

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## THE STAR OF CHRIST.

EIGHTEEN hundred and ninety-five years ago, according to Christian chronology, a wonderful star was seen in the East. Somehow or other it escaped the notice alike of Jews and Pagans. It was never heard of by the chroniclers of prodigies. In fact, it was only visible to three "wise men," who were fools enough to follow it. They must have rested all day and journeyed all night, and we may imagine their delight when it came to a standstill. We are told that it stood over a certain house, and the three wise men knew the little King of the Jews they were looking for must be inside that building.

That star was more than wonderful—it was thrice wonderful. It must have moved along in the earth's atmosphere, and, as the Yankees say, low down at that. Anyone who thinks otherwise should just go outside his front door on a fine, clear night, fix his eye on the likeliest looking star, and then walk down the street and decide which house it is over.

Having come from nowhere, the star went back to the same place. It was never seen before or after. It was fetched out, so to speak, by the story-teller, and replaced in the bag when the trick was ended.

The wise men came from the East, which is a large region. If you face the sun at midday, north of the equator, the East is all the world on your left hand. The wise men came from there, and returned there. It is not surprising that they got lost, and there is no record of their having been found.

That wandering star heralded the birth of a baby called Joshua, or more commonly (in the Greek form) Jesus. He was to astonish the world, and he has done it. King Herod wanted to settle him in his cradle. Some people say it is a pity he failed. But the king took a wrong course. Instead of sending one of his detectives after the wise men, he exacted a promise of information from *them*, and they went home (or somewhere), and left him in the dark. Herod was therefore obliged to kill many children instead of one. He ordered the massacre of every child under two years of age in the whole neighborhood. Curiously, however, Herod's worst enemies never heard of this infamous deed. Josephus, who rakes up all he can against Herod, is silent over this stupendous atrocity. The consequence is that persons who are endowed with more sense than faith decline to believe it ever happened.

For thirty years the world knew nothing of the baby born under the wise men's star. Then he burst upon the public as a preacher. Three years afterwards he was executed for sedition. While he was dying the sun was eclipsed for three hours. This is an astronomical impossibility. It must, therefore, have been supernatural. The power which produced this astounding darkness was the same power which made the moon stand still for General Joshua. Perhaps it was like the Egyptian darkness—a thick one that could be felt, one that could be cut into slices. But a still more wonderful thing than the darkness itself is the cat-like vision that was possessed by the people of that age. They saw excellently well in the dark; in fact, they did not notice it *was* dark; so they never mentioned it, and the most prodigious eclipse in all history is without the attestation of a single contemporary.

It is surprising that the star of Christ should show up again in the darkness

splendid opportunity of distinguishing itself. For three-hours it might have skipped in the sky, and secured universal attention. Perhaps it was aware of the cat's eyes of the general public, and refrained from wasting a big display.

For some time after the crucifixion the star of Christ was hidden. Then it began to appear to a multitude of low, illiterate persons, whom it lured to entertain great expectations beyond the tomb. Many of them expected that Christ would come again, and establish a universal kingdom, in which they would enjoy fine positions. But they looked for him in vain, and died without a glimpse of him. Whether they saw him after death is more than anyone can say. Our private opinion is that they saw him as much after death as they did before.

The star of Christ rose higher and higher in the heavens, and it shone the more brightly in the darkness which fell upon civilisation. At length it became the only light men had to walk by, and history tells us what monstrous doctrines and practices flourished in that obscurity. It was an age of faith and an age of filth. The masses were oppressed and miserable. Kings ruled despotically by the grace of God. Nobles were masters of the very lives of their dependents. Priests lorded it over the laity, and were mostly ignorant, idle, luxurious, and profligate. Lazy monks and hysterical nuns too often realised the worst dreams of pandemonium. Intellectually and morally, Europe sank into a state which would have seemed impossible to the Greeks and Romans.

This state of things continued for nearly a thousand years. Then there was a stir in the darkness. The stifled mind of man began to assert itself. Ancient literature was read, a few bold spirits studied science, printing was invented, maritime discovery opened up new ideas of the world, and astronomy whispered the great secrets of the universe. "Light, more light!" became a daily growing aspiration, and the priests of darkness trembled at their altars. They determined to keep back the light if they could. They imprisoned investigators, tortured those who had courage to think for themselves, and slew myriads of men who were touched by "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come." But the light still spread, and the star of Christ paled in its splendor.

