing will mislead Christians and indifferentists, as of course it is intended to do; but it should not mislead Freethinkers. Supposing the statement as to the building at Sydney to be true, what does it prove? Simply this: That Christian laws incapacitate Secular Societies from holding property in trust for their principles, and that nothing less than this will give them any security. Property that has to be held by a commercial tenure is, sooner or later, sure to be alienated. We have had illustrations of this in England, and the moral of it is that the acquisition of property is a mistake while the law remains as it is. We must go on using halls, without possessing them, and while we can do this—although it is not the ideally best thing—our movement will be very far from being as weak as the enemy fondly imagine it.

The Armenians estimate the losses suffered by their community during the late events in Anatolia at £T10,000,000, and the number of victims at 40,000. They fear that these figures will be considerably increased, owing to the approaching winter and the threatened famine.

The monks of San Francisco, at Bagnorea, Viterbo, have their own way of interpreting the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount. A band of brigands attacked them, but they made such bold resistance with guns, knives, and any weapon that came to hand, that the armed robbers took to flight.

In the divorce case of Biedermann v. Biedermann the husband told the wife they were not legally married, as she was a Catholic and he was a Protestant. If civil marriage were compulsory, as in other countries, such nonsense would have no chance of being believed.

A telegram from Lima, Peru, states that, a proposal for reforms in the convict revenues having been made in Congress, the Church party were much alarmed, and a number of them assembled outside the House and attacked the deputies as they were leaving. The Congress subsequently censured the Government for neglecting to afford sufficient protection to members of Parliament.

The Rev. J. E. Vaux has a not intentionally amusing letter in the *Church Times* on "Priests without Blemish." He argues that the injunction in Leviticus, that all things offered to the Lord should be without blemish, applies to the priests. From Deuteronomy it is evident that if Mr. Vaux is right the bishop ought to require all candidates for the holy office to be stripped and inspected before they are ordained.

Mr. Lang, in a recent *Daily News* article, mentions that the early Scotch ministers solemnly accused a witch of transferring the illness of Archbishop Adamson to a white pony. The horse it was that died.

Paris women who wear bloomers or knickerbockers when riding bicycles will be disqualified from receiving the

sacraments of the Church, according to the instructions issued to the clergy by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris.

The Kentish rector who asked a class of small boys who was the patron saint of England received as an answer, "Mr. Gladstone." This reminds one of the incident which occurred a few years ago when a deputation visited Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden to endeavor to enlist his sympathies in some enterprise which they projected. In the temporary absence of the ex-Premier the deputation was received by a friend of the family, who, by way of beguiling time, asked how the scheme was progressing. "Only moderately," was the response, "but we rely upon the aid of One Above." "Ah, yes," returned the querist, with upraised eyes; "he is only washing his hands, and will be down directly." The next instant Mr. Gladstone entered the room.

Oh, for the "good old times"! The Rev. S. Baring Gould says: "With the march of the times we have abolished dames' schools, and cut away thereby a means of livelihood from many a worthy woman; but, what is worse, we have driven the little ones into Board schools that are Godless, where they are taught to despise manual labor, and to grow up without moral principle." Of course, these statements are false; but equally, of course, in clerical eyes, absence of clerical domination means everything that is bad.

Christian civilisation is doubtless a divine article, but it means misery, degradation, and extinction to inferior races. Here is the testimony of the Christianised Dr. Eastman, the learned Sioux Indian, before a congregation of notable Christians at the Church of the Ascension, New York: "My race," he said, "has degenerated physically and morally since civilisation was thrust upon it." He described the Indians, as he knew them in early life, dignified, courteous, brave, merry and fleet-footed, spirited when at the camp fire, grave when at counsel, reverent to their elders, and kindly to their wives. "They owe," said he, "to civilisation the fact that they are now idlers, gamblers, drunkards, and beggars." This lets us understand how highly the Chinese and Japs are to be reprobated for wishing to have nothing to do with Christian civilisation.

An English missionary has been killed in Madagascar. This is a small set-off against the number of Madagascar natives who have recently been killed by Europeans.

Crazed by religion, Mrs. Elias Gilder, of Allantown, Pa., only a few days ago sacrificed the life of her babe to appease the wrath of a supposed angry Deity. The child was suffocated. Its little body had been badly beaten, and the tiny ankles were hacked with a butcher-knife.

Mrs. Rayward, of Hull, had musical tastes, and eloped with another member of the choir in her church. She also eloped with her husband's money. The court has granted him a divorce with £300 damages.

William Horrocks, superintendent of a Farnworth Wesleyan school, and conductor of a Wesleyan Mission Brass Band, has been sentenced to three months' hard labor at Bolton for stealing his employer's goods.

Edward Purkess, bank-manager at Stratford, is arrested on a charge of embezzlement. Between £20,000 and £30,000 is said to be involved. Purkess was a sidesman at Woodford parish church.

Durrant, the Sunday-school superintendent who has been convicted of murdering one of his scholars and fellow communicants in a chapel at San Francisco, appears to have been a most pious scoundrel. He was secretary of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, and prayed with the people after committing the murder. Christianity does not count much as a preventive of crime, but then it is a splendid thing to lay your sins on Jesus afterwards.

A friend of ours got the *Freethinker* into the Brampton Working Men's New Liberal Club. It was laid on the table, but some bigots used to hide it away. Our friend thereupon pinned the following notice on the paper: "If this paper is not required, have the courage to say so. Do not hide it. It is placed here to draw all classes into the Liberal fold again, for narrow-mindedness lost the Liberals the last election. It is also placed here to contradict the statement that this is just a Methodist Club."

Mr. E. W. Lummis, of West Bromwich, proposes, as "a step towards that Christian reunion which is so much projected," the formation of a Guild of Good Works. If the title rightly represents the idea, we cannot see anything specifically Christian about it, and Mr. Lummis would probably have difficulty in getting Christians to join his Guild on terms of equality with Jews, Atheists, Agnostics, and Deists.

A correspondent informs us that he recently saw an organ in the London streets with a picture of the Last Supper in front, and the tune being ground out was "Beer, beer, glorious beer!" The central figure of the picture seemed to be wondering why it wasn't wine.

The *Church Times* (Nov. 29) itself exposes the nonsense of Professor Sayce about identifying Kudar-kumal with Chedorlaomer of Genesis xiv. Some time ago "Chilperic," in our columns, by giving a literal translation of this chapter, showed its mythical character. Sayce is on the wrong track in trying to find far-fetched historical identifications. But ever since he was called over the coals for his admissions about the non-historical character of Daniel and Esther, he has been trying to keep in with the orthodox as much as possible. They have the disposal of good billets.

According to Colonel Cockerill, the missionaries to Japan are usually half educated, so that the Japanese declare that "those who are so ignorant as to be unable to make a living doing aught else abroad become missionaries." The educated Japanese see through the pretences of the missions, which are mainly the means for enabling incompetent sky-pilots to live abroad in luxury.

The moderator of the United Presbyterian Church deplores the antipathy of present-day church-goers to long sermons. A minister who likes exhorting for a couple of hours stands no chance now-a-days, unless he provides smoking-pews. The *Kirkintilloch Herald*, however, is not sorry. Few ministers, it says, can preach acceptably at length; in fact, it is "about as much as some of them can do to keep their hearers awake for a quarter of an hour."

Anatole France, writing on his early days in the *Forum*, says his toy Noah's Ark was a great proof to him of the truth of the Scriptures. In his Bible he saw God with a white beard. He says: "How sincerely I believed in Him! although, between ourselves, I considered Him inclined to be whimsical, violent, and wrathful; but I did not ask Him to render an account of his actions. I was accustomed to see great personages behave in an incomprehensible manner." M. France says: "But I did not understand why God had prohibited that good Flemish Eve from touching the fruits of the tree which gave pleasant knowledge." He came afterwards to think that God said to Himself: "Science does not make happiness, and when men come to know much of history and of geography, they will grow sad."

ON WHEELS.

ONE parson says a multitude—
E'en leaving out the ladies—
Upon their bicycles to-day
Are steering straight for Hades.

Another vows he's visions had
Much more to mortal liking,
Wherein he saw on heaven's gold streets
The blessed angels biking.

Their wheels, we're told, were gilded, too,
To match the heavenly highways;
And pretty saints in bloomers sped
Along the gleaming byways.

Thus, parsons, tho' they're prejudiced,
Betwixt 'em make us feel now,
Whichever way a body's bound,
He "gets there" on a wheel now.

Male cyclers still may take short cuts
To Sneol thro' Chicago,
Tho' biking saints in bloomers there
Are under an embargo.

M. N. B.

The teaching of the "Sermon on the Mount" is immoral. Take no thought for to-morrow, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed." This injunction, so at variance with all economy, prudence, and wisdom, is uttered, not once incidentally, but three times. It constitutes the passport of the indolent tramp, the voucher of the improvident sponge on society, and the senseless excuse for the beggar. No wonder the mythical Jesus "had not where to lay his head," if he acted as he preached. He did not deserve any.—A. S. Hudson, M.D.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 8, Foresters' Hall, Clerkenwell-road, E.C. :- 7.30, "Gladstone's Theology." (Admission free.)

December 15, Newcastle; 22, Manchester; 29, Camberwell.

January 5, Camberwell; 12, 19, and 26, St. James's Hall.

February 2, Liverpool; 9, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 7, Blyth; 8, South Shields; 9, North Shields; 15 and 22, Foresters' Hall. January 12 and 13, Bolton; 19, Glasgow; 26, Edinburgh.—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 Efra-road, Brixton, London, S. W.

T. RILEY.—Thanks. We have used them.

H. L. SUMNER.—Obliged. See paragraph.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—G. Dodds' Friend, 1s.; John Umpleby, £20.

A. DRUCK's subscription to Shilling Month should have been acknowledged as 2s. 6d.

G. DODDS.—Thanks for cuttings, etc. We printed Mr. Putnam's "Why Don't He Lend a Hand?" in the *Secular Almanack* two years ago. Perhaps we may reprint it in the *Freethinker*.

H. C.—Thanks for cuttings. See "Acid Drops."

F. T.—See paragraph.

J. WALTON.—The Salvation Army captain, whom you heard state that Charles Bradlaugh took out his watch and gave God Almighty five minutes to strike him dead, is probably too insignificant for much notice. Of course the story is a lie. Charles Bradlaugh prosecuted one fellow for telling it in print. We should like to see Freethought propaganda renewed at Hartlepool. Why not speak to the gentleman you mention yourself, and ask him to communicate with us?

J. M. R.—We have not read Tom Duncan's *Canaanitish Woman*, but we will look at it as soon as we find time. Thanks for cuttings.

G. F. DUPLAY.—You certainly suggested—and rather more than suggested—that Mr. Foote did not express his real opinions in the article on Miss Lanchester's case. However, we note your disclaimer of having intended to do so.

F. CRESWELL.—Please forward a bill.

J. R. BOWMAN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

A. HINDLEY.—Sunday traders are proceeded against under the Act of Charles II., prohibiting people from following their ordinary avocations on the Lord's Day. The penalty is a fine, which, if not paid, can be recovered by distraint.

W. DYSON (Barnsley).—Mr. Foote will offer you a date as soon as possible.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) The word means *water-life*, all that lives in the water. (2) The Puritans were at first a party in the Church of England, and as they could not make the Church conform to their pattern they attacked it from outside. They did not fight for religious liberty; in fact, they did not understand it. (3) All sects outside the Church of England are Dissenters. (4) Your brother in America might order what he requires through the *Truthseeker* office, Lafayette-place, New York.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: M. A. M., £1; Geo. Anderson, £5; Westminster Branch, 5s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Herald of Peace—Islington Gazette—Leek Times—The Literary Guide—Freethought Ideal—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker—Liberty—Boston Investigator—Glasgow Evening News—North-Eastern Daily Gazette—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Isle of Man Times—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker.

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

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

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

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

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

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

Liberty is not a means to an end, it is an end itself. To secure it, to enlarge it, and to diffuse it, should be the main object of all social arrangements and of all political contrivances.—*Buckle*.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE delivered three lectures at Bradford on Sunday. Bigotry having refused him every decent hall, he was forced back upon one which is of fair size, but so out of the way, ugly, dirty, and uncomfortable, that the general public would not go there to hear God Almighty. In the circumstances the audiences were as large as could be expected, and the lectures were to all appearance very highly relished. Friends were present from Halifax, Dewsbury, Leeds, and other places. There was a good sale of literature at the bookstall.

Mr. Foote lectures at Foresters' Hall this evening (Dec. 8) on "Mr. Gladstone's Theology," with special reference to his new article in the *Nineteenth Century*. There should be a large audience. Freethinkers will find this a favourable opportunity for bringing their more orthodox friends to the hall.

The lectures at Foresters' Hall will be discontinued, for the present, at the end of December. Mr. Foote has engaged St. James's Hall for three Sunday evening lectures in January. In February the Athenaeum, in Tottenham Court-road, has been engaged for two Sunday evening lectures by Mr. Watts. Other Sunday lectures will be organised in the West-end during the rest of the winter.

Courses of week-night free lectures are being organised under Mr. Foote's scheme in various parts of London during January and February. Mr. Foote will try to start each course himself, and will be followed by Messrs. Watts, Cohen, Heaford, Moss, Snell, etc.

Mr. Foote will be lecturing in London the whole of January, and in the country the whole of February. It is his intention to deliver a number of week-night free lectures, and places that desire a visit from him should communicate as early as possible.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday evening at the Club and Institute, Wood Green, to a select but a most enthusiastic audience. Christian bigotry has deprived the local Secularists for the present of the use of a public hall, but the members of this enterprising Branch of the N.S.S. are determined to still carry on their Sunday evening lectures, and we hope that all possible support will be rendered them in their laudable efforts.

Mr. Watts was too unwell to fulfil his engagement at Ipswich on Tuesday, Nov. 27. The lecture was postponed till Thursday, and, as Mr. Watts was still suffering, his place was taken at very short notice by Mr. William Heaford, whose obliging disposition is equal to his profound devotion to the cause of Freethought.

Mr. J. W. Gott, of Bradford, sends us a complete statement of the eight free lectures delivered in the district by Mr. C. Cohen. The deficit on the local expenses amounts to £10 17s. 1d., and the lecturer has to be compensated in addition. The places visited were Halifax, Heckmondwike, Stanningley, Todmorden, Keighley, Bingley, and Leeds. Good halls were engaged in each place, and the attendance was most encouraging, especially at Leeds, where twenty-five names were taken for a new Branch which is in formation. Five new Branches, altogether, have resulted from this effort; and they will do good work if the propaganda can only be continued. Of course it will be less expensive in future. Mr. Grange has promised to follow up shortly the work begun by Mr. Cohen.

Mr. Foote's lecture scheme is hailed by the provincial Branches as the best new feature of our movement. All that is wanted to make it a triumphant success is money. If any Freethinker is moved to send in a handsome cheque, we shall be happy to announce it as an encouragement to others.

Just as we are going to press we receive a cheque per Mr. Charles Watts for £20 from our veteran friend, Mr. John Umpleby, of Blackburn. Clearly a case of "providence."

The Church party have been badly beaten in the Nottingham School Board elections, the Archdeacon being among the defeated candidates. The Radicals polled 25,000 votes more than "the enemy." No less than 19,000 votes were polled by the Independent Labor candidate.

Hiram S. Maxim, the famous scientist, contributes an article to the *New York World*, in which he argues that the Chinese acted quite naturally in killing the Christian missionaries, and that it is infamous to demand blood for their "crime." He denies that the Chinese are barbarians; on the contrary, he says they are highly civilised, or they

could never maintain such a large population. As for religious liberty, Mr. Maxim wants to know whether it really exists in any part of the world, except perhaps in Paris and Constantinople. Christians are very tender about their own "feelings," but very indifferent to the feelings of other religionists. "Suppose," he says, "the Chinese were to send missionaries into the Southern part of the United States, that these Chinamen should not only persist in teaching the Chinese religion, but should also erect a compound for women and children. Does anyone believe that the compound would not be attacked and the missionaries murdered? And what satisfaction would the Chinese Government be able to obtain from the United States Government? Simply the payment of a small sum of money for each of the missionaries murdered, while the actual culprits would never be brought to justice."

Tit-Bits offers a prize of one guinea for the best quotation from Shelley. No doubt this will excite fresh interest in the beauty of Shelley's poems, and incidentally to the Free-thought views expressed in them.

The Herald of Peace, the organ of the Peace Society, gives a long extract on Arbitration from Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword*.

The *Leek Times* reproduces our last paragraph on the projected debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. W. W. Howard. It now remains to be seen whether Mr. Howard means debating or self-advertisement.

Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, writing in the *Forum* on "Woman's Position in Pagan Times," says: "Paganism in the North did, undoubtedly, tend to evolve sturdier types of womanhood than Christianity has done; and it accorded a recognition to female intelligence which Christianity has been far slower in according."

A debate on the question, "Are Christ's Teachings Practical?" takes place this Sunday evening at the Northumberland Hall, Newcastle. The disputants are Messrs. Lynn and R. Mitchell.

The *Boston Investigator* has a very good defence of Ingersoll's methods of dealing with the Bible, from the pen of W. C. Sturco, who points out that the mission of rationality is to shatter the superstitions which act as a barrier to human advancement, and that talk about destructive and constructive methods is mainly verbal bamboozlement.

There are some lively bits in Mr. Frederic Harrison's "Unto This Last," a conversation on John Ruskin in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*. "When I remember," he says, "all the rabid things, the wicked things, the inhuman things, to which great and good men have been driven by faith in the Papacy and the Catholic Church, faith in Calvinism, faith in Communism, faith in Spiritualism—when I think of dying men dragging themselves to Lourdes, generous men turning assassins, and tender mothers adoring the divine judgment that consigns their children to hell-fire—when I reflect on all the folly and wickedness that has stricken men *gravi sub religione*"—well, when Mr. Harrison reflects on all this he can easily understand a twist in the brain of Ruskin.

With respect to usury, which Ruskin condemns and denounces, Mr. Harrison observes that it is expressly forbidden in the Bible. "He took the Bible," says Mr. Harrison, "and acted on it, come what may, and Bible Christians now mock at him for so doing."

It is all very well," Mr. Harrison says, "for you and for me to ask for a more common-sense creed, and to feel what a ghastly mess the primitive Christians would make of the world if they had their way. But it is too bad that the professing Christians who read their Bible on Sundays, and pretend to believe in it as the Word of God, should laugh to scorn a Christian poet who does in his soul accept it as God's own truth, and resolutely takes it as the law of his life. The Bible undoubtedly does say: 'Thou shalt not give thy money upon usury'; 'I am the Lord thy God'; and John Ruskin says: 'I will not give my money upon usury,' whereat the whole Christian world roars out in mockery and wrath—falls upon him as the Jews on Paul as 'a pestilent fellow,' a 'mover of sedition,' and calls out in a loud voice, like Festus to Paul, 'John! thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.'"

Mr. John Morley's article in the same magazine on Matthew Arnold is interesting, but the style is not up to his best level. "Destroys true epistolary charm" is terrible cacophony. It is enough to break the jaws of a Welshman. Curiously enough, Mr. Morley does not say a word about Arnold's essays on religion, which form so large a part of his prose writings. We wonder if the omission is deliberate—with a view to the by-election in the Montrose Burghs.

We have much pleasure in once more calling attention to *Humanity*, the little monthly organ of the Humanitarian League, published by Reeves, of 185, Fleet-street. The December number contains a report of Mr. Josiah Oldfield's address at the Memorial Hall on "The Scientific View" of the Rights of Men and Animals. "The Churches' View" is to be given by the Rev. A. L. Lilley on Tuesday evening (8), Dec. 12, Canon Wilberforce in the chair. Some account of this address will be given in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Frederic Harrison gives "The Ethical View" on January 21, and Mr. G. W. Foote "The Secularist View" on February 18. The admission to these meetings is free.

Alexandre Dumas, the great French playwright, who has just died, was a pronounced Freethinker. It was his personal wish that he should be buried without any religious ceremony. The expenses of his funeral are defrayed by the State. Jules Simon, who is himself a Deist, pays a high tribute of respect to the personal character of Alexandre Dumas. "He was in his friendship, as in his works," says Simon, "upright, tender, and firm."

The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control (2 Serjeant's-inn, Fleet-street) has issued a series of tracts on National Education. Though written from a Nonconformist point of view, they contain a number of facts and arguments in opposition to the attempts to obtain clerical control over education.

A Burns exhibition is to be held at the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts next year, and will be open all the summer.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, continuing in the *Contemporary Review* his chapters on Professional Institutions, deals with the evolution of the teacher and the still incomplete differentiation of the teaching from the priestly class. He takes note of the fact that at the present moment there is going on a struggle to re-acquire clerical control. "Clerics," he says, "have striven, and are still striving, to make the public help them to teach Church dogmas in Church schools. At the present time" (the article was apparently written in June) "the Archbishop and clergy at large are fathering an Act which shall give them State funds without State control. With an arrogance common to priesthoods in all times and places, no matter what the creed, they say to the State: 'We will say what shall be taught, and you shall pay for it.'"

Mr. Watts lectures on Saturday evening, December 7, at Blyth under Mr. Foote's Lecturing Scheme, and to-day (Sunday, Dec. 8) he lectures three times at South Shields under the auspices of the local branch of the N.S.S. On Monday evening, December 9, Mr. Watts lectures at North Shields under Mr. Foote's scheme.

At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive a committee was appointed to carry out the customary arrangements for the Annual Children's Party. This is always a very pleasant function. Some hundreds of little ones have a jolly evening, and their elders look on delightedly at a convenient distance. Of course it takes a fair sum of money to defray all the expenses, but the appeal for this object has never met with ungenerous response. Subscriptions *pro tem.* can be forwarded to Miss E. M. Vance, at 28, Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

Arrangements are also being made for the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant, full notice of which will appear in due course.

Archæology and the Bible.

No less fruitful [than the researches in Assyria] have been modern researches in Egypt. While, on one hand, they have revealed a very considerable number of geographical and archæological facts proving the good faith of the narratives entering into the books attributed to Moses, and have thus made our early sacred literature all the more valuable, they have at the same time revealed the limitations of the sacred authors and compilers. They have brought to light facts utterly disproving the sacred Hebrew date of creation and the main framework of the early Biblical chronology; they have shown the suggestive correspondence between the ten antediluvian patriarchs in Genesis and the ten early dynasties of the Egyptian gods, and have placed by the side of these the ten antediluvian kings of Chaldean tradition, the ten heroes of Armenia, the ten primeval kings of Persian sacred tradition, the ten "fathers" of Hindu sacred tradition, and multitudes of other tens, throwing much light on the manner in which the sacred chronicles of ancient nations were generally developed.—Professor Andrew D. White, in "The Popular Science Monthly."

LECTURING NOTES.

FREETHOUGHT advocacy is now passing through a fresh crisis in this country, which deserves the special attention of every member of the Secular movement. Its principles are as potent as ever, and its influence is penetrating more and more into theological, political, and social sections of society. It, therefore, becomes the more necessary that proper care and united action should be manifested in the promulgation of our views. In the various churches the old style of service fails to draw congregations; hence Christians have to adopt a new method of advocacy. Preachers no longer rely upon their sermons as the principal feature of attraction, for the reason that they have found good music and singing to be far more potent in commanding the attention of hearers than expositions of the perplexing doctrines of faith and grace.

The new conditions that have sprung up in the Free-thought world require a new departure in advocacy. I do not mean that the battle with theology should cease, but I do mean that our plans of attack need revision, and that the arrangement for lectures should be more carefully studied. At some of my recent lectures in the provinces many complaints were made that the work of preparing for the meetings devolved upon one or two of the members of local societies. This should not be, as it is the duty of each one to take his turn in conducting the affairs of the society. Then, where morning and afternoon lectures are held, the same attention should be shown in conducting them that is given to the evening gatherings. But, as a rule, I have not found this to be the case, except in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and one or two other towns. Of course, the day audiences are not so large as at night. That, however, is no reason why the majority of members should confine their interest to the evening lecture.

It must be recognised that the meetings of the Socialists and Independent Labor Party, being held at the same time as ours, affect somewhat our audiences in the provincial towns, inasmuch as these organisations are largely composed of Freethinkers. Still, the rapid progress of Secular thought during the present decade would, under more favorable conditions, cause our halls to be filled.

The question arises, What can be done to meet the new requirements of Secular propaganda? This question, I believe, will be fully dealt with at our next Conference; but, in the meantime, I suggest the carrying out, to the fullest possible extent, of what is known as Mr. Foote's Lecturing Scheme. Speaking from experience, I pronounce it to be an unqualified success. At my recent lectures given upon this plan all the meetings have been full, and most of them crowded. Admission being free, Christians attended and listened attentively to what was advanced, and, in some cases, they acknowledged that the exposition of Secularism and the criticism of orthodoxy which they had heard were very different from what they expected.

The fact is, we have been so misrepresented by theological exponents that the general public have had no opportunity of fairly judging of the true character of our principles. What we have long required, and what this scheme provides, is a plan whereby Christians should be induced to attend our meetings. Many of them object to pay to hear that of which they have but little knowledge, or very erroneous ideas. I repeat that the success of this enterprise has been most encouraging; and, although the operation of the scheme is, for the time being, confined to week-night lectures, no doubt it will be extended in certain cases to Sunday meetings if sufficient financial support is afforded. It will be a grand day when we are sufficiently wealthy to have free admission on Sundays. Then the largest halls at our command will be filled; our philosophy will be better known, and the triumph of our principles will, in my opinion, be secure.

Under this scheme I have already held twelve meetings, and arrangements are being made for me to lecture under its auspices next week at Blyth and other places in the North of England, in Scotland during January, and throughout the London districts in February. Mr. Cohen has also done good work through the aid of the Lecturing Fund, and many new branches of the N.S.S. have been formed. Thus our practical work goes bravely on, and it is intended that it shall continue.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE VIRGIN OF CHARTRES.

(Nôtre Dame de Soubs-terre.)

"I am black, but comely."—SONG OF SOLOMON, i. 5.

CATHOLICISM supplies its votaries with a multiplicity of virgins. Some are more popular than others. There are, for instance, our Lady of Lourdes, our Lady of Loretto, and our Lady of Guadalupe, all of whom have numerous devotees, who take long pilgrimages to pay their respects at their respective shrines. But the most venerable of all is Nôtre Dame de Chartres. I am particularly fond of old women. They always know a thing or two, and if you get into their good graces can tell many a quaint and curious story of the past. The oldest of old virgins in Europe was, as I have said, our Lady of Chartres in France, and the question whether the spirit which animated the old statue reincarnated itself in the new statue which takes its place is a most important one. For, alas, the venerable underground Virgin Mother is no more. On the 9 Frimaire of the year II. of the French Republic (Nov. 29, 1793) she was taken from her subterranean crypt and burnt. For some two thousand years she had wrought miracles; yet she could not withstand the Revolution. Virtue had gone out of her, and the question whether the virtue has entered into the modern statue, which has taken the old one's place, is an important one to the archæologist as well as to the hagiologist. For the old statue could unfold a tale. Certain it is that a Druidical grove and grotto existed on the spot where the Cathedral of Chartres now stands, and there was a subterranean idol with the inscription, *Virgini Pariturae*—To the Virgin who shall bring forth. This virgin was older than Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Did she represent Isis, the mother of Horus; Ceres, the mother of Bacchus; or Cybele, the lover of Attys? Her name is uncertain, but her meaning is clear. The black, underground Virgin of Chartres was our ever-virgin Mother Earth, who, sure as Lady Day arrives, sends forth verdure from her teeming womb. She is truly the blessed virgin whose chief feast comes round in mid-August, when the corn is in the ear. Fecundated in spring, she gives birth in December in Beth-lehem, the house of corn. But why was the Virgin of Chartres black? Because she came from the east as well as from the earth. The earliest picture of the Virgin and Child, in the Roman catacombs, is a picture of Isis and Horus. Paris still retains its Greek name, Para Isis (under the protection of Isis), as its great Cathedral bears the name of Nôtre Dame (our Lady)—a term applied to Isis, Ceres, Cybele, and other virgin mothers.

LUCIANUS.

A Calendar for Freethinkers.

The most interesting portion of *The Secular Almanack* for 1896 is that which might, in forgetfulness, be most easily overlooked. We mean the calendar itself. Instead of the conventional array of new moons, Sundays after Trinity, and the natiivities of King George the Third's numerous descendants, a thoroughly novel and instructive list of the birth and death days of great Rationalists meets the delighted eyes. Taking the June catalogue as a sample, we note such names as Littré, James Thomson, W. J. Fox, Paine, Bruno, Harriet Martineau, Colenso, Mazzini, Huxley, etc. Mr. Foote furnishes a useful retrospect of 1895. Mr. J. M. Wheeler, whose fund of curious learning is inexhaustible, writes on the Calendar, old style and new, Easter, Christmas, and the like. Mr. Charles Watts looks hopefully at the prospects of the Freethought "Work of To-day." Full details touching the N.S.S. Council, Principles, and Branches, along with lists of American, Colonial, and Continental Societies, complete a very handy issue.—*Watts's Literary Guide*.

I am just and honest, not because I expect to live in another world, but because, having felt the pain of injustice and dishonesty towards myself, I have a fellow feeling with other men who would suffer the same pains if I were unjust or dishonest towards them. Why should I give my neighbor short weight in this world because there is not another world in which I should have nothing to weigh out to him? I am honest because I don't like to inflict evil on others in this life, not because I am afraid of evil to myself in another. It is a pang to me to witness the suffering of a fellow being, and I feel his suffering the more because he is mortal, because his life is so short; and I would have it, if possible, filled with happiness, and not misery.—*George Eliot*.

THE REVELATION OF SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE.

"These things themselves are neither true nor rare ;
The wonder's how the devil they got there."

It is the horrible dream of a madman ; the result of heavy lobster suppers at Patmos. If the rhapsody did not contain certain nasty passages, it would be awfully funny. The writer makes the most awkward blunders, far surpassing those of old Moses anent cosmogony. He predicts a general cataclysm, and all the worlds we see with our naked eyes (for he knew nothing of those that could be seen only through the telescope) go hee-hee-goleerie on to our unfortunate planet, evidently the centre of attraction, which, according to his weird fancy, is the biggest cosmic lump, and can stand the heaviest of bumps. Chapter vi. 12 I call a transformation scene. The sun is blackened, and the moon (sweet Selena) dyed in blood, *ad captandum vulgus*. Total eclipse ! Verse 13.—"The stars of heaven fell unto the earth even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs." A silly comparison. This event is just as likely to happen as all the cannon balls in the world dropping on the top of an ordinary-sized potato. Where would that potato be ? If a few stars only fell upon the earth, our planet would burst up into minute fragments, and disappear like a heap of sawdust in a whirlwind. Yet "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man [all, in fact, except the women] hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains" (verse 15). Poor devils ! There could be neither rocks nor dens to hide in, for nothing would be left of this earth after such gigantic concussions.

VII.—Marvellous to relate, the world is still revolving. The damage done cannot have been very serious. The winds are stopped for devilment. They shall no longer blow on the earth. What a heavenly calm ; but, oh, what stench ! No more breezes, gales, tornadoes, or squalls. Verse 1.—After the general smash up the world still revolves, for an angel says : "Hurt not the earth" (verse 3). After these frightful cosmical disturbances, "there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (viii. 1). From this I conclude that there were no ladies in the celestial roost. Trust them being silent five minutes. "Pas si bête." Verse 5.—More cosmical phenomena and disturbances to the sound of seven trumpets. Fancy blowing brass instruments as an accompaniment to voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. What a disgusting din ! Then follow hail and fire mingled with blood (verse 7). Query, whose ? What a horrid mess ! It is about the strangest mixture ever heard of, producing something like the effect of a seidlitz powder on an empty stomach. Of course, this queer stuff falling on the earth in large quantities would interfere somewhat with the vegetation. Verse 8.—"Then a great mountain, a volcano, was cast into the sea, and the *third* part of the sea became blood" (*sic*). More likely turned into hot water *pro tem*.—cooked fish (stewed Leviathan) coming to the surface. Verse 9.—Of course, "a *third* part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died." What a haul for Billingsgate ! Verse 10.—Another great star fell from heaven (at the blowing of the *third* angel). It fell upon the *third* part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. What a funnily-shaped star ! All had evidently not come down. This star is called "Wormwood." Crasher would be more *à propos*. Verse 12.—Next, "the *third* part of the sun is again smitten, and the *third* part of the moon, and the *third* part of the stars, so as the *third* part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a *third* part of it, and the night likewise." This seems to me madness with method. How damnably irritating is this *third*. I understand the *third* in music, but not in cosmos smashing.

IX. 1.—Again a star falls from heaven upon the earth with the key of the bottomless pit (*sic*). I cannot imagine the shape and size of that key ; if I could, I would have the key to the mystery.

XII. 4.—More star shooting. The tail of a great dragon drew the *third* part of the stars of heaven ! Still harping on the stars. The repetition of the word *third* makes one suspect that this fellow had an inkling of the rule of three, but not according to Cocker. And so he raves on. The madder his utterances, the more inspired, no doubt. Of course, we think that the earth will come to an end some day, but not in such an idiotic fashion. How beautifully Byron describes the final catastrophe ! I can well imagine

it : "Darkness. . . I had a dream that was not all a dream." The English poet's utterances are more true and more sublime than the ravings of the apostolical lunatic.

CHARLES KROLL LAFORTE.

THE PAINE EXHIBITION.

THE centenary of the publication of Paine's *Age of Reason* is a fitting occasion for bringing together such an exhibition of Paine relics as have been on view at South Place Institute. Mr. M. D. Conway, who, by his *Life of Thomas Paine*, has done so much for the vindication of the author-hero, and who, with Mr. Todd, the secretary, has been chiefly instrumental in getting up the present exhibition, lays most stress on Paine's political work. But it was by his *Age of Reason*, which brought him most obloquy, that he is most widely, and probably will be longest, known. So much of Paine's life was spent in America that an exhibition there would be likely to bring out some fresh articles of historical interest ; but the present one exceeds both in number and variety all expectation. Four hundred and eighty items appear in the catalogue. It is true the majority of these are books, but that goes without saying in the case of a man whose chief work was done with the pen. Mr. Conway himself exhibited a great variety of Paine literature, including first editions of all his works, and the principal biographies and other works written about him. The most amusing of these, perhaps, is the broadsheet issued by the publishers of the *British Workman*, entitled "Thomas Paine's Recantation." A large number of portraits, prints, and other relics are also exhibited by Mr. Conway, many of them coming from America. Mr. Conway himself has the excellent oil painting of Paine by Jarvis, which looks better on canvas than in his *Life of Paine*. The portrait by Romney is probably still in existence somewhere, though its locality is unknown ; but the engraving by Sharpe remains and attests its merits. Several copies were lent by various gentlemen, that belonging to Mr. G. J. Holyoake having an inscription from Paine to Clio Rickman. The most notable copy of the Romney portrait was that painted by Millière, and given by him to Charles Bradlaugh. The painter himself was shot on the steps of the Pantheon after the Commune. He died crying "*Vive l'Humanité*." Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, who lent this, also sent portraits of Carlile and his daughters, and the baby-shoe worn by Hypatia Carlile while in prison with her father.

There were a number of engravings of the first iron bridge at Wearmouth, designed by Paine. A large-sized engraving and the patent were sent by Mr. Truelove, together with a number of interesting relics, including the table on which Paine wrote *The Rights of Man* and other works. This table he first saw over half a century ago when in the possession of Clio Rickman. We were pleased to notice a portrait of Mr. Truelove himself, who well deserves place with Eaton, Carlile, Watson, and others who have published Paine's works and maintained a free press.

A number of political medals and tokens in connection with Paine and his time were exhibited by E. Snelling and by A. W. Waters. Jugs, with portraits, etc., were lent by Mr. Willett from his collection of Historical Pottery in the Brighton Museum. A good bust of Paine, published by Mr. Truelove, was on the platform, together with death masks of both Paine and Burke. Among portraits of those brought into connection with Paine were several of Rickman, Eaton, Cobbett (of whom there were a number of relics contributed by his biographer, Mr. A. Smith), Carlile, Frances Wright, etc. Mr. Wheeler sent a portrait of Elihu Palmer, the blind author of *The Principles of Nature*, who, with Paine, set up the first Deistic Church in America. A well-engraved broadsheet, published by Carlile, showing Paine in a triumphal car, driving away superstition ; the first German editions of *The Rights of Man* (Copenhagen, 1793) and of *The Age of Reason* ; various lives of Paine and works issued by Eaton and Carlile, were also exhibited by Mr. Wheeler.

The only easily accessible objects conspicuous to us by their absence from the room were portraits of Blake, who assisted Paine to escape from England, and views of the Paine Memorial Hall at Boston. There was, however, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, illustrated by Blake, exhibited by Mr. Buxton Forman, who sent many other interesting works ; while Mr. Alfred Morrison contributed many autograph letters and manuscripts of Paine. Other autographs were lent by Dr. Clair J. Grece, who contributed over forty articles. Probably the most curious article of the whole collection was a portion of Paine's brain, sent by Mr. Louis Breeze. Altogether the exhibition was of a most varied and interesting character to admirers of Paine, and the catalogue itself makes a good memento of the occasion. South Place Institute, turned for a while into a museum, was on Monday almost inconveniently crowded, many well-known Freethinkers being present. Music was interspersed, and brief addresses were given by Mr. Conway, Mr. Holyoake, Mrs. Bonner, and Mr. Picton.

BOOK CHAT.

The specimen page of the new critical edition of the Hebrew Old Testament gives five different colorings of the passage it prints (1 Samuel xx. and xxi.). That is to say, five different writers are represented on this one page of the Bible. The Holy Ghost must have been more than a trinity—a multiplicity of persons.

R. McClure says of the late Robert Louis Stevenson: "He had no interest in the evangelising spirit. He liked best the primitive man of the islands, unbaptised, and not bartering for powder. The man who, in the Cevennes, wrote, 'Thus, to the high entertainment of the angels, do we pelt one another with evangelists, like schoolboys bickering in the snow,' was not driven to enthusiasm by the missionaries of the South Seas or the effect of their work."

The *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) for December is as useful and interesting as ever. The brightly written review of Professor Huxley's collected writings is continued. "Jottings" are lively and clever—though, by the way, Thomas Dekker, the old dramatist, should not be printed as Decker. The Rev. Charles Voysey will scarcely like the criticism of his "Theism as a Science."

The Rev. D. P. Faure, who writes *The Truth About the Bible*, discourses delivered in the Free Protestant Church, Cape Town (Cape Town Argus Publishing Co.), is a very Liberal "Free Protestant" indeed. In this brochure he gives a lot of facts about the old books, which he regards as a purely human production. Of the ordinary theory of his school, that the Bible is human on one side and divine on another, right on morals and religion though wrong on science and history, he says: "The logical consistency of this theory is difficult to discover, but it is the necessary result of the recent scientific discoveries. The theory of plenary inspiration has broken down before these. Thinking men have been forced to admit that the science and the history and the chronology of the Bible are wrong; and they now claim infallibility for it only when it deals with the regions of the unknown. This theory, therefore, amounts to this, that the Bible is declared infallible in all those parts where it is practically impossible to test its correctness." We are glad to hear the work is having a good circulation, as it must tend to propagate Freethought and break up the old superstitions in South Africa.

In Miss Garnett's *Women of Turkey* (p. 73) mention is made that among the modern Greeks there is a custom similar to that we recently cited from M. D. Conway as existing at christenings in Cyprus—viz., of cutting three tiny locks of hair from the baby's head, and throwing them in the font in the name of the Father, Son, and Ghost. The hair symbolises the life, and, in the superstition of many countries, a lock places the person from whose head it is cut in the power of the one to whom it is given.

The Arcana of Nature, by Hudson Tuttle (London: H. A. Copley, Canning Town, E.; 2s. 6d.; 1895), purports to be a revelation of the History and Laws of Creation. If, as the publisher states, it was first published thirty-five years ago, it was certainly much in advance of the time, even though anticipated by the *Vestiges of Creation*. It is throughout evolutionary, and so mainly in accord with the conclusions of the latest science that we wonder why the author uses the term "creation" at all.

MR. PUTNAM ON THE FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

ON Sunday morning, amidst alternate rain and shine, I journey over to Failsworth, about four miles from Manchester centre. It is a small manufacturing place of about 15,000 inhabitants; but it has a most wonderful development of Freethought constructive ideas—a Secular Sunday-school which has been in existence over fifty years. It began in a small and obscure way. Its history is scarcely traceable for a while, but it was a persistent movement; there were vigorous personalities connected with it; it grew and flourished; and is now an established institution, with an excellent property and membership. The services on Sunday were exceedingly interesting. There was singing by the little children, and by the larger pupils and the congregation. There is an orchestra connected with the school which is excellent. I gave addresses afternoon and evening. There was a full attendance, notwithstanding the stormy weather. The American visitor was warmly welcomed. He will not forget the brightness and promise of this Secular School,

where the freshness of childhood gives inspiration to the work, where we see that our places as we pass on are filled with the energy and the enthusiasm of youth. We realise that Secularism has for its work the art, the music, the poetry, and the beauty of life; that it can interest and educate the child-heart as well as the mature brain. The Secular Sunday-school is a most noble institution.

—*Boston Investigator.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

A DREADFUL FATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Though neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, I foresee for you, and other prominent Freethinkers, a fate compared to which that of the martyrs of old will be enviable. They were imprisoned, tortured, and burnt. Green wood was supplied by Calvin's executioners to prolong the burning agonies of Servetus. The rack, the wheel, the boot, and many other devices of pious ingenuity, were brought into requisition that heretics might have a foretaste of the eternity of woe which God Almighty has provided for his non-elect. Worse than this awaits you. Yes, worse! for Christians have invariably pursued Freethinkers not only with injury, but calumny. First they took their lives, then their liberties. Now they take their characters. Who has not heard of the wickedness of Voltaire, the horrible death-bed of Paine? But worse, infinitely worse than this, awaits you. When heretics were too strong to be killed, they were left to rot in prison; when they could no more be imprisoned, they were ostracised; and now they can no more be ostracised, a yet more subtle and horrible punishment has been devised. What is it, do you ask? The most malignant, cruel, and abominable charge that can be brought against a self-respecting man. Yes, in days to come they will say that you, Bradlaugh, and Ingersoll were Christians. Already the odious, dishonest lie has been used against the characters of Darwin and Huxley, and I have heard it darkly whispered of Ingersoll and Bradlaugh. How can you hope to escape such great damnation?

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

PROFANE JOKES.

It was a colored preacher who said to his flock: "We have a collection to make this morning, and, for the glory of heaben, whichever of you stole Mr. Jones's turkeys, don't put anything on the plate." One who was there says: "Every blessed niggah in de church came down wid de rocks."

Gilbert Parker recently encountered a Canadian bishop whom he had known in his boyhood. The bishop pompously inquired: "Ah, Gilbert! and are you still writing your—ah—little books?" Mr. Parker answered promptly: "Yes, bishop. And are you still preaching your—ah—little sermons?"

"You fellows," roared the little man with the bristling moustache, "are a gang of thieves, cutthroats, liars, swindlers!"

"What do you mean? You?"

"Embezzlers, suborners of perjury, political tricksters!"

"Shut up, or we'll!"

"Rascals, assailers of innocence, and!"

"You!"

"Oppressors of the poor, wolves, tigers, jackals, skunks!"

"Kill him! Kill him! Bring a rope!"

Demure Little Woman—"Mercy, men! He's only practisin' on an imaginary congregation!"

"What does the scoundrel mean, then?"

"Oh, Jim's no scoundrel. He's got an idea that old-style preachin's too slow, and he's going to start out as a new style of evangelist."

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- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.

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.

FORESTERS' HALL (Clerkenwell-road, E.C.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Gladstone's Theology."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7, Touzeau Parris, "Some Bible Symbols." Tuesday, at 8, social party. Wednesday, at 8, public discussion.
BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, W. J. Ramsey, "Good Tidings of Great Joy." Tuesday and Friday, at 8, social gatherings.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. James, "The Meaning of Atheism."
EAST LONDON (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): 8, W. Heaford, "Why Should a Freethinker Fear to Die?"
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Roman-road): 3, Sunday-school; 7.30, F. J. Gould, "Life of Bradlaugh."
ISLINGTON BRANCH: 3.15, special general meeting at the Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 36 Newington Green-road.
PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road): 7, J. Kaspary, "Judaism."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "England's Duty to Inferior Races."
WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, Mr. Manning, Dramatic Recitals.
WOOD GREEN (Club and Institute, 4 Lawn-villas, Stuart-crescent, opposite Wood Green Church): 7.30, A. Lewis, "Scientific and Theological Foundations of Morality."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 12, a lecture.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30—lectures, weather permitting.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 7, A. Holland, "The Ethics, Humor, and Philosophy of Shakespeare's Works."
CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school.
DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 6.45, J. R. Wright, a paper.
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 11.30, Chapman Cohen, "Charles Darwin"; 2.30, "Christianity and Morality"; 6.30, "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?"
HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Starke, "The Antiquity of Man."
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Felix Volkhosky, "Exile Life in Siberia"—with lantern illustrations.
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "Progress." Special committee meeting after lecture.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, Edward Aveling, "The Value of Commodities"; 6.30, "Shelley: Socialist and Atheist."
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street, near Grey's monument): 7, debate between Messrs. Lynn and R. Mitchell, "Are Christ's Teachings Practical?"
NORTH SHIELDS (Spiritualist Hall, Camden-street): Monday, at 7.30, Charles Watts will lecture.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "Unbelief v. Faith—A Reply to E. W. Bailey, of London."
SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane): 11, Charles Watts, "Trust in God: A Delusion"; 3, "Theological Puzzles"; 7, "Secularism and Modern Thought."
STOCKTON-ON-TEES (32 Dovecote-street): 6.30, Mr. Mitchison, a paper on "Buddha."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BARNESLEY (May Day Green): 11, "Salvation Army Charity."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—December 8, Glasgow; 11 and 12, debate at Newcastle-on-Tyne; 15, Blackburn; 22, Wood Green; 29, Ball's Pond.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London.—Dec. 22, Leicester.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—December 8, Balls Pond; 15, Wood Green; 29, Foresters' Hall.

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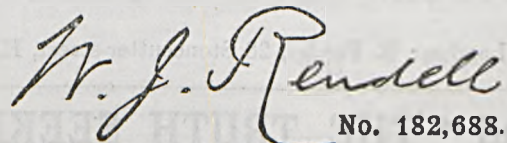
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