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The Free-thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XV.—No. 51.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1895.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

NOTICE.

Owing to the holidays, next week's "Free-thinker" will be published on Tuesday, Dec. 24. Lecture Notices must be sent in by the previous Saturday.

A BABY GOD.

CHRISTMAS will be here in a few days, and millions of Christians will celebrate, under a new name, the old pagan festival of the new birth of the Sun. Centuries, perhaps millenniums, before Jesus Christ was born or thought of, the twenty-fifth of December was commemorated with good cheering and rejoicing. The sun, the real lord and giver of life, without whose rays the earth would be a sterile rock in a lonely infinitude—the royal sun was once more beginning his triumphant career. His first slight ascent from his winter tomb was a prophecy of spring, with its bursting vegetation; of summer, with its loaded harvests; and of autumn, with its gathered sheaves, and golden fruit, and purple vines. Life was still worth living, hope gleamed through the desolation, men's hearts gladdened, and they danced and sang, ate and drank, and mocked the wrinkled face of care.

Christianity adopted this old pagan festival, and associated it with the pretended birth of Christ. We say *pretended*, because the birthday of Christ (if he ever existed) is utterly unknown. The earliest Christians were ignorant of it, and, when it was first celebrated, different dates were patronised by various sections of the Church. At length, in the fourth century, when the Church allied itself with the State, and stooped to conquer, and paganised itself to convert the pagans—the twenty-fifth of December was definitively selected, although it was obviously incompatible with the gospel story of shepherds watching their flocks by night, which is an absurdity during mid-winter in Judea.

From that time the SON has been worshipped instead of the SUN. But there has been little difference in the essential character of the celebration. Shibboleths have altered, but the observances have been unchanged. Eating, drinking, and visiting go on as before, and scattered families still meet around the hearth and festive board. Religion raises her voice in the pauses of merriment, but the season is mainly social, and strongly smacks of its carnal origin. It is impossible for the profane mind to perceive any connection between Jesus Christ and roast turkey and plum pudding.

Religion has been called the poetry of unpoetical natures. There is certainly a lack of imagination in ordinary Christians. The birth of a man may be celebrated with carnal festivities, but the birth of a god should surely be celebrated with spiritual recreations. Love-feasts may be all right, if we exclude indiscriminate kissing; but wine-feasts, and still more whiskey-feasts, seem rather incongruous, unless they are a tribute to the Holy Spirit.

There is also a want of imagination in sermons about the birth of Christ, to say nothing of pious conversation on the same incomprehensible subject. Christians say the babe of Bethlehem was God; indeed, the designation of "Mother of God" has been applied to Mary by Protestants as well as Catholics. Words are easily uttered, but it is sometimes difficult to realise their meaning. We invite our Christian friends to form (if they can) some definite conception of a baby god. Just imagine him in the hands of the doctor or midwife, a helpless, wailing little lump of flesh. Fancy him afterwards mewling and puking in his nurse's arms. Picture him learning to walk, with many failures, and sad falls on the part mercifully provided by nature for such mishaps. Conceive him teething, keeping his mother awake at nights, and making his father use the language of commination. Think of a god spotted with measles or raucous with the whooping-cough. Is it possible that a god would (or could) go through all these trials, and be subjected to all these infirmities? Yet this is what the Christian is bound to believe—though happily not bound to understand—with respect to Jesus Christ.

What a position is babyhood for the alleged creator and governor of this illimitable universe! What vanity, what check on man's part, to make the Almighty go through all the undignified stages of *his* petty career! His worship consists in pulling down God to his own level.

When this baby god of the Christians was born, it is said that angels sang of peace and goodwill on earth. This was meant as a prophecy, but it reads like irony. The peace has not come, and the goodwill is as hard to find in our reckless commercialism and wicked exploitation of inferior races, from whom we actually thief under pretexts of morality and religion. Europe to-day is one big camp. Millions of soldiers are grasping arms, and a terrible part of the wealth of every Christian nation is spent on preparations for war. It is the goodwill of the bloody sword, the peace of thunderous artillery.

Look at the great Nonconformist demonstration just held in London in favor of the Armenians and against the Turks. Religion is at the bottom of all the trouble; it separates those whom humanity would unite. And nine-tenths of the sympathy with the Armenians is a religious sympathy. Christian bigotry is the sentiment which is being stimulated. How many indignation meetings would be held if Christians were slaughtering Mohammedans? And how much more discreet these Nonconformists would be if Turkey were a great power? They do not clamor about the tyrannies in Russia, or go into hysterics over the horrors of Siberia—simply because the Czar commands a million bayonets. And what peaceful sentiments they display! They are trying to induce England to thunder with her battle-ships, and that would mean red war, with European Turkey as a cockpit for all the armies of Europe, probably in fratricidal strife. There is really nothing like religion for stirring up men's minds to what Carlyle called "the due infernal pitch."

G. W. FOOTE.

EARLY CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS.*

ARMENIA, which unfortunately has of late been forced on the attention of Europe, claims to be the oldest Christian country, and the Armenian Church boasts of retaining the primitive aspects of its religion. Perhaps it does, for a ridiculous, superstitious hodge-podge it is. It is pretended that Jesus Christ himself corresponded with Agbaros, King of Edessa, who also corresponded with the Emperor Tiberius. Most Protestants regard these documents as forgeries, but they illustrate the Armenian pretensions.

Monuments of early Christianity, other than literary ones, are of the most meagre and uncertain description. Some tombstone inscriptions, catacomb paintings, lamps, and old brass crosses, of uncertain date and possibly Pagan derivation, make but a beggarly collection of Christian antiquities. Our only real sources of information are the documents descended through monkish hands. Until late years these have been mainly those in the care of the Latin Church, whose scrupulous fairness in literary matters is not entirely above suspicion. Certainly the most important sidelights on Christian origins have come from sources beyond the control of the Romish Church. As instances may be mentioned the book of Enoch recovered from Abyssinia, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles found at Constantinople, the Gospel of Peter found in Egypt, and the Syriac Gospels recently discovered by Mrs. Lewis in the Sinaitic Peninsula.

Mr. Conybeare, though still but a young man, has already done something in helping to throw light on Christian origins by his translations of Armenian texts, and by his edition of the work of Philo, *About the Contemporary Life*. The Armenians, surrounded by enemies to their faith, have naturally preserved, extolled, and exaggerated the doings of those who have suffered for their creed. The whole of the texts here given are of this description, but they cast many side-lights on the real character of early Christianity, which are well exhibited by Mr. Conybeare in his "General Preface."

Mr. Conybeare notices that the note generally struck by these sainted Christian martyrs is one of hatred, defiance, and imprecation; and this feature of their religion the Armenians seem to have carefully preserved. A curious item is that one saint, Demetrius, encourages another to fight in the gladiatorial show. He rushes on his opponent confident in the saint's prophecy of victory, and slays him at once.

One point is clearly brought out by Mr. Conybeare in his "General Preface"—viz., that the early Christians did not deny, but believed in, the old Pagan gods, whom they regarded as demons. Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 55) says so explicitly. Mr. Conybeare says (p. 11): "We are thus prepared to find the Christian saints resorting to exorcism against the gods of the heathen." And he gives an instance in which the demons cast out from their images were Dia, and Apollo, and Artemis. Minutius Felix, the earliest Latin apologist (c. 27), similarly professes his belief in the heathen gods and goddesses.

A natural consequence of this attitude was the destruction by Christian saints of Pagan works of art. As our author says: "The obvious way of scotching a foul demon was to smash his idols; and we find that an enormous number of martyrs earned their crowns in this manner." He tells us, moreover, "the most popular of the saints were those who resorted to such violence and earned their death by it." Many must have wondered why the early Christians are said to have been subject to such persecution, while the Jews of the same era, who equally objected to sacrificing to other gods, were exempt. Mr. Conybeare throws some light on this. He tells us plainly that the Christians were punished for their anti-social tendencies. "There was first that rejection of family ties and relationships which accompanied the belief that the world was speedily and any day coming to an end. Young men and maidens were taught not to marry, husbands and wives not to cohabit and beget any more children. Eunuchism, because of the kingdom of heaven, was even tolerated by the very founder of the religion. And all this just at a

time when the most thoughtful and patriotic of the Romans were deploring the decay of population all over the empire, and were even making laws against celibacy and holding out rewards to married men with families." Mr. Conybeare further refers to their interference with family relations, their elevation of improvidence and poverty into virtues, their repudiation and ridicule of other cults, and the secrecy of their rites. He says (p. 287), in a passage I must quote at length:—

"The teaching of Early Christianity was thus altogether subversive of ancient society. So it would be of modern society, and any one set of people who should literally carry it out in their conduct would very soon come into conflict with established law and morality, and would certainly descend, sooner or later, into beggary and destitution. A system of ethics inspired by the belief that the existing order of things is shortly to succeed, and, by an abrupt peripety, give way to a kingdom of heaven, in which angels and superhuman agencies will supersede the slow and arduous methods and industry of this earth—such a system will not much avail us until the promise is fulfilled; we shall be fortunate if it does not put us into much useless conflict with the old and permanent constitution of things. Into such conflict the early Christians fell. They were regarded, and rightly, as enemies of the human race. If it is possible to endorse any judgment of the past, we may endorse this one of the authorities of the Roman empire."

Another point brought out by our author is "the extent to which there gathered round the personality of a favorite martyr the stories which had been believed of the demigods and heroes of an earlier age." Surely this is as true of Jesus as of any of the later Christian saints. The supernatural descent and virgin birth had been told of many pagan heroes. Miracles of healing had been related of Esculapius. Buddha had been tempted in the wilderness by Mara. Elisha had raised a widow's son. The feeding of multitudes, walking on water, and turning water into wine were natural incidents ascribed to any solar deities; and prodigies attended the death of Julius Caesar. If legends clustered round the minor martyrs, surely they did also around the greatest. Mr. Conybeare seems to allow this, for he mentions that the story of the virgin birth is wanting in the earlier "Acts."

Mr. Conybeare will not allow that Christian documents are in any way to be condemned because they relate miracles. He says: "In appraising the historical value of an early Christian document we ought to condemn it: not in case it contains miraculous elements, but in case it be wholly lacking in local color, in case the sentiments and teachings put into the mouths of the actors, and the actions attributed to them, be foreign to their age and country, so far as of these we have any reliable knowledge." Try John by Mr. Conybeare's canons, and, though it is nothing against him that he (according to some MSS.) makes an angel come down to disturb a pool, we may rely on his speaking of the office of high priest as yearly, and his attributing to Jesus discourses and sentiments unlike those of any Palestinian Jews.

Mr. Conybeare is always looking for history, and, of course, he finds it. Even of such a palpable theological concoction as the dogmatic discourse attributed to Callistratus, he can only use the words of Professor Jowett concerning the Phædo of Socrates: "How far the words attributed to Socrates were actually uttered by him we forbear to ask; for no answer can be given to this question. And it is better to resign ourselves to the feeling of a great work than to linger among critical uncertainties." Such an attitude can scarcely be wondered at when we remember that no Christian critic has yet discovered that the "Sermon on the Mount" is a literary compilation, never uttered by one man, either on mount or plain.*

Mr. Conybeare's training at Oxford and among Armenian Christians has hardly served to develop that rugged scepticism which, it seems to me, is a preliminary requisite for sound criticism of early Christian documents. He would seriously have us believe that in these stories of the early Christian martyrs we have the actual record of dialogues between judges and the accused some seventeen hundred years ago! Some nucleus of truth there may be; but a verbatim record—*Credat Judeus*.

* *The Apology and Acts of Apollonius, and other Monuments of Early Christianity*. Edited, with a General Preface, Introduction, Notes, etc., by F. C. Conybeare, M.A. (London: Swan Sonnenschein.)

* In my paper on "The Literary Character of the Gospels," *Freethinker*, March 27, 1892, I was the first, so far as I am aware, to announce this view.

I should be sorry to leave the reader with a sense of disparagement of Mr. Conybeare. He is both learned and fair-minded. His life, I should say, must have been mainly spent in study, and he is too honest and amiable to readily impute dishonesty to others. Had he, however, mixed much with the world, he would have seen how easily facts get twisted whenever the interests of a powerful corporation are concerned. When such a corporation has had for many centuries sole control of literature, every item thereof must be scrutinised with the utmost caution. Mr. Conybeare's own works confirm the opinion of De Quincey that no one has yet sifted the remains of early Christianity with sufficient critical care.

J. M. WHEELER.

THEOLOGICAL PERPLEXITIES.

(Concluded from p. 787.)

IN my article in last week's *Freethinker* I endeavored to show the perplexing nature of the New Testament account of the death of Christ, the Bible story of the Fall of Man, and the theological theory of free-will. The inconsistency of this last Christian teaching is such that it may be well to return to the subject.

There is, underlying the popular view of free-will, the assumption that all persons are endowed at birth with a faculty that selects and decides upon a certain course of conduct, or a particular form of belief, irrespective of the influence of environment. This is a palpable fallacy, for it would be equally as reasonable to suppose that cabbages, for instance, are endowed with power to grow independently of soil, rain, and sunshine. Now, it is a fair question to ask: If man has been designed by a supreme and eternal will, how can he act in accordance with an inferior and temporal will of his own? Further, can there be one great irresistible designing will, and at the same time millions of little changeable wills frustrating its designs? When a person says, "I will to do a thing," and afterwards he wills not to do it, there is no free-will, as the term is commonly understood by theologians, but simply a conflict of ideas, caused by the introduction of fresh factors in the act of determining. The change of determination does not mean that in the brain there is a presiding officer, as it were, who first decides upon one course of action, and then countermands it by issuing different orders. The theological fallacy is in regarding the will as being the *cause* of the determination, whereas it only expresses the *final* conclusion arrived at through impressions made upon the mentality by circumstances which at the time were in operation.

In the development of our intellectual and moral powers we pass through the stages of infancy, youth, and maturity, and the excellence or otherwise of our conduct will depend upon the nature of the conditions that surround each stage. There is no volition in man that can produce a moral character from immoral conditions. As a rule, a person's conduct is a reflex of his environment. What we term mind, thought, or will is undoubtedly influenced by causes, internal and external. For instance, defective sight prevents the formation of accurate ideas of distance and of color, and a defective memory may mar the success in life of an otherwise gifted man. Some persons are so criminally inclined by nature that it becomes necessary to place them under restraint; and others are born and trained under such inferior conditions that they are unable to rise to a high virtuous plane. These facts, to a large extent, explain the why and the wherefore of good and bad characters, of rational and irrational conduct. It is not here contended that man is an abject victim to fatalism, for by the accumulation and observance of the lessons of experience he may learn to control nature, and also to create new circumstances that will strongly influence his life. Through discovery and invention persons change under fresh circumstances, which may be of their own making. It is an utter fallacy to suppose that we can divest ourselves of the effects of the civilisation of our time. We can no more do so than we can dismiss all sensation by closing our eyes. Science implies power over matter, and shows that while it controls us we can also control it. Thus, by the careful observation of the manifestation of nature, and by the study of the physical and

mental laws which govern man's organisation, we find an explanation of phenomena which theological conceptions do not afford.

Estimates of right and wrong may vary in different ages and nations. It is not, however, the result of free-will, but rather the consequence of the evolution of thought and action. The transformation of noble thoughts into noble deeds is the work of a progressive people, and depends upon material causes. Samuel Laing, in his *Modern Zoroastrian*, says: "Now, it is certain that the will, like life, memory, consciousness, and other mental functions, is, so far as human knowledge extends, indissolubly connected with matter and natural laws, in the form of certain motions of the cells which form the grey substance of the nerves, and of the nervous ganglia of which the cortex of the brain is the most considerable. This is conclusively proved by experiment. We know that by removing certain portions of the brain of a dog or of a pigeon we can destroy the power of motion while preserving the will, and by removing certain other portions we can destroy the will while preserving the powers of motion. Take away a certain portion of the brain of a pigeon, and, although it retains the power of taking food, it has so totally lost the will to exercise this power that it will starve in the midst of abundance, though it can be kept alive by placing the food in its mouth. In like manner, in the human brain there are certain portions which, if destroyed by injury or disease, will paralyse the power of giving effect to the will by muscular movements, while the destruction of other portions will paralyse the will which originates such movements. Numerous cases are recorded in medical treatises in which the will is completely paralysed for the performance of certain functions, and in such cases the anatomist can lay his finger on the spot where the brain is affected, and when the brain is dissected after the death of the patient it will be found that his prediction is verified, and that this region of the brain really was diseased" (pp. 191-2).

It is asked, if man has not a free-will, or if he is necessitated to do a thing, why should he be punished? The answer is, for his own improvement, and for the protection of society. Punishment affects its motive, motive controls will, and will regulates conduct. According to the free-will theory, punishment is vindictive; it is inflicted for past conduct, rather than for the purpose of preventing wrong-doing in the future. But if I am free, why punish me at all? To tell me I am free to act, and then to punish me for so acting, is a sham. Besides, the very fact of threatening me with eternal punishment, unless I act or believe in a certain way, prevents freedom, inasmuch as the very dread produced by the threat affects my power of choice, and renders free volition impossible. It is a circumstance in itself, supposing I thought it to be true, that would impel me to arrive at one conclusion.

As to the perplexed question of man's responsibility, it depends so entirely upon what is meant by the term, and to whom we are supposed to be responsible. Its true meaning is being amenable, accountable; but this involves a mutual agreement, a contract between two parties. Now, I have no agreement, neither have I made any contract, with God, and, therefore, I feel that I am not responsible to him. I am here without any choice upon my part, and I gave no consent as to the alleged relations between myself and God. If any bargain exist, it is a one-sided one which was forced upon me. Besides, the odds are all against me, for, according to the orthodox theory, I was handicapped from the very commencement. I was, it is said, "born in sin"; "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew xx. 16); "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction," while "narrow is the way which leadeth unto life" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). The only responsibility that I can recognise is that to my fellow man, from whom I receive reciprocal service.

CHARLES WATTS.

The minister had been in the little Kentucky town but a short time, and when he was called on to preach a funeral sermon he thought it best to pick up a few facts about the deceased. "I trust our brother gone before was a truly religious man?" he said to the surviving brother. "You bet he was," was the earnest answer. "Why, brother, he never tuk out his gun to lay fer one of the Simmonses without fust prayin' three hours."

THE WOMAN'S BIBLE.

THE first part of the long-talked-of "Woman's Bible," edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and colleagues, has been published, and it proves so heretical that Frances Willard, Lady Henry Somerset, and other representatives of the Christian New Woman, have made haste to repudiate all connection or approval. Joined with Mrs. Stanton in the production of this first part, which consists of comments on the Pentateuch, are Lillie Devereaux Blake, Rev. Phoebe Hanaford, Clara Bewick Colby, Ellen Battelle Dietrick, Ursula N. Gestefeld, Mrs. Louisa Southwork, and Frances Ellen Burr. The method of work adopted by these leaders of the New Woman Movement is described by Mrs. Stanton in the Preface as follows: "Each person purchased two Bibles, ran through them from Genesis to Revelation, marking all the texts that concerned women. The passages were cut out and pasted in a blank book, and the commentaries then written underneath."

In her Introduction, Mrs. Stanton defends the attempt of women to look at the so-called sacred books with feminine eyes. She asks: "Why is it more ridiculous for women to protest against her present status in the Old and New Testaments, in the ordinances and discipline of the Church, than in the statutes and constitution of the State? Why is it more ridiculous to arraign ecclesiastics for their false teaching and acts of injustice to women than members of Congress and the House of Commons? Why is it more audacious to review Moses than Blackstone, the Jewish code of laws than the English system of jurisprudence?"

"The sentimental feelings we all have for those things we were educated to believe sacred do not readily yield to pure reason. I distinctly remember the shudder that passed over me on seeing a mother take our family Bible to make a high seat for her child at a table. It seemed such a desecration, I was tempted to protest against its use for such a purpose, and this, too, long after my reason had repudiated its divine authority.

"Bible historians claim special inspiration for the Old and New Testaments, containing most contradictory records of the same events, of miracles opposed to all known laws, of customs that degrade the female sex of all human and animal life, stated in most questionable language that could not be read in a promiscuous assembly, and call all this 'the Word of God.'

"I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God; I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic Code, or told the historians what they say about woman; for all the religions on the face of the earth degrade her, and so long as woman accepts the position that they assign her, her emancipation is impossible."

The most notable item in Mrs. Stanton's comment on the first of Genesis is the contention that, since man was made male and female in the image of God, the deity must contain feminine as well as masculine elements. She says: "If language has any meaning, we have in these texts a plain declaration of the existence of the feminine element in the Godhead, equal in power and glory with the masculine, the Heavenly Mother and Father!"

"As to woman's subjection, on which both the canon and the civil law delight to dwell, it is important to note that equal dominion is given to woman over every living thing, but not one word is said giving man dominion over woman."

Ellen Battelle Dietrick comes next in the rôle of commentator. She insists that the first three chapters of Genesis contain "two entirely separate and very contradictory stories of creation, written by two different, but equally anonymous, authors." She gives extracts to prove that the serpent was more truthful than God.

Lillie D. Blake considers the rib story a ridiculous myth, but finds consolation in the superiority of Eve to Adam. Of the conversation with the subtil serpent she says: "In this prolonged interview the unprejudiced reader must be impressed with the courage, the dignity, and the lofty ambition of the woman. The tempter evidently had a profound knowledge of human nature, and saw at a glance the high character of the person he met by chance in his walks in the garden. He did not try to tempt her from the path of duty by brilliant jewels, rich dresses, worldly luxuries or pleasures, but with the wisdom of the gods. Like Socrates or Plato, his powers of conversation and asking puzzling questions were, no doubt, marvellous, and

he roused in the woman that intense thirst for knowledge that the simple pleasures of picking flowers and talking with Adam did not satisfy. Compared with Adam, she appears to great advantage through the entire drama."

Mrs. Colby thinks highly of the Genesis story of creation, but has qualms about the domestic arrangements of Noah's Ark. She says: "The paucity of light and air in this ancient vessel shows that woman had no part in its architecture, or a series of portholes would have been deemed indispensable."

Further on Mrs. Blake expresses her contempt for Abraham as a man. She sees nothing grand or poetical in his character. On the other hand, she thinks he is a bad pattern for the other patriarchs. She says on this score: "Like many a modern millionaire, he was not a self-made, but a wife-made, man. When Pharaoh sent him away with his dangerously-beautiful wife, he is described as 'being rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold'; but it is a little curious that the man who thus gained wealth as the price of his wife's dishonor should have been held up as a model of all the patriarchal virtues."

Rebekah and Rachel are somewhat roughly handled by Mrs. Stanton. She says it was a good test of the former's patience and humility "to draw water for an hour, with a dozen men looking on at their ease, and none of them offering help." She sums up her opinion of the Pentateuch as follows: "Indeed, the Pentateuch is a long, painful record of war, corruption, rapine, and lust. Why Christians who wish to convert the heathen to our religion should send them these books passes all understanding. It is most demoralising reading for children and the unthinking masses, giving all alike the lowest possible idea of womanhood, having no hope nor ambition beyond conjugal unions with men they scarcely knew, for whom they could not have had the slightest sentiment of friendship, to say nothing of affection."

Near the end of the first part Mrs. Stanton thus sums up her view: "This utter contempt for all the decencies of life and all the natural personal rights of women, as set forth in these pages, should destroy in the minds of women at least all authority to superhuman origin, and stamp the Pentateuch at least as emanating from the most obscene minds of a barbarous age."

When the book of Exodus is reached, Moses is attacked very savagely by Mrs. Stanton. Moses, indeed, has not a single good trait from her point of view. She charges that he deluded an ignorant and superstitious people in order to gain ascendancy over them. She declares that woman's inferior place in civilisation is directly attributable to him. She asserts, moreover, that the tables of stone containing the commandments were not given to Moses by Jehovah, but were "faked" by that unscrupulous prophet. Neither has she any great respect for the commandments themselves. "A critical reading of them," she declares, "will show that they are chiefly for men." The following are some of the comments on the Mosaic law: "Women are always considered sufficiently clean to beg, work, and give generously for the building and decoration of churches and the support of the priesthood. They might always serve as inferiors, but never receive as equals."

Incidentally, Mrs. Stanton says: "If women have been faithful to any class of the human family, it has been to the Levite. The chief occupation of their lives, next to bearing children, has been to sustain the priesthood and the churches. With continual begging, fairs, and donation parties, they have helped to plant religious temples on every hilltop and valley, and in the streets of all our cities, so that the doleful church bell is forever ringing in our ears."

"The Woman's Bible" has been received with some cheap ridicule in the American press, but if it gives women courage to express their honest opinion of the fetish book written and supported by men, it will serve no mean purpose.

A worthy clergyman, having been presented to an important living, preached his first sermon from the words, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." He was surprised and distressed when the churchwardens afterwards hinted to him that, though such words might be very charitable when used by a divine tongue, his predecessors in the incumbency would think his use of them rather unjustifiable.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND INGERSOLL.

ALL the world has heard of Frederick Douglass, the runaway slave, who became a famous orator and the friend of some of the most distinguished men in the United States; and most Freethinkers have heard how, on a famous occasion, the colored orator, in calling on Ingersoll to speak, introduced him by reciting Leigh Hunt's famous lines on Abou Ben Adhem. It appears from the autobiography entitled *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* that the ex-slave had good reason to know that the name of Ingersoll should be written among those who loved their fellow men.

Mr. Louis Levine, of Charleston, who is always doing some good work for Freethought, has sent to the *Freethought Magazine* an extract from Douglass's book, which we are sure our readers will like to see reproduced in our columns:—

"A dozen years ago, or more [1868 or earlier], on one of the frostiest and coldest nights I ever experienced, I delivered a lecture in the town of Elmwood, Illinois, twenty miles distant from Peoria. It was one of those bleak and flinty nights when prairie winds pierce like needles, and a step on the snow sounds like a file on the steel teeth of a saw. My next appointment after Elmwood was on Monday night, and in order to reach it in time it was necessary to go to Peoria the night previous, so as to take an early morning train, and I could only accomplish this by leaving Elmwood after my lecture at midnight, for there was no Sunday train. So a little before the hour at which my train was expected at Elmwood I started for the station with my friend Mr. Brown, the gentleman who had kindly entertained me during my stay. On the way I said to him: 'I am going to Peoria with something like a real dread of the place. I expect to be compelled to walk the streets of that city all night to keep from freezing.' I told him 'that the last time I was there I could obtain no shelter at any hotel, and that I feared I should meet a similar exclusion to-night.' Mr. Brown was visibly affected by the statement, and for some time was silent. At last, as if suddenly discovering a way out of a painful situation, he said: 'I know a man in Peoria, should the hotels be closed against you there, who would gladly open his doors to you—a man who will receive you at any hour of the night, and in any weather—and that man is Robert G. Ingersoll.' 'Why,' said I, 'it would not do to disturb a family at such a time as I shall arrive there, on a night so cold as this.' 'No matter about the hour,' he said; 'neither he nor his family would be happy if they thought you were shelterless on such a night. I know Mr. Ingersoll, and that he will be glad to welcome you at midnight or at cock-crow.' I became much interested by this description of Mr. Ingersoll. Fortunately I had no occasion for disturbing him or his family. I found quarters at the best hotel in the city for the night. In the morning I resolved to know more of this now famous and noted 'infidel'! I gave him an early call, for I was not so abundant in cash as to refuse hospitality in a strange city when on a mission of goodwill to men. The experiment worked admirably. Mr. Ingersoll was at home, and if I have ever met a man with real living human sunshine in his face, and honest, manly kindness in his voice, I met one who possessed these qualities that morning. I received a welcome from Mr. Ingersoll and his family which would have been a cordial to the bruised heart of any proscribed and storm-beaten stranger, and one which I can never forget or fail to appreciate. Perhaps there were Christian ministers and Christian families in Peoria at that time by whom I might have been received in the same gracious manner. In charity I am bound to say there probably were such ministers and such families, but I am equally bound to say that in my former visits to this place I had failed to find them. Incidents of this character have greatly tended to liberalise my views as to the value of creeds in estimating the character of men. They have brought me to the conclusion that genuine goodness is the same, whether found inside or outside the church, and that to be an 'infidel' no more proves a man to be selfish, mean, and wicked than to be evangelical proves him to be honest, just, and humane."

The Dutch Freethought work, *Dominie, Pastor, and Rabbi*, by J. G. ten Bokkel, one of the editors of *De Dageraad*, has been translated into French and German.

A BRAVE WOMAN.

Leslie's Weekly, which is sent to us with other American papers by our good friend, Mr. Louis Levine, of Charleston, gives in its issue for November 28 a number of illustrations of the reception in honor of the eightieth birthday of Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. Mrs. Stanton was associated with Ernestine Rose both in the anti-slavery and women's rights crusades, and the first convention in favor of the rights of women was held at her home in Seneca Falls in July of 1848. With her friends, Susan B. Anthony and Parker Pillsbury, both sterling Freethinkers, she edited the *Revolution*; and, like Ernestine Rose, she has never been backward in pronouncing that the priest has been the great enemy of her sex. Ten years ago she wrote a notable article in the *North American Review* on the question, "Has Christianity Benefited Woman?" Later still she contended earnestly for the Sunday opening of the World's Fair, and at present she is occupied in bringing out *The Woman's Bible*. At the celebration of her eightieth birthday, at which her life-long friend, Susan Brownell Anthony, herself seventy-five years of age, was by her side, she said, as reported in the *New York Public Opinion*:—

"We women must now make the same demands of the Church that we have made of the State during the last fifty years for the same privileges that man enjoys. We must see that the canon laws, Mosaic code, Scriptures, Prayer Books, and liturgies are purged of all invidious distinction of sex, of all false teachings as to woman's origin and destiny. To make her the author of sin, cursed in her maternity, a subordinate in marriage, an after-thought in creation, and all by the command of God, is to so overweight her in the scale of being that centuries of civilisation have not yet been able to lift the burden. We must demand an equal place in the offices of the Church, as pastors, elders, deacons; an equal voice in the creeds, discipline, in the conferences and general assemblies. We must insist that all unworthy reflections on the sacred character of the mother of the race, such as the allegory of her creation and fall, and St. Paul's assumption as to her social status, be expunged from Church literature. Such sentiments cannot inspire the rising generation with respect for their mothers. We must demand that the pulpit be no longer desecrated with men who read these invidious passages of Scripture and teach the subordination of one-half the human race to the other."

Mrs. Stanton's life should be an inspiration to others of her sex. Her consistent Freethought and maintenance of women's rights have brought her the respect of the leaders of thought in America, and her birthday celebration was attended by delegates representing 700,000 women.

WHY INGERSOLL WAS NOT CONVERTED!

THE Christian Endeavorers made a fine display of Christian Endeavor by their united prayer, in which many of the Salvation Army joined, for the conversion of "the erring orator," Colonel Ingersoll. The Rev. J. Z. Tylor, President of the Christian Endeavor Union, expressed beforehand the utmost confidence in the accomplishment of the object prayed for; and L. V. Denis, another prominent officer of the Union, declared there were many instances of sinners and infidels being converted that way. In fact, they were too numerous to specify. "I cannot name any just now," said he; "that is, any prominent instances; but I have heard of many persons who have been converted by prayer, and we hope to convert Mr. Ingersoll."

As Mr. Ingersoll has not yet had his brain atrophied or proclaimed his conversion, explanations are asked for, and will have to be given. The effectual fervent prayers of the pious endeavorers have not been answered, not because they were not righteous, but because they were not effectual. And why were they not effectual? The answer, to one in the secret counsels of Jahveh, is easy. Prayers were ordered for two o'clock on the afternoon of December 1. It happened that Jahveh's ears had been dinned for a long time past with the rival prayers of Turks and Armenians, and, on taking his nap (his custom always of an afternoon), he fell into such a sound slumber that he heard nothing of them. His hearing, as many must have noticed, has been

defective for a long time. When he awoke, and took his customary promenade in the cool of the day, the prayers were all over. Thus it happens that Ingersoll goes on his way unstricken with softening of the brain.

The Jewish priests were better acquainted with the habits of Jahveh than the Christian Endeavorers. The high priest had a garment fringed with bells that the sound thereof might wake up Jahveh whenever he went into the holy place (see Exodus xxviii. 35). The next time the order is given for united prayer for Ingersoll's conversion all the bands of the Salvation Army should be required to pray together also. That may be efficacious, for it is well known to many races that shouts and the beating of drums and gongs are the proper instruments to ward off eclipses of the moon.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

THE FAKIR OF THE MONKEY-TEMPLE.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Kölnische Zeitung* tells the following strange story, which, if true, may help us to believe that Rudyard Kipling's tales of India are not altogether creations of the imagination. This writer says: "Every visitor to Simla (India) knows the Jakko Hill—about 1,500 feet high—in the neighborhood, and the monkey-temple on the top of it. There lives an ascetic, fanatical fakir, who supports himself and the monkeys on the offerings of the faithful, and who is treated by those creatures with the most profound respect. There are two troops or regiments of monkeys, each with its king, who is appointed to that position by the fakir. The king, alone, has the right to eat in the temple; the other monkeys remain outside, and the fakir himself brings a dish of tit-bits for their *Kotwal* or general. When they have done, they file respectfully before the fakir, who dismisses them with 'Go, my children.' This fakir, who is bronzed by wind and weather, clothed only in a leopard-skin, and whose hair has not been cut or combed for twenty years, is a European. He is able to converse in perfect English, and his name is Charles William de Rousette. His father was a shopkeeper in Simla, and sent him as a boy to the best school there. But an ex-servant of the father had been intimate with the fakir of Jakko, and on the latter's death had succeeded to his position. The young Rousette used to visit him frequently, and the man showed great regard for the son of his old employer. Threatened with some punishment at school, the boy took refuge with his friend the fakir at the temple, but was found there some days later and brought back. He seemed to have lost all interest in life, was always wanting to return to the temple, and one day he suddenly disappeared. The next twelve years he spent in his novitiate, wandering about India, and 'clothed' only with his hair. After the twelve years, he reappeared in Simla as the disciple of the fakir, and on the latter's death succeeded him. The elder Rousette had meanwhile died, leaving a good fortune, but the son made no effort to secure it. He says that he is perfectly happy, and has no desire to re-enter the 'false and corrupt European society.' He has a particular antipathy to the Anglo-Indian clergy, and possesses an extraordinary influence over all classes of Hindus, who revere him as a saint. He is the only instance of a fakir brought up as a Christian, and of European parents, who, though heir to a considerable fortune, leads a wretched life, deprived of all visible enjoyments, and yet to all appearance absolutely happy and contented."

A Pious Show.

A holiness camp-meeting has been in progress some time at Haines's Grove, a few miles from Lamar, and shortly after it had begun a gaudily-painted poster that astonished the natives in that vicinity was put up by the roadside, painted thus:—

"Eureka! Here we are! Great Gospel Show and Holy Hippodrome at Haines's Grove! Greatest display of legendary traditions ever placed on exhibition. Two performances daily, under the management of Happy Charlie, the world-renowned pulpit-pounder and sky-pilot, assisted by Hallelujah Jones, the efficient masticator of yellow-legged chicken. In our gallery of Gospel myths and holy relics may be seen the following: Core of the apple that Eve ate; Jacob's ladder; gold bricks from the streets of the New Jerusalem, and cinders from the other place; blubber from Jonah's whale; broomstick ridden by the witch of Endor; gang-plank over which the animals walked into the ark; Noah's log book; club with which Cain slew Abel; Satan's poker and shovel, etc., etc. New attractions added daily. You keep the grub waggon rolling; we'll do the rest."—*Kansas City Journal*.

ACID DROPS.

THE Toxteth Board of Guardians have had a little religious discussion in connection with the boarding out of pauper children. It appears that the vicar's wife at Dufton, where the little ones are boarded, is a rabid Churchwoman, and declares that if people go to any gospel-shop but those of the Church of England their salvation is endangered. Mr. Moulding, one of the guardians, thought that bigots of that sort were candidates for a lunatic asylum. In his opinion, we all have a chance of getting to heaven, whether we go to church or not. What a dreadful doctrine! It is enough to make a parson swear till his neck runs over his collar.

Under the heading of "Shocking Depravity at Hoylake," a Liverpool paper records the prosecution of a barber for cutting a man's hair on Sunday. The culprit was let off with a warning, on his promising never to repeat his awful crime.

A correspondent of the *Leek Times*, who has a poor opinion of the Rev. W. W. Howard's controversial methods, deprecates the debate which is to take place between that gentleman and Mr. Foote. He admits that "Mr. Foote commands in many ways our respect, and in this correspondence has proved himself fully more self-restrained than some others." At the same time, he thinks it wrong to "drag things which every Christian holds dear and sacred into the dirt and dust of a public arena." What is still worse, the "seeds of doubt" will be sown "in young minds." Very likely.

Janet Stirling was going to a prayer meeting, but it was a "thick" night, and, as Providence did not guide her, she walked into the Forth and Clyde Canal. The poor woman's body was drowned, and her soul is supposed to have gone to the land of everlasting prayer-meetings, where there is no night—thick or thin—and no canal.

Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* ought to have a good circulation in Glasgow, where a controversy is raging over the great drink question. Mr. F. Faithful Begg, M.P., a son of the great Dr. Begg, of godly memory, remarked that Jesus Christ turned water into wine, while Paul recommended a stimulant to Timothy. This remark has elicited a howling reply from the Rev. R. W. Dobbie, who calls Mr. Begg an irresponsible fool. Such are the amenities of controversy when men of God engage in it.

The *Irish Times*, reviewing Dr. Kinyon's new book on *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, catches his style and speaks of the old literature as "that guide-book of all humanity." Why, three-fourths of humanity do not even yet possess it, and those who do rarely read it, and fewer still think of regulating their lives by it. But to cant and gush comes natural to pietists when speaking of the Bible.

The papers have been again writing about the worship of the Devil. The adoration of a being who condemns the mass of mankind to eternal woe comes the nearest to this definition of any we know.

The Charity Organisation Society has issued a damaging report on the orphanages, sisterhoods, and other institutions of the Church Extension Association, which refuses to have a committee and submit to a regular audit. The C. E. A. is said to be in the hands of a single person.

The *Daily Chronicle* has an article on "Salvation Army Shelters," which, it admits, bring grist to the Army mill, and are at the same time centres of pauperism, idleness, crime, and disease.

The police complained, before Alderman Morgan, that the Salvation Army shelter in Fetter Lane was closed against them, and they had to wait outside until thieves came out before they could arrest them. Alderman Morgan said it was a disgraceful thing that people who represent themselves as administering charity should act in this manner.

Dr. John Macleod, the Established Church minister of Govan, has been attacking Dr. Ross Taylor and Dr. Stalker, of the Free Church, hammer and tongs. He twitted them with abortive efforts at Church destruction, said Dr. Taylor's remarks reminded him of the words of Scripture, "A brutish man knoweth not, neither does a fool understand," and accused him of "cant of the worst description." Scotch Free-churchmen are looking for a smart reply from their leaders. How they love one another!

There are many Christs living in America—Christ Schlatter, Christ Teed, Christ Murphy, and Christ Schweinfurth. The latest addition is Christ Huntsman, who has an establishment called "The Lord's Farm," holding a community of the Lord's People at Pascaak, Bergen County, New Jersey.

Christ Huntsman has visions and revelations. His followers are simple people, vegetarians, who work seven days a week. They have been much persecuted by their Christian neighbors. All sorts of incendiary rumors were current: that they were "free lovers," and held shameless orgies, which they designated as "Angel Dances"; that they enticed and ruined young women under guise of religious proselyting; that they were blasphemers, and practised hypnotism and other forms of witchcraft. But a lady correspondent of the *New York World*, who visited them, describes them as innocent people, and thinks that if Jesus Christ was here he would not live as the world lives, but as they live at "The Lord's Farm."

Christ Schlatter, the healer, who sloped from Denver on account of the press, has turned up in Colorado on a white horse journeying to New Mexico. He says the Father had told him to go to Albuquerque, where he would begin a fast, the duration of which the Father would indicate. After the fast he expects revelations, which usually arrive when the brain is weakened. He predicts a social upheaval, which probably is more in the air than any second coming of Jesus Christ.

Christ Schlatter expects to go to Chicago and New York. If well advised, he would keep away from the cities, remembering what his predecessor suffered in Jerusalem. Schlatter stated, in reply to an inquiry, that all the letters which were in Denver would be returned in the proper manner, and whether he handled them himself or not the handkerchiefs would have the same cure and powers. The fact that the sufferers indicated a willingness to have him touch the articles was sufficient, and the actual touch was unnecessary. As with certain patent medicines we wot of, it is the faith that works the cure.

Christ Schlatter, if not himself inspired, is an inspiration to others, and several faith-healers are now parting their hair à la Jesus Christ, and pretending communication with the Father.

Another Christ has turned up in England. His name is Alfred E. H. Gaynor, and he calls himself "Spirit Architect and Constructor of the Universe; the Osiris, or Incarnate and representative of the solar power; Buddha, Krishna, and Jesus Christ resurrected." Mr. Gaynor reminds us of a person who was very unpopular at Colney Hatch. He proclaimed himself the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Wellington, and God the Father. This was not giving the other inmates of the asylum a fair chance.

Christ Gaynor appears to be an Anarchist-Communist. In a strange publication, entitled *The Truth Book*, part 2, which is dated "November, 1895; Olombia, or Millennial Era, I," he announces Olombia, which is a "Saturnian, or No-Money Commonwealth, with its members, the Spirit Builders of the White Light and the Truth University," which, he says, is now established. We are happy to read that "six hours will be a commonwealth working day, five days will be a week, twenty days a month, and ten days a year. Twenty-nine years will be a commonwealth working limit."

Another mistake of Providence! Gresham Baptist Chapel, Brixton, has been burnt down after a tea-meeting.

"Purple and Fine Linen," East Dulwich, has sent us two halfpenny stamps "towards augmenting the present ridiculously low stipend (only £10,000 per annum) of the Bishop of London." We are grateful for this prompt response to our appeal, but beg to suggest to other intending subscribers that their contributions should be sent direct to his lordship's official residence, Fulham Palace, S.W.—*Morning Leader*.

Hugh Allen, formerly incumbent of St. Mary's, Old Kent-road, has been sentenced to nine months' hard labor at the Old Bailey for obtaining money by false pretences.

Rev. T. G. Dale, vicar of Alton, Staffs., is in custody on a charge under section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. We need not be more specific.

The current *Homœopathic World* records the case of a Sunday-school teacher who suffered from religious melancholy. She was taken to the Homœopathic Hospital, as it afterwards appears, by mistake for the Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic, Queen's-square—was treated with *Plumb. Acet 6*, and in two doses recovered. Constipation is at the root of much religious disorder.

A tombstone has been found at Cesarea with an inscription, "Monument belonging to Mary and Lazarus." As usual with Palestinian relics, the tomb is a fake. The inscription is in Greek, and it was at first supposed to be merely a monument of two persons by the names of Mary and

Lazarus. But Professor Gelzer, of Jena, shows that, in view of the fact that Mary's name comes first, there is no doubt was intended to represent the Scriptural characters. He dates it about the fifth century, when the discovery of apostles' and prophets' tombs was "a flourishing and manifestly also a lucrative branch of industry." At that period it was claimed that the bodies of Joseph, Samuel, Zachariah, John the Baptist, and other Biblical men were found, and many of these pseudo-relics were transported to the capital city of Christendom, Constantinople. It is not impossible that at this period also the pretended remains of the sister and brother from Bethany were transported to Cesarea, which in the ante-Chalcedonian period—*i.e.*, down to 451—was the metropolitan centre of the Church in Palestine.

A Japanese correspondent says: "I find that all the English here dislike the missionaries, at least those I have heard talk about the matter; and the reason is that, whereas they leave England as heroes and martyrs, amid the clamor of Exeter Hall, when they come here they live well and luxuriously. In fact, in the present depressed times they are the only class well off; while others starve, they are in plenty. Indeed, they are the most fortunate class, making more money than if they had to earn their living."

From India comes a story of the beating to death of a girl of the Kumbi caste, whose parents thought she was possessed of devils. She patiently allowed herself to be so treated until she succumbed. W. N. Cooper, in his work on *Flagellation*, gives an instance of similar treatment by Christians in the Middle Ages.

According to Professor J. F. Jenkins, human sacrifice prevails among a sect known as the "Tshukshem," not far from Yakootsk, Siberia. Old people who have lived beyond the Biblical allotment, and sick ones tired of life, offer themselves for sacrifice. When one of these characters decides to "offer himself up," he sends word to all his relatives, friends, and neighbors, who then visit him and try to persuade him to change his intentions; but all to no purpose. He chooses the manner in which he shall die, and he is killed with great ceremony. The body is then taken to a crematory near by, where it is reduced to ashes, which are carefully preserved in an urn of silver by the relatives. During the cremation the relatives pray to the spirits, begging them to guard the lives of those mortals still left on earth. This custom has been followed by the sect for centuries.

The Rev. John T. Vine, "a venerable evangelist," who was taken to the Butler-street Police Court, Brooklyn, on a charge of drunkenness, is reported in the *New York Herald* (Nov. 29) as having been very popular in England. It says: "His sermons last summer in the East-end of London drew enormous crowds of workmen." Perhaps the crowds were attracted more by the spirit than by the sermons.

"Clericus," who is a queer cuss, writes to the *Isle of Wight County Press* to correct the false notion that we shall be judged hereafter by our actions, and not by our beliefs. "We are, and shall be," he says, "held responsible for right faith as well as for right conduct." And what is right faith? "Clericus's" faith, of course. Said we not that he is a queer cuss? "Me and God" should be his motto.

Ball, in his *Jungle Life in India* (p. 26), says: "Hindus sometimes put crocodiles, which are objects of veneration, with some classes at least, into tanks—an attention which the crocodiles reciprocate by preying, when they get the chance, on their benefactors' persons, or on their flocks and herds." This reads like an allegorical satire on our treatment of priests and other venerated pietists.

Some Christians make teetotalism part of their religion, despite the doings of Jesus at Cana. With the Moslems it is an integral part of Islam. The Sikhs are equally opposed to tobacco, and believe that smokers cannot attain salvation. If a Sikh touches tobacco, he offends the manes of his ancestor. The water touched by a person using tobacco is said to be as bad as spirits, and sends the user and seven generations of his descendants to hell.

A Tennessee mob cut off the ears and fingers of a negro victim, hanged him, and then mutilated the body. The people of Tennessee are so eminently pious that they kept eight men in jail for several months for working on a Sunday.

A writer in the *Arcna*, who proclaims himself "neither a sceptic nor a cynic," but "an orthodox clergyman who loves the Church and writes from a heart which is sad at contemplation of these things," says that the modern preacher is merely the servant of the plutocrat. "Religious professions," he says, "have become a commodity in trade. The Church has waxed, religion has waned; 'Christians' have multiplied, but the significance of the term has

become indefinitely vague; quantity has been attained, but quality lost. The result is, as it always *must* be, quantity too is now in danger of being lost."

"Jesus said: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!' and the Church is saying, by actions which speak louder than words: 'How easily shall they that have riches enter into and rule the Church'; by which we are bound to conclude that the fittest for membership in the Church are the least fit for the kingdom of heaven."

Sometimes we hear of provincial juries bringing in a verdict of visitation of God in cases of death by lightning. H. O. Forbes says that, if a person is struck by lightning in Java, no one can be found brave enough to lift him from the ground.

According to the Danish statistician, Vahl, there are 304 missionary societies for the conversion of the heathens to Christianity. Seventy-six of these have their headquarters in England. These organisations employed, in 1892, 5,520 male missionaries, 2,771 unmarried females, 4,285 native preachers, and 45,683 native assistants. The greatest number of missionaries were in the employ of the English organisation—namely, 1,810. The American societies come next with 1,619 men. The Germans have only 525 missionaries abroad.

Simultaneously with the report of how the Kurds at Kharpout offered the Armenians the alternative of conversion or death, we read how fourteen Moslems, born and bred as such in Uja, Russia, were brought before the Court, and the whole of their property taken because they refused to enter the orthodox church. The Procurator called a number of witnesses, who deposed that the parents of the accused, Mohammedan Tartars, had been forcibly baptised during "the good old days," when conversion by force was looked upon as a soul-saving service to God. But these "converts" were never anything more than Christians in name. Moreover, it was proved that not one of the accused had ever entered a Christian church; they had all been exemplary Moslems from their childhood. The defence was not accepted by the Court, and the whole of the property, including household goods and chattels, of the fourteen Mohammedans was ordered to be sequestered.

Father Ivan Sergieff, the "miracle worker of Cronstadt," was asked his opinion of actors using the sign of the cross in Count Tolstoi's dramatised work, *The Power of Darkness*. He thought it not permissible, and expressed his opinion that Tolstoi was himself the victim of the power of darkness. Father Ivan said the impression left upon him by Tolstoi's works was that their author is either a man of prodigious self-pride and of bombastic pretensions and assumptions, or he is a lunatic. How about Father Ivan's own pretensions and assumptions?

Mrs. Chisholm, of Fulton-avenue, Rochester, New York, where the bicyclists meet, applied to the district attorney to suppress the bloomer costume, which, she says, is ruining young girls by the hundred. Said Mrs. Chisholm: "Why, you have no idea how these bloomer girls carry on. They ride up and down so boldly, and last night they sang 'Only One Girl' and 'Her Golden Hair was Hanging,' and all those low songs, so you could hear them blocks away. I know their names, and I want to have something done about it. I've got a mission from heaven to preach against bicycles. I would sooner see my daughter in her grave than ride one of those machines of Satan."

Joshua Critchlow, a farmer of Hartington, claimed sixteen guineas from the London and North-Western Railway Company for sheep who walked up a snowdrift over a wall, on to the railway, and were killed. The defence was that the snowdrift was an act of God. The judge, however, held that it was not the act of God, and the company have to pay.

Professor George D. Herron, of Iowa College, one of the leading Christian Socialists of America, has a light-hearted fashion of stigmatising all who do not follow his ideals as Atheists. Atheism he defines as God-out-ness from life, and religion is God-in-ness in relations. We should say he is God-intoxicated.

H. Nipperdey, writing on Fetich Faith in Western Africa, says: "The white man is regarded by tribes who have seen only a few of the white race as a fetich, and is feared by them, especially by their women and children, as if he were a ghost." The fetich-doctor, or medicine-man, of the negro, is his priest, physician, and chief justice in one, and gets out of him his valuables in return for some trash served up in cloth or leather, or enclosed in a goat's horn, which he will not part with for any price. Selden well says "Priests of all religions are the same."

In the Church of Santa Maria Annunziata, at Naples, once a year, on the day of Our Lady, before its altar kneels a silent row of thirty girls dressed in black, and with folded hands. They are orphans from the neighboring foundling asylum, and once a year those who have reached the age of eighteen have a chance of being chosen in marriage by any honest man whose character is good. At the door leading to the sacristy stands a gray-haired priest, the head of the foundling institution. By-and-bye a young man approaches him, and hands him a packet of papers. These the priest reads carefully, and, being satisfied, leads the candidate towards the row of girls. The man walks slowly along the row—at last he stops; his choice is made, and he stretches out his hand. The girl rises, puts her hand into that of the stranger by way of consent, and together they disappear into the sacristy. The ice having been broken, others follow, and this goes on until the suitors are exhausted, or all the girls have been chosen.—*Tit Bits*.

George Arthur Lynch, who was executed at Adelaide Gaol for the murder of a boy, died in the cheerful assurance of soon settling down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Speaking to the city missionary, the condemned man said: "Good-by, Mr. Berry; we shall meet in heaven."

Ritualism has made great progress among the Episcopalians of New York, and is said to reach its acme in the just-opened Church of St. Mary the Virgin, whose rector, the Rev. Dr. McKee Brown, has a wealthy congregation. Ritualism in New York, as elsewhere, has advanced usually by these well-recognised steps: The surplice, unlighted tapers, lighted tapers, plain vestments, colored vestments, high mass, and finally the confessional. The old surplice was a voluminous white garment, falling to the feet of the wearer. The surplice now is the barometer of Ritualism. As the Church rises in Ritualism the surplice rises, until finally, in the highest Ritualistic church, the surplice is a cotta, coming to the waist, and upon special occasions trimmed at the bottom with lace. Men may think this making guys of themselves, but it takes with the ladies.

The Rev. I. M. Gibson, of Plattsburg, Mo., says that the Lord's Supper ought to be a real meal, and not a sham supper of crumbs of bread and drops of wine. There is no doubt it was a square meal in primitive times. Paul says of the early celebration (1 Cor. xi. 21): "One is hungry and another is drunken." In the representations of the Eucharist in the Roman Catacombs it is a common meal, with fish as well as cakes. Dean Stanley mentions fish in the early Eucharists.

William Henry Cadman, a traveller, who has been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for marrying seven wives, kept up pious correspondence with each of them. When discovered, he invited No. 1 to share his hopes of "the dawn of a better life," and thus to carry out the purposes of her Maker, "in His infinite and mysterious ways."

The *Daily News* speaks of a crisis occasioned by the refusal of the Bishop of Winchester to license a third altar in the Church of St. Agatha, Portsmouth, erected by the popular High Churchman, the Rev. R. Dolling, who declares he holds it as "part of his duty as priest to exercise his sacrificial powers on behalf of those of his children who were dead as well as those living." The difference between the doctrine of Mr. Dolling and the Sacrifices of Masses, which in the Thirty-first Article are called "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits," is not easy to distinguish.

The town of Peebles, Ohio, has passed an ordinance requiring a curfew bell to be rung at 8 o'clock every evening except Sunday. When it rings, every boy between the ages of six and eighteen, and every girl between the ages of six and sixteen, unless accompanied by parents or guardians, must be within doors, under penalty of arrest and a fine of not less than \$1 and costs.

The Paisley *Mirror* notices Mr. Cohen's lecture as "at times very eloquent." But the writer says of Secularism: "Granting, for the moment, that it is true, how can it be called satisfactory?" Does he, then, find no satisfaction in truth, or is he only to be satisfied with illusions?

How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 22, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester:—11, "Mr. Gladstone's Theology"; 3, "The Old Serpent"; 6.30, "How and Why was Jesus Born?"

December 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 22, Foresters' Hall, Clerkenwell. January 1, Camberwell; 5, Birmingham; 8, Hammorsmith; 12 and 13, Bolton; 14, Blackburn; 19, Glasgow; 26, Edinburgh; 29, Dinner of the N.S.S. February 2 and 16, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London; 23, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.
- D. MCINTYRE.—Many apocryphal stories are told about Lincoln, and we should say that the one on p. 120 of E. Foster's book is decidedly of that description. The standard *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, by W. H. Lamon, or that by his partner, W. H. Herndon, will let you see how heretical were his views on religion.
- A. L. (Douglas).—Thanks for your encouraging letter. It is pleasant to know that you "could not do without" your *Freethinker*. The story in *Great Thoughts* (a pious paper) about Voltaire's insulting Pope's mother is an infamous concoction. There is no ground for it whatever.
- J. D. LEGGETT.—Starkie's is the standard book on the Law of Libel. It is big and expensive. There is a good summary in the late Judge Stephen's Digest of the Criminal Law.
- J. BRIERLY.—Thanks. Mr. Forder executes your order.
- H. BUTCHER.—Obliged. See paragraphs.
- J. F. ARMISTEAD.—We have noticed the matter you refer to.
- E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks for cuttings.
- T. BROWN.—Mr. Holyoake is not conducting any paper at present. His address is—Eastern Lodge, Brighton. You will find all such information in the *Secular Almanack*, which only costs threepence. Glad to hear you mean to purchase Mr. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*, which we shall review shortly.
- MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—A Friend, 5s.; G. Forbes, 1s.; B. Walker, 1s.; J. Walker, 1s.; Nicholson, 6d. Per Miss Vance: Camberwell Entertainment, £3 3s.; Mrs. B. E. Marks, 10s.; S. A., 5s.
- C. E. SMITH.—Thanks for your budgot, some items of which will be used next week. Glad to have your opinion that *Bible and Beer* is "a splendid pamphlet." Of course it might be more widely distributed if it were cheaper, but the author is not a millionaire and cannot risk a loss. We heartily endorse your praise of Chilperic's articles, which we are always very glad to receive.
- D. D.—Shall appear.
- SERVANT GIRL.—Pleased to hear from you. Gordon Scott's poem is good, but rather long for reproduction in our columns.
- ANNUAL CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss Vance acknowledges receipt of the following subscriptions:—G. W. Foote, 10s. 6d.; C. Watts, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. B. E. Marks, 5s.; W. Middleton (per C. Watts), 2s. 6d.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: Mrs. B. E. Marks, 10s.; S. A., 10s.; W. Middleton (per C. Watts), 2s. 6d.
- J. R. M'LELLAND (Paisley).—Pleased to hear from you. See "Sugar Plums."
- ERNEST NEWMAN.—We deeply regret to hear of the death of Mr. Doeg. He was a brave and loyal soldier in the "forlorn hope" section of the army of progress.
- J. M. R.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- H. W. JONES.—Mr. Foote will write you as to a lecture in February.
- W. DYSON.—Miss Enid Stacy is free to call Bradlaugh and Foote "religious men." It amuses her, and hurts no one else. She is incorrect in stating that Secularism is dying. We suspect the wish was father to the thought. She is incorrect also in saying that most Socialists are Christians. They are notoriously not so in Germany and France, and a large proportion of them are Freethinkers in England.
- T. CHARLTON.—The debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. W. W. Howard is not yet fixed as to time and place. We note your suggestion that the Victoria Hall, Hanley, would be very central.
- WELL WISHER says he cannot obtain the *Freethinker* now at Brighton. Thatcher's shop, in Oxford-street, where it used to be sold, is closed. Will one of our Brighton readers give the address of another shop where it can be obtained?
- J. B. mentions that the Wiltshire people are called moon-rakers, and a story is told of smuggled goods being raked for in ponds on pretence of raking the moon. The *Shadow of the Sword* is published at 2d. by the Humanitarian League, 13 Great Queen's-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields.
- T. R. ALLINSON.—Thanks for hint.
- E. G. TAYLOR.—Is he really worth all your powder and shot?

H. LEES SUMNER.—The list of newsagents who sell the *Freethinker* is far too long to publish in every number as you suggest; and you know it would not make very readable copy. Why not write the local newsagent's name, or stamp it, on the three or four copies you kindly give away every week?

J. URTON.—Mr. Foote will be glad to see you when he visits Liverpool. It is, as you say, the young people that we most want to get hold of, and who are our hope for the future. Thanks for the cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Staffordshire Sentinel—Melbourne Age—Der Arme Toufel—South Shields Free Press—Crescent—Melbourne Standard—South American Journal—Glasgow Herald—Isle of Man Times—Liberator—Freidenkor—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—New York Public Opinion—Irish Times—Middlesex Chronicle—Jerusalem Star—Manchester Guardian—Le Gaulois—Le Temps—Club World—Arbeiter Freund—Paisley Mirror.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

NEWCASTLE gave Mr. Foote three most appreciative audiences on Sunday, the hall being crowded in the evening, and the applause being very enthusiastic. Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day (December 22) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. By special request, he will give a poetical reading before the evening lecture.

Mr. Foote's new pamphlet, *Who Was the Father of Jesus?* is now on sale. It is a drastic discussion of the great question which really caused all the turmoil of the last School Board elections in London. The subject has never to our knowledge been dealt with so thoroughly and carefully before, and, as the pamphlet is seasonable just now, we fancy it will have a good circulation.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Watts had a good audience last Sunday evening at Foresters' Hall. He again lectures at the same place this Sunday evening, December 22, taking for his subject, "The Religious Man." Mr. Watts will deal with the different types of that much-talked-of individual. There should be a good audience.

We are informed that Mr. Cohen acquitted himself admirably in his recent debate with Mr. Waldron at Newcastle. Mr. Cohen is delivering a good many lectures under Mr. Foote's scheme, and he will shortly give in our columns a brief account of his recent tours.

Canon Wilberforce presided at the discourse on "Animals Rights," from the Church point of view, by the Rev. A. L. Lilley, under the auspices of the Humanitarian League, and there was a good attendance and an animated discussion, in which Mrs. C. Mallet, the Rev. J. Stratton, Mr. Ernest Bell, Miss Woodward, and others, took part. The views that have previously been discussed are the Humanitarian and the Scientific. The one announced for January is the Ethical, when Mr. Frederic Harrison will be the lecturer, and Mr. Passmore Edwards will take the chair. Mr. Foote will follow in February from the Secularist point of view.

Henry Dunkerly ("Verax") had a notable article on "Sunday-School Teachers and the Bible," in the *Manchester Guardian* of Tuesday, December 10. Of the books of the Pentateuch he says: "It used to be believed that they were all written by Moses, and that they formed substantially a single work, which was supposed to have come down to us just as it left his hands. This is now known to have been a mistake, due to a want of careful examination by competent investigators. The Pentateuch is found to consist of a number of different narratives, composed by persons whose names are unknown, and they cannot have taken their present form till after the Exile."

"Verax" mentions a story recorded of Mr. Johnson, one of the missionaries killed in Madagascar. In giving the Malagasy a lesson on Saul and the Amalekites, he could not bring himself to say that the dumb animals and the innocent children had been doomed to death. "That is," comments "Verax," "a religious man in the nineteenth century could not bring himself to tell his converts of a transaction which appears from the Israelitish records to have been done by the direct command of the Almighty." "Verax" concludes his article by saying that, when the change in view regarding the Bible is fully realised, it will amount to a new Reformation.

Secularists in Greenock, Kilmarnock, and Hamilton who are willing to co-operate in arranging for week-night meetings to be addressed by Mr. C. Watts between January 19 and 26, 1896 (under Mr. Foote's scheme), are requested to communicate at once with Mr. J. P. Gilmour, 439 Victoria-road, Glasgow.

The Glasgow Branch holds its Annual Conversazione on Thursday, December 26, at 8 p.m., in the Blythwood Rooms, 155 West Regent-street. Members and friends intending being there are requested to purchase tickets at the meetings to-day (Sunday), or not later than Tuesday, from R. Ferguson, 88 Ingram-street. Gents, 2s. 6d.; ladies, 2s.

Several courses of free lectures are being arranged in London during January and February, under Mr. Foote's lecture scheme. A beginning will be made at Camberwell and Shepherd's Bush, a course of four lectures to be given at each place. Other courses will be given at Battersea, Islington, and Edmonton. It will be seen, therefore, that the President means business, and is not allowing the grass to grow under his feet. Miss Vance, with the assistance of Miss Brown, is seeing to the practical details.

At the French Academy of Moral Sciences a prize was offered for a history and exposition of Positivism, discussing its methods, aims, and applications. M. Leon Say, the appointed judge, took occasion to himself deliver a long discourse on Positivism. He regarded Comte as giving birth to the three currents of Agnosticism, Evolutionism, and Monism, though viewing with misgiving the consequences of these currents of intellectual life.

We read in *North Indian Notes and Queries* of a sect called Sadh, in Karnal. It says: "It was founded by one Udaydas, and its headquarters are at Furrukhabad. The sectarians are freethinkers, and, as they can see no gods, worship none. Their only ceremonial consists in large public dinners, especially on the Puran Mashi festival. They abjure tobacco, and affect special personal cleanliness."

The New York *Review of Reviews* gives in its December number a full-page portrait of Herbert Spencer, with a character sketch, said to be written by an eminent English scientist. He says: "Nor must you expect, if you make up your mind to tackle Mr. Spencer's great work, to find any particular tenderness displayed for your creed or your class, your own pet prejudices, social, religious, political, or moral. In all probability you will discover, to your dismay that everything you hold most sacred in life is rudely called in question. The existence of a God, the reality of creation, the truth of the Bible narrative, the immortality of the soul, the foundations of morality, the origin and meaning of marriage and the family, the inherent right of majorities to coerce minorities, the absolute wisdom of governmental agencies, and a thousand other points on which you have hitherto held dogmatic opinions, you will see subjected to most searching and unsparing analysis and criticism."

Mr. F. C. Conybeare recently read a paper before the Folk-Lore Society on the Legend of St. Josaphat and Baalam. He admitted that the germ of the legend was Buddhistic, and, moreover, that the non-Christian versions of the story contained a parable of the Sower.

Freethinkers do the cause a real service by timely letters to newspapers that are fair enough to insert their views. Last week Mr. Rolley had a good letter in the *Echo* in answer to the Rev. S. Fletcher Williams, and Mr. Wellesley Orr contributed a good reply to the Rev. D. Ellison in the columns of the *Blackpool Herald*.

Our Huddersfield friends celebrate the Pagan birthday of the sun with "a grand social and dance" in the Friendly and Trade Societies' Hall, which they hope will be well attended by members and their friends.

The Paisley Branch was resuscitated by Mr. Watts's visit under the President's lecture scheme. The hall was crowded on that occasion, and five new members were added to those who had previously joined themselves together. Mr. Cohen

followed Mr. Watts, and, though his lecture was not quite so largely attended, it excited much interest. The new Branch has taken Tannahill Hall for its monthly meetings, beginning on Sunday, January 5, when Mr. W. McLean will deliver the inaugural address. Mr. Watts in January, and Mr. Foote in February, will give week-night lectures in Paisley.

The new year's number of the *Freethinker* (dated Jan. 5) will be a special one, though at the usual price. It will contain exceptional reading matter and some good portraits.

LECTURING NOTES.

MY recent visit to South Shields and its districts was a very pleasant one. I found the friends exceedingly earnest in their endeavors to aid Mr. Foote in his efforts to increase the scope and force of Secular propagandism. My audiences were not so large as usual, but that was attributed to the severe weather then prevailing, and to the near approach of the Christmas holidays, which demanded extra attention to business and economy in expenditure; but at all my meetings the greatest enthusiasm was manifested, and a decided intention was avowed by the friends in South Shields to carry on a vigorous advocacy during the coming year.

At Blyth and North Shields I lectured under Mr. Foote's Lecturing Scheme, and one and all expressed their very hearty approval of the President's plan. Undoubtedly this new venture has, as the Americans would say, "caught on," and, if the wealthy friends in our movement will financially mark their appreciation of Mr. Foote's scheme, the practical results will, I feel assured, be most satisfactory. There is plenty of work to be done, fresh districts have to be visited, and a knowledge of our principles has to be imparted to those who hitherto have had no fair opportunity of knowing what our views really are. There are willing and able workers, ready to devote their services to the cause; the only additional requirement is the "sinews of war," and, if these are forthcoming, there can be no doubt that Mr. Foote will see that they are usefully employed in advancing the interests and power of the Secular movement. I am quite in accord with my colleague upon this matter, and I shall be glad when he has the means at his command to keep Messrs. Heaford, Moss, Snell, and others, as active in the field as he has recently been able to command the valuable services of Mr. Cohen.

Personally, I am desirous to render all possible support to the Lecturing Scheme, and, therefore, I wish to intimate to provincial friends that when I lecture in any large town on Sundays it will be a pleasure to me to visit the surrounding districts on the following week-nights. The only expense the branches will have to meet will be the hire of the hall and the cost of advertising the meetings, towards defraying which a collection can be made at all the lectures.

Last Sunday I lectured at Foresters' Hall, London, to a good audience, which was most enthusiastic. This evening, Sunday, December 22, I speak again at the same place, upon "The Religious Man." During January and February I lecture in the various London districts on week evenings, in conjunction with Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, and others, under the new Lecturing Scheme. Thus it will be seen that real active work is being done, the result of which must necessarily be the still further advancement of the great principles of Freethought and Secular philosophy.

CHARLES WATTS.

LOVE.

THIS only do I hold as faith,
And this is all my creed contains—
That love will flourish without scath
When neither creed nor faith remains.

This is the faith against belief,
Which shall awake and disenthral
The world from its dark dream of grief—
Love—the be-all, the all-in-all.

PYRITES.

THE NEW BIBLE.

THE New York *Morning Journal* prints a symposium on the "Woman's Bible," which, except for the appreciative contribution of Mrs. Anna H. Shaw, would be a total condemnation of that work. Mrs. Shaw is the clergy-woman who, at the late celebration of Mrs. Stanton's birthday, said that the worst chain that had ever bound womankind was the chain of religious superstition. The other symposiasts are T. De Witt Talmage, Dr. Joseph H. Rylance, and Mrs. Elizabeth Grannis, editor of a religious paper. Talmage says you might as well publish a shoemaker's Bible as a woman's Bible, and offers other remarks derogatory to the enterprise; Dr. Rylance characterises the work as ridiculous; while Mrs. Grannis declares that it is "utterly preposterous that a committee of women should presume to give us a Woman's Bible." Mrs. Grannis also says that "the best women everywhere are evangelical Christians, and these will be led to believe that the leaders of woman suffrage are what is termed Freethinkers." The calm insolence of the lady in claiming that evangelical Christian women are better than other women is equal to her humility in deprecating female commentary on the Scriptures. In what way she herself is better than Mrs. Stanton, Mrs. Gage, Mrs. Gardener, or any other Freethinking woman, or even those Christian women not evangelical, she does not take the space to explain. The mother of Jesus Christ was not an evangelical Christian, and yet the existence and destiny of all evangelical Christians rest upon the question of her anatomical chastity.

Anybody who is led to believe, either from the "Woman's Bible" or from other evidence, "that the leaders of woman's suffrage," so many of them as are women, "are what is called Freethinkers," will not be far out of the way. There are two divisions of the movement. One demands the suffrage in the name of right and justice, regardless of consequences. This division is led by Freethinking women like Mrs. Stanton. The other division demands the suffrage in the name of Christ, in order that God may be voted into the Constitution, the Bible into the schools, and Christian doctrine generally into civil law. This division is led by the churches, Anthony Comstock, and Dr. Funk; and the women like Mrs. Grannis, Mrs. Livermore, and Miss Willard, who imagine themselves leaders, are only followers. Their voice is heard from the pillion, but a minister occupies the saddle and pushes on the reins.

—*Truthseeker.*

G. E. MACDONALD.

ORIGIN OF RELIGION.

MAN, in his ignorance, supposed that all phenomena were produced by some intelligent powers, and with direct reference to him. To preserve friendly relations with these powers was, and still is, the object of all religions. Man knelt through fear and to implore assistance, or through gratitude for some favor which he supposed had been rendered. He endeavored by supplication to appease some being who, for some reason, had, as he believed, become enraged. The lightning and the thunder terrified him. In the presence of the volcano he sank upon his knees. The great forests filled with wild and ferocious beasts, the monstrous serpents crawling in mysterious depths, the boundless sea, the flaming comets, the sinister eclipses, the awful calmness of the stars, and, more than all, the perpetual presence of death, convinced him that he was the sport and the play of unseen and malignant powers. The strange and frightful diseases to which he was subject, the freezings and burnings of fever, the contortions of the epilepsy, the sudden palsies, the darkness of night, and the wild, terrible, and fantastic dreams which filled his brain, satisfied him that he was haunted and pursued by countless spirits of evil. For some reason he supposed that these spirits differed in power; that they were not all alike malevolent; that the higher controlled the lower, and that his very existence depended upon gaining the assistance of the most powerful. For this purpose he resorted to prayer, to flattery, to worship, and to sacrifice. To pacify these spirits was considered of infinite importance. The poor barbarian, knowing that men could be softened

by gifts, gave to these spirits that which to him seemed of the most value. With bursting heart he would offer the blood of his dearest child. It was impossible for him to conceive of a god utterly unlike himself; and he naturally supposed that these powers of the air would be affected a little at the sight of so great and so deep a sorrow. It was with the barbarian then as with the civilised now—one class lived upon and made merchandise of the fears of another. Certain persons took it upon themselves to appease the gods, and to instruct the people in their duties to these unseen powers. This was the origin of the priesthood. The priest pretended to stand between the wrath of the gods and the helplessness of man. He was man's attorney at the court of heaven. He carried to the invisible world a flag of truce, a protest and a request. He came back with a command, with authority and with power. Man fell upon his knees before his own servant, and the priest, taking advantage of the awe inspired by his supposed influence with the gods, made of his fellow-man a cringing hypocrite and slave.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

"FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT."

Flowers of Freethought are two volumes of editorials on living topics written by G. W. Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker*. I do not know of anyone in England who has gathered together a larger store of information than Mr. Foote, or who uses it with more happy effect. Taking all these editorials together, they exhibit an abundant knowledge of history, of literature, and of philosophy. Mr. Foote is a dweller in libraries, as well as a man of the world. He browses among books; he gets the best they contain, and he gives it to his readers in a most available and interesting manner. These editorials are short, always to the point, fresh with illustrations, clear cut from beginning to end. Mr. Foote's language is like an arrow; it moves straight to the mark. There is no flourish, no involution of sentences, no fireworks. When you read Mr. Foote you know exactly what he is driving at; there is no obscurity.

Flowers of Freethought are good books to take along on a journey. They are like a friend with whom you can talk for a while, and then keep a golden silence. You can pluck a "Flower of Freethought" here and there, and read according to your own sweet will. You are not obliged to read continuously. You do not have to tackle a whole volume. You have a hundred articles to pick from, on a wide variety of subjects, and in every article you will find the philosophy of Freethought keenly and lucidly expressed. In America these books ought to have a large sale, for they are admirably adapted to our hurrying life. It is very seldom that an American will undertake to read a whole volume. He hasn't the time. He's on the rush; has but a few minutes to spare. The *Flowers of Freethought* are just the thing. He cannot put in his few minutes to better advantage than by a perusal of one of these terse and freighted editorials. In a small compass he will find a great many stimulating ideas. These are just the books to put into one's travelling bag. They are better than a summer novel, for, while equally entertaining, they are also profoundly and variously instructive.

—S. P. Putnam, in "*Truthseeker*" (New York).

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM.

"Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"—LUKE xxiii. 34.

If there is one thing more clear than another from a criticism of the Gospel history, it is that Jesus, the miracle-worker, is earlier than Jesus, the moral reformer. The Sermon on the Mount is a manifest compilation of traditional sayings, never uttered by one person at one place and one time. The peculiar doctrine of forgiveness, inculcated in the story of the woman taken in adultery, is, as we have seen, an interpolation; and the above text, the finest of the alleged sayings of Jesus on the cross, must be put in the same category. The passage is wanting in the oldest manuscript, the Vatican MS. In the Sinaitic it is put by Tischendorf as omitted by S₂, which means a later hand; but the later hand may be that of the insertion. It is wanting in the Codex Bezae, in the Old Latin, in a copy of the Coptic, and in the Sahidic. These omissions in widely-separated versions are inexplicable, save on the view that the text did not exist in ancient times. The theory of an accidental oversight on the part of many copyists is an imputation on the Holy Ghost and an imposition on human credulity. If Jesus ever said "Father, forgive them," it must have been in reference to the misdeeds of his own followers.

LUCIANUS.

PARSONS.

DOES he, dare he, *can* he ever think straight or simply on any subject as any other man thinks, edged in as he is by so many limitations? He is considered a gentleman—which, perhaps, you and I are not—unless we happen to behave as such. It is a condition of his noble calling. Perhaps it's in order to become a gentleman that he becomes a parson. It's about as short a royal road as any to that enviable distinction—as short almost as Her Majesty's Commission, and much safer and much less expensive—within reach of the sons of most fairly successful butchers and bakers and candle-stick makers.

While still a boy he has bound himself irrevocably to certain beliefs which he will be paid to preserve, and preach, and enforce through life, and act up to through thick and thin—at all events, in the eyes of others, even his nearest and dearest, even the wife of his bosom.

They are his bread and butter, these beliefs; and a man mustn't quarrel with his bread and butter. But a parson must quarrel with those who don't believe as he tells them.

Yet a few years' thinking and reading and experience of life one would suppose might possibly just shake his faith a little, and teach him that many of these beliefs are simply childish—and some of them very wicked indeed and most immoral.

It is very wicked and most immoral to believe, or affect to believe, and tell others to believe, that the unseen, unspeakable, unthinkable immensity were all part and parcel of source of eternal, infinite, indestructible life and light, is a kind of wrathful, glorified, and self-glorifying ogre in human shape, with human passions and most inhuman hates—who suddenly made us out of nothing one fine day, just for a freak, and made us so badly that we fell the next, and turned us adrift the day after—damned us from the very beginning and ever since—never gave us a chance!

All merciful Father, indeed! Why, the Prince of Darkness was an angel in comparison (and a gentleman into the bargain).

Just think of it—a finger in every paltry pie—an eye and ear at every keyhole, even that of the larder, to catch us tripping and find out if we're praising loud enough, or grovelling low enough, or fasting hard enough—poor God-forsaken worms!

And if we're naughty and disobedient, everlasting torment for us—torture of so hideous a kind that *we* wouldn't inflict it on the basest criminal, not for one single moment!

Or else, if we're good and do as we are bid, an eternity of bliss so futile, so idle, and so tame that we couldn't stand it for a week but for thinking of its one horrible alternative, and of our poor brother for ever and ever roasting away and howling for the drop of water he never gets.

Everlasting flame or everlasting dishonor—nothing between!

Isn't it ludicrous as well as pitiful—a thing to make one snigger through one's tears? Isn't it a grievous sin to believe in such things as these, and go about teaching and preaching them and being paid for it—a sin to be heavily chastised, and a shame. What a legacy!

And even at that it's a failure, this precious image! Only the very foolish little birds are frightened into good behavior. The naughty ones laugh and wink at each other, and pull out its hair and beard when nobody's looking, and build their nests out of the straw it's stuffed with (the naughty little birds in black especially), and pick up what they want under its very nose, and thrive uncommonly well. And the good ones fly away out of sight; and some day, perhaps, find a home in some happy, useful fatherland far away, where the Father isn't a bit like this. Who knows?

But the poor parson?

He must, willy-nilly, go on believing, or affecting to believe, just as he is told, *word for word*, or else good-bye to his wife's and children's bread and butter, his own preferment, perhaps even his very gentility—that gentility of which his Master thought so little, and he and his are apt to think so much—with possibly the Archbishopric of Canterbury at the end of it, the *baton de maréchal* that lies in every clerical knapsack.

What a temptation! one is but human!

So how can he be honest without believing certain things, to believe which (without shame) one must be as simple as a little child; as, by the way, he is so cleverly told to be in these matters, and so cleverly tells us—and so seldom is himself on any other matter whatever—his own interests, other people's affairs, the world, the flesh, and the devil! And that's clever of him, too.....—"*Trilby*," by George Du Maurier.

Old Mercator (to little Billy Ducks, just left school, who applies for situation as office boy, and produces testimonial from clergyman): "We don't want you on Sundays, my good little boy. Have you a reference from any one who knows you on week days?"

CORRESPONDENCE.

THACKERAY'S HERESY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In *Freelight*, p. 61, I read:—William Makepeace Thackeray was fond, in the early portion of his literary career, of writing very boldly. In his admirable verse he cries:—

Forgive me if, in all Thy works,
I see no hint of damning,
And think there's faith among the Turks,
And hope for e'en the Brahmin.
Cheerful my mind is, and my mirth,
And kindly is my laughter;
I cannot see this smiling earth,
And think there's hell hereafter.

Can you or any of your readers tell me where this verse is to be found in Thackeray's works? C. W.

[We are not sure if this verse is found in the collected edition of Thackeray's works. But it is certainly his. *Freelight* was edited and largely written by Richard Bedingfield, who was a cousin of Thackeray. Bedingfield was a Pantheist, and wrote in the *National Reformer* with the signature, B. T. W. R.]

Sequel to a Salvationist Wedding.

A Wife Given up to a Lodger.

There were some remarkable revelations at the Shoreditch County-court yesterday, when a cabinet-maker, named Scott, of Hackney, sued Annie Scott, of Clapton, his wife, for the return of certain furniture detained by her. The defendant, who entered the box crying bitterly, stated that the furniture was hers, the plaintiff, who had left her, having given it to her. They were married in 1892 at the Salvation Army Congress Hall, Clapton, in the presence of four thousand people. They lived together for over two years, but she was now living with a gentleman whom her husband gave her up to. He signed an agreement for her to go and live with this gentleman. After seeing the agreement, Judge French said: "I give judgment for defendant. Here is the plaintiff's signature to this abominable document. That is sufficient for me." The solicitor for the plaintiff said that, as these painful circumstances had been gone into, he must lay the facts of the case before his honor. This young man was weak-minded. He lived happily with his wife for two years, until this man, a brush-maker named Gowling, came to live in the house with them. He had been the cause of all this. The plaintiff was a tool in her hands. The plaintiff stated that when he was married both he and his wife were members of the Salvation Army. She did not buy a single one of the goods, nor did he give them to her. When living in Earlsfield-road, Clapton, they took Gowling with them as a lodger. The landlady called his attention to rather suspicious conduct on the part of his wife and Gowling. One day, in a weak moment, and over-persuaded by the woman, he signed the document produced. His wife and Gowling, who always passed as a very religious man, then lived together, treating him as a lodger, and later on he left. Judge French said these details, shocking as they were, were absolutely irrelevant to the case. He could not understand how any solicitor could act for a man who had put his name to such a document as that before him. He believed the woman's evidence that the furniture was given her, and gave judgment for her, with costs. Outside the court a number of the plaintiff's friends set upon the defendant and severely beat her. Her own friends took her part, and the assistance of the police was needed to clear away the crowd.—*Pall Mall Gazette*, December 13.

A contemporary says of the Rev. Dr. Carleton (of whom we have not the advantage of having previously heard) that he has not been absent from his congregation on Sunday for seventeen years. If any pious gentleman of his flock has attended service as regularly for as many months, he is entitled to a crown of glory beside which that earned by the Doctor shall appear but an indifferent old felt hat.

A prominent Chicago divine, like all others there, had a very exalted opinion of the city. His end came. Reaching his eternal home, he looked round with surprise, and said: "Really, this does great credit to Chicago. I expected some change in heaven." A black attendant severely observed: "This is not heaven!"

Trance Medium (recovering)—"Yes, friend; while the dormant clay of my body lay here, my spirit was in the heavenly city. I saw the pearly gates, the towers of gold—" Bicycling Enthusiast (interrupting eagerly)—"How were the roads?"

BOOK CHAT.

In criticising the pretensions of Theosophy we have expressed the opinion that it is both natural and desirable that the contact of European thought with that of the East should react on Western beliefs. This is shown to the full as much in the profound philosophy of Schopenhauer as in the charlatanism of Blavatsky. A serious and notable example comes to us in the form of some translations *From the Upanishads*, by Charles Johnston (Dublin: Whaley, Dawson Chambers; 1896). Mr. Johnston, in his dedication to his friend, G. W. Russell, says of these old Sanskrit sacred books: "I have found them wise, beyond all others; and, beyond all others, filled with that very light which makes all things new—the light discovered first within, in the secret place of the heart, and which, brimming over there, fills the whole of life, lightening every dark and clouded way."

The passages selected by Mr. Johnston for translation are not new to English readers. Sir Edwin Arnold has already, under the title of "The Secret of Death," told, from the Katha Upanishad, of the visit of Nachiketas to the House of Death, or Yama:—

But coming, all unsummoned, to the House,
Where red Death dwells, no Yama found he there
To bid him bitter welcome.

The final passage, "That Thou'rt," from the Chhandogya Upanishad, which contains the very essence of Hindu philosophy, is also found in the *Sacred Books of the East*. Without pretending to any qualifications to speak as to the merits of Mr. Johnston's work as a translation, it seems to hit the happy medium between mere literalness and the ornamental flourishes which we suspect Sir E. Arnold of giving to his versions of Oriental works. There is a quaint, almost child-like, simplicity about the diction, even when the thought is most profound. This suits the Brahmin character. Freed from worldly cares, this caste went in meditation as far as abstract thought can go, yet without practical experience and worldly knowledge. Transcendentalism may be said to have been tried on the banks of the Ganges over two thousand years ago, and even under Hegel or Emerson it has got "no forrarder," while its chief votaries are a subject race under occidentals who have subordinated metaphysics to physics.

The contributions made by the Brahmins to religion, philosophy, and speculative thought are well worthy the attention of students, and the extracts chosen by Mr. Johnston may serve as an introduction to the Bhagavat Gita and other writings in *The Sacred Books of the East*. Of their value as philosophy we need not here speak. Something of its gist may be surmised from this quotation from "In the House of Death": "When all desires that dwell in his heart are let go, the mortal becomes immortal and reaches the Eternal." The teaching of the Upanishads is humility, self-control, and universal regard. Christians are too apt to ascribe everything of worth in other religions to borrowing from Christianity. Now, of whatever date these Upanishads may be—and there are good grounds for considering them long anterior to the Christian era—it is certain that their philosophy is unique, and all of a piece. It is, in short, Pantheism pure and simple.

There is a German translation of *The Testament of Jean Meslier*, the French priest who abjured Catholicism for Freethought. It is made by Samuel Ludvigh, and is circulating in the United States.

Two Suffolk Friends, by Francis Hinde Groome (Blackwood and Sons; 1895), is an interesting record of R. H. Groome, who was Archdeacon of Suffolk, and his friend Edward Fitzgerald, the poet and translator of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*. Dr. Thompson, the late Master of Trinity, wrote to Mr. Groome in 1885: "Two of the purest living men among my intimates, Fitzgerald and Spedding, were prisoners in Doubting Castle all their lives, or, at least, the last half of them. This is to me a great problem, not to be solved by the ordinary expedients, nor on this side the veil, I think." The problem would have been unveiled could Dr. Thompson have seen that he was in the prison of orthodoxy, while Fitzgerald and Spedding were outside in the free air of liberty and Freethought. It may be doubted if Spedding could have achieved his great work on *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon* if he had not been a Freethinker; while Mr. Groome himself admits that Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat* reflects his own deepest doubts.

There is a curious picture of Omar Khayyam Fitzgerald in these recently-published reminiscences of his friend, F. H. Groome. The poet, Mr. Groome says, was always perfectly careless as to dress. "I can see him now," he adds

"walking down into Woodbridge, with an old Inverness cape, double-breasted flowered satin waistcoat, slippers on feet, and a handkerchief, very likely, tied over his hat. Yet one always recognised in him the Hidalgo. Never was there a more perfect gentleman." Mr. Groome says that a former rector of Woodbridge once called on Fitzgerald to express his regret that he never saw him at church. "Sir," said Omar, "you might have conceived that a man has not come to my years of life without thinking much of these things. I believe I may say that I have reflected on them fully as much as yourself. You need not repeat this visit."

Gibbon wrote his *Roman History* once; but the history of his own life he wrote no fewer than seven—or, indeed, eight—times. The manuscript versions themselves have been preserved among the Gibbon papers, which since the historian's death have remained in the safe custody of the Sheffield family. These seven autobiographies, together with Gibbon's Journals and correspondence, are now published by Murray.

The editor of the *South-western Presbyterian* feels constrained to warn his readers against "the subtle poison" of humanitarianism which he finds lurking in some of the Drumtochty stories by "Ian Maclaren." For example, in the case of the good physician, Dr. Maclure, it appears that, with all his kindness of heart and nobleness of character, he was not "a professor of religion, or even an attendant at church." Horrible! And yet Dr. Ian Watson is the idol of the kirks, and himself a meenister.

Mr. John Hollingshead, in *My Lifetime*, has a good story of the pious doings of Bendigo, the converted Nottingham prize-fighter. Bendigo was an active, not a passive, missionary—a member of the Church Militant. Those who knew his strength and weakness played upon them. "Ben," said one of his supporters, pointing to a group of men at a public meeting, "do you see those fellows?" "Yes," said the converted one. "Do you know what they are?" continued his tormentor. "No," replied the ex-pugilist. "They're Atheists, that's what they are," continued the tormentor. "Wot's Atheists?" asked the simple-minded and not too well-educated Bendigo. "They don't believe in God, Bendigo." "Wot?" shouted the fighting-man, snorting like a war-horse, "don't believe in not no God. Here! (taking off his coat) let me get at 'em! I'll damned soon show 'em wot's wot!"

Essays and Notices, Philosophical and Psychological, by T. Whittaker, B.A., is published by T. Fisher Unwin, and includes his rationalistic essay on "The Philosophy of History," which we have previously noticed.

Was Israel Ever in Egypt? or, A Lost Tradition, by G. H. Bateson Wright, D.D., is published by Williams and Norgate

Obituary.

It is with great sorrow that we have to record the death of our secretary, Mr. C. Doeg, on December 15, at the early age of forty-seven. This regret will be shared by all Freethinkers who have ever met him and have enjoyed an hour in his genial company. He had a great enthusiasm in work for popular causes. He was a compositor by trade, and had always been a staunch Trade Unionist. His energy, ability, earnestness, and readiness to put his principles into practice placed him always in the forefront of the various movements with which he was connected. His loss to the Secularist cause in Liverpool is great. For many years, Sunday after Sunday, he had been at his post of duty, often to the sacrifice of his personal comfort and gain. Socialists, Trade Unionists, the unemployed, and all who need help, will miss his willing work. He will live long in the memories of his Liverpool comrades.—L. SMALL.

I REGRET to have to record the death of Mr. William Allen, of Walthamstow, at the age of forty-seven, which took place on the 13th inst. He was for many years a prominent member of the old Balls Pond Branch, but the last few years he had been doing active work in Walthamstow. He will be remembered by many for his ardent support of our movement and the manner in which he helped to bind Freethinkers together. He suffered a long, painful illness for eight months with a calm fortitude that was remarkable, and we are conscious that his death is the loss of a brave soldier to the Freethought army.—WILLIAM SIMONS.

The idea of the miraculous, which a superficial observer might have once deemed its most prominent characteristic, has been driven from almost all its entrenchments, and now quivers faintly and feebly through the mists of eighteen hundred years.—W. E. H. Lecky, "History of Rationalism," i. 198

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.O.): 7.30, Charles Watts, "The Religious Man."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7. James Rowney, "The Atonement: Ethical and Historical." Tuesday, at 8, social party.
BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, open discussion on "Socialism." Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, at 8, social gatherings.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, a lecture.
DEPTFORD ANARCHIST GROUP (Smith's Coffee Tavern, Deptford Bridge—adjoining Broadway): 7.30, T. Cantwell, "Anarchism and Secularism."
PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "The Real Jesus."
WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("Sun in Splendor," Portobello-road, Notting Hill Gate): 7.30, half-yearly general meeting.
WOOD GREEN (Club and Institute, 4 Lawn-villas, Stuart-crescent, opposite Wood Green Church): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Origin of Man."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 12, F. Haslam, "Peace on Earth."
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30—lectures, weather permitting.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 11, members' meeting; W. J. Russell, "Christ and Cor fucius."
BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): Boxing Day, at 7, concert and dance.
DERBY (St. James's Hall, St. James-street): Friday, Dec. 20, at 8, C. Cohen, "What Think ye of Christ?"
DUNDEE (Tally-street Hall): 6.30, discussion—"Christianity and Woman."
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion—J. Gunn, "Swedenborgianism"; 6.30, A. Paul, "The Birthday of Jesus."
HECKMONDWIKE (Lombard Coffee Palace, Market-place): 2.30, meeting—local Freethinkers invited.
HIDDERSFIELD (Friendly and Trade Societies' Hall, No. 5): Wednesday, Dec. 25, grand social and dance.
HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Hendy, "Historical Evidences for Christianity."
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Arthur B. Moss, "The New Age of Reason."
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, Ernest Newman will lecture.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Gladstone's Theology"; 3, "The Old Serpent"; 6.30, "How and Why was Jesus Born?"
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street, near Grey's monument): 7, M. E. Copland, "Thomas Paine"; 8, monthly meeting.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, J. Pearson, "Toryism, Liberalism, and L.P.-ism." Members and friends' annual soirées and ball on New Year's Day.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, music; 7.30, W. Cook, "Ancient Philosophy."
STOCKTON-ON-TESSES (32 Dovecote-street): 6.30, G. Thwaites will read a paper "On Health."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—December 22, Wood Green; 29, Balls Pond.

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

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—December 29, Foresters' Hall.

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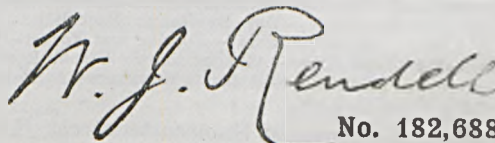
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Printed and Published by G. W. FOOTE, at 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.