Religions, said Schopenhauer, are like glowworms; they require darkness to shine in. This is true of Christianity, as it is true of every other superstition.

The star of Christ is approaching its utter extinction. As a god, the Nazarene is dead already. Few educated and intelligent people believe the full orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Even in professional Christian circles stress is laid upon the human and ethical aspects of the "preacher of the Sermon on the Mount." All this shows a general drifting from the dogma of his godhead. It is absurd to bespeak our sympathy and admiration for a supernatural being. A god does not invite approval; he demands obedience. In vain does Count Tolstoi picture an arbitrary Christ, and manufacture a new Christianity by a process of selection from the ruins of the old system. The result only commends itself to those who are seeking a dignified escape from orthodoxy, without being ready for a complete spiritual emancipation. A played-out god should have his niche in the historical pantheon; he should not be thrust into the Valhalla of actual heroes. This truth is instinctively admitted by ordinary men and women, who to these high-pitched panegyrics on

the man Jesus. Stripped of his deity, he is not imposing enough to be the centre of universal reverence. Jesus has had his day, and the great god Christ is dead; dead, this time, beyond all hope of resurrection.

G. W. FOOTE.

### PANTOMIMES.

PANTOMIMES are what our American friends call an institution. Christmas comes but once a year, but when it comes it brings pantomimes as surely as plum puddings. Fairies and transformation scenes are, to townspeople, almost as natural an accompaniment of Yuletide as holly and miseltoe. If, however, we look up the accepted authorities, we shall find pantomimes set down as quite a modern institution. We are led to suppose that, because the first Drury Lane pantomime was produced in 1702, the thing was then wholly new.

In my *Footsteps of the Past* I have argued that the customary ascription of the drama to the Christian miracle plays of the Middle Ages is wrong. I hold that the drama has developed, not from the Church, but side by side with it, from the mimetic movements of early man. Mummery, or imitative magic, as I hope to convince readers of my book, is rather the foundation of the Church than the Church the founder of the drama. So with pantomimes. In certain of their features—their masks, mummery, supernatural and allegorical personages and transformations—they represent ancient features of human thought; and this, in part at least, is the source of their delight to children.

Doubtless the name of pantomimes, and certain elements in them, were borrowed from the Italians in the early part of last century. But names are easily misleading. The Italian *Arlecchino* is quite different from our spangled and splendid *Harlequin*. Moreover, as Isaac Disraeli pointed out, the Italian pantomimes were themselves descended from the early Roman popular diversions. It was exactly so in England. When pantomimes were introduced into our theatres, they, as Mr. Gomme has already noticed, "travelled along thoroughly English lines, and met a tide of popular English drama which just then flowed into London from the country."

We are told that Manager Rich, of Drury Lane, happened to hit upon pantomimes, and they were copied everywhere, because their success was prodigious. But why so? Because they hit the taste of the country people then flocking into the towns. They had previously been used to mummery and puppet-shows at Christmas, and in London the same thing was catered for more gorgeously. That the magical element was early predominant we may guess from Pope's lines on the rival houses of Drury Lane and Covent Garden:—

When, lo! to dark encounters in mid air  
New wizards rise—here Booth, and Cibber there.  
Booth in his cloudy tabernacle shrined;  
On grinning dragons Cibber mounts the wind.

The severer critics cried out against these mummeries, as they rightly called them. But it was this that was the great source of attraction.

In the old mummery a chief aim was to surprise by the oddity of the masks and the splendor of dresses. In the *Records of Norwich*, 1410, we read of a wealthy citizen who was crowned King of Christmas, and rode in state dressed in silks and tinsel, preceded by twelve persons as the twelve months of the year. Mummery in grotesque dress and imitating animals followed. There is a curious manuscript in the Bodleian, written and illuminated in the reign of Edward III., in which the mummerys are exhibited wearing the heads of animals. One wore the head of an ox, another of a goat, one of the hare, another of the dog, and so on through the list. Strutt mentions that in the year 1348 the king kept his Christmas at Guildford, where the mummerys exhibited. Eighty buckram tunics of various colors were provided, forty-two visors of different similitudes—fourteen with female faces, fourteen with faces of men, and fourteen heads of angels made with silver. There were tunics wrought with the heads of dragons, swans, peacocks, etc., fourteen of each; and a variety of others were provided. In other instances whose record has reached us there were heads of deer, swine, owls, and fish which had been prepared at great cost and were worn by

the mummerys. They seem to have entered the rooms to dance, and to imitate the sounds of the beast or bird in whose similitude they appeared; but we do not read of anything they did beyond this in the way of playing their parts. From the ragged remnants of such popular plays at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun yet preserved to us, we may infer that the main import of Yuletide mummery was the celebration of the triumph of light over darkness, and that mummerys really preserved some features of ancient religion. The essence of Yuletide mummery was nature worship, and after the Reformation this was so clearly seen that an Act was passed ordering that, if any persons disguised themselves as mummerys, they should be treated as vagabonds and sent to prison for three months. From this blow the old custom never recovered, though it lingered in places; and in the Court masques some of the old features were preserved, as in Ben Jonson's *Christmas his Masque* two of the characters are taken by Mince Pie and Bride Cake. When pantomimes were introduced into the theatres, they came as a revival and illustration of earlier customs.

Our old mummery and puppet shows were themselves but dramatised versions of traditional tales. The nursery stories upon which popular pantomimes are still built are the ancient ones, such as Jack the Giant-killer, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Whittington and his Cat.\* In witnessing the pantomime we may become children again, and catch some glimpse of ancient thought handed down to us by tradition from the earlier ages of the world, served up with all the splendid accompaniments of beautiful scenery, magnificent dresses, dazzling lights, and joyous songs and dances. This at least may, perhaps, serve as an excuse for an old fogie like myself paying a visit to the pantomime "only once a year," just to witness, on the mimic stage, the assured triumph of Light over Darkness, and of Youth, Beauty, and Love over Age, Ugliness, and Hatred.

J. M. WHEELER.

### A Religious Epidemic.

The *Alienist* tells of a peculiar religious movement which took place in the province of Kiev, Russia, in the winter of 1891-92. The originator was a Stundist, who began to suffer from hallucinations, among others perceiving extremely pleasant perfumes, which he declared to be the smell of the Holy Ghost. Then he conceived that he was possessed of the Holy Ghost, and that he was Jesus Christ. He obtained numerous peasant followers, who sold their possessions, gave up work, and looked upon their insane leader as the Savior of the world, in which there should soon be new regulations; no one should die, and no one should have need to work or to care for the future, for God would care for them all. Most of them suffered from hallucinations of the sense of smell, perceiving extremely agreeable odors, which they described as pertaining to God and heaven. Many had a feeling of remarkable bodily lightness, as if floating in the air, and many others were taken with convulsions, manifestly hysterical. The congregations were always noisy and exalted, some falling to the earth, others jumping, striking themselves on the breast, and shouting inarticulately. Some would imitate conversation; but it consisted of incomprehensible, senseless sounds, which they believed to be a language spoken somewhere. Most of them were emaciated and anæmic. The epidemic was finally overcome by the authorities; those who were most insane being shut up in asylums, while the hysterical were sent to hospitals and convents.

I sent my soul through the invisible,  
Some letter of that after-life to spell;  
And by-and-by my soul returned to me,  
And answered, "I myself am heaven and hell."

Heaven, but the vision of fulfilled desire,  
And hell, the shadow from a soul on fire,  
Cast on the darkness, into which ourselves  
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

—Omar Khayyam.

\* Mr. Clouston (*Popular Tales and Fictions*) shows the tale of Whittington was current in Persia in the century before Sir R. Whittington was born. Possibly the story of the cat was associated with him from his *acate*, or "purchases." In September, 1668, S. Pepys went to Southwark Fair, "and there saw the puppet-show of Whittington, which was pretty to see," and, he adds, "how that idle thing do work upon the people to see it, and even myself too."

## CHRISTMAS AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

"WE are such stuff as dreams are made of." So wrote the inimitable Shakespeare; and, although he applied the words to ordinary men and women, they would be equally applicable to Christianity and the story of the advent of its hero. There is no doubt in our mind that a large portion of the Christian faith is composed of the very same "stuff as dreams are made of." This is particularly so with the theological associations of Christmas, which is the period that orthodox believers celebrate in honor of the alleged birth of their Master. If the New Testament may be relied upon, the inception of Christianity was exceedingly dreamy, and it certainly was not in harmony with the present welcome and hilarious manner, which most sensible people appreciate, of commemorating this pagan festive season.

According to the Gospel ascribed to St. Luke, Joseph was "espoused" to Mary, the mother of Jesus, when an angel appeared and made an important announcement to her that, although a virgin, she would "bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." This information astonished the affianced bride, who exclaimed, for a very good reason, as given in Luke i. 34: "How shall this be?" Joseph, the engaged young man, was also naturally concerned at the condition of his future wife, and "was minded to put her away privily." St. Matthew, however, informs us that while Joseph was thinking the matter over an angel appeared to him "in a dream," and stated that the father of the coming little stranger was the "Holy Ghost." The only assigned reason given in the account for this new and remarkable mode of reproduction was that once upon a time a prophet said, without referring to either Joseph or Mary, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah vii. 14). The fact that this alleged prophecy had no reference to Jesus, and that he was not called Immanuel, does not seem to convince Christians of their absurdity in connecting the two events. Perhaps in this matter the perceptive powers of believers are "overshadowed" to this day. It is said that dreams are "overshadowed" by contraries, but Joseph, when he was awakened out of his sleep, seems to have been satisfied that his dream was a reality, for he took Mary unto him as his wife. Evidently Joseph was as easily duped as many of Christ's followers, who believe the story, have been since. It would be difficult to induce any sensible person to believe that such a Holy Ghost procedure could take place in the present age.

But Joseph did not have all the dreaming to himself, for the wise men of the East, who had instructions to report on this matter to Herod, had "a dream that they should not return to Herod," and, therefore, they did not carry out their instructions. Then Joseph had another dream, in which he was told that he should take the mother and child into Egypt in case Herod should seek to destroy the son of the Holy Ghost. This, we are informed, was done because another prophet had said (not, be it remembered, in reference to Christ): "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matthew ii. 15). Yet another dream overtakes Joseph, in which an angel instructs him to take mother and child back, "for they are dead which sought the young child's life." But this time Joseph did not display the same confidence in God's warning as he had previously done, for he turned aside "into the parts of Galilee," fearing that Herod's son and successor might do some mischief to the progeny of the Holy Ghost. This, it is said, was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets—He shall be called a Nazarene." Of course, the prophets here referred to made no allusion whatever to the hero of the Gospels, as may be seen on reading Judges xiii. and 1 Samuel i. However, Jesus had already honored Bethlehem by being born there, and now it was sought to make Nazareth immortal by a visit. Perhaps the strange account given of these occurrences may be attributed to the fact that people who are given to much dreaming get confused notions of things; and it often happens that the dreamer, when awake, is unable to make either "top or tail" of his vision. It strikes us as being peculiar that, if the birth of Jesus were supernatural, there should be so much anxiety necessary to protect him from injury. If the Holy Ghost, aided by God, were the author of his being, surely the two combined should be more than a match for the machinations of Herod or anyone else.

Further, we cannot but think that, if Joseph had been more wide-a-woke, he would not have been deluded by such dreamy, angelic announcements. It is quite clear that to make-believe was a much easier process in the early days of Christianity than it is now.

St. Mark does not appear to have heard of these very remarkable dreams, for he introduces Jesus full grown from Galilee to be baptised by John, who makes Jesus appear as an unknown person, as one who standeth "among you whom ye know not" (John i. 26). After this it is alleged Jesus was "found," not as the offspring of the Holy Ghost, but as the son of Joseph. Not only do Mark and John omit to refer to Joseph's dreams and peregrinations up and down the different countries, but Mary nowhere mentions the peculiar nature of the angel's visit to her at Galilee and its unique consequences. It is not even stated by Luke that she dreamt that the angel visited her, nor does she again refer to the matter, after the speech in which she made the false prophecy that "all generations shall call me blessed." Is it not singular that the very one who must have known of the miraculous birth of Jesus, if it had been true, was silent all her life upon the subject? One must be gifted with poetic vision to see in this story any solid foundation for the advent of what is termed the greatest moral power ever revealed to the world. No Rationalist can consistently accept the inexplicable account of the origin of Mary's son as given in Matthew and Luke, inasmuch as it is in direct contradiction of all known laws of human generation.

Perhaps the next most important event recorded as having taken place in those dreamy times of early Christianity was what is said to have happened to Peter when he went to the top of the house to pray (Acts x.). He saw heaven opened, and a "vessel descending unto him" containing "four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." Being hungry at the time, and having been told to "kill and eat," he refused by saying: "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." But the interpretation of the appearance of this vessel, and of the "voice" which "spake" thrice before the "vessel was received up again into heaven," is the amusing point of the story. This vision, or trance, completely revolutionised what was inaugurated in the dream of Joseph. At first it was intended that the efforts of the principal subject of the dream should be confined to the Jews, for we are told "that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or to come unto one of another nation" (Acts x. 28). The vision entirely changed Peter's policy, for from that time he was not disposed to confine his sayings and doings to the Jews. He ceased to obey the injunction of Jesus to "go not into the way of the Gentiles," for he said: "God had shown me" by the vision "that I should not call any man common or unclean." After this "eye opener," which he received in a "voice," Peter opened his mouth and said: "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Those who heard Peter's declaration were "astonished," because, as they argued, this new announcement "poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost on the Gentiles." But Peter replied that they had "received the Holy Ghost as well as we," and could not be forbidden. Now, but for that vessel of wild beasts, etc., and the voice which said "Kill and eat," probably there would have been no permission given for embracing other nations into the Christian fold.

At the present season, when our streets resound with Christmas carols intended to recall the realisation of Joseph's dream in Judea, and when it is celebrated upon a day on which it is generally acknowledged he was not born, Christians may do well to pause and reflect upon the dreamy absurdities recorded in the tenth chapter of Acts. From the story as there set forth it is clear that the original proclamation, "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men," was intended for the Jews only. Moreover, even to-day, notwithstanding Peter's vision, there is neither peace nor goodwill existing among all Christian men, to say nothing of all mankind. One nation is steeped in jealousy and mistrust of another, while the followers (a long way off) of Christ are hurling reproaches at their co-believers who belong to another section of the Christian community. The realisation of this peace and goodwill is but a dream, although a pleasant one, and it would be still more pleasant if it duly affected the dreamers in their wakeful moments. Unfortunately, this has not been the

case, for, after eighteen hundred years of Christian profession, the world is still in arms, and we are saddened with the cry of "war and rumors of war." Millions of money are being spent annually, and some of the best skill of the country is being employed, in preparing for battle with those for whom "Christian England" has but little goodwill. It is said the "Man of Peace" came, that the Cross was established, and that its influence was felt; and yet discord, envy, and malice, to an alarming extent, mar the happiness and tranquility of our race. Instead, therefore, of relying upon Christian dreams as foreshadowing the means whereby peace and goodwill shall obtain, let us turn our earnest attention to the lessons learnt in our wakeful moments, and endeavor to bring about this desirable object by fostering national justice, personal freedom, and the true brotherhood of the human family, irrespective of creeds, wealth, and social distinctions. If this is done, then, as the festive season comes round, we shall have better reasons than we now possess for believing that all well-wishers of their kind will enjoy "A Merry Christmas."

CHARLES WATTS.

### WHAT IS OUR PROGRAM?

IT is to clear the human field of weeds, the rank over and undergrowths of superstition, so that useful and beautiful plants, plants intellectual, plants moral, and plants æsthetic, may be grown in the greatest possible plenty.

To us the world appears an immense jungle, or forest and jungle combined, with here and there a patch of land more or less cleared and planted with useful plants. We observe that, where the original forest-jungle has not been cut or cleared away by human labor and sound sense, little or nothing grows that is of benefit to man. There man is blind, ignorant, a creature of impulse, dreamy, submissive, slavish, with most of the possibilities of his life missed or wasted, and with little or no hope of improvement in this world. But where the ground has been cleared we find man has reached his highest development, is the most intellectual, most independent, pushing, and hopeful as regards the life that now is. And just where the ground has been most perfectly cleared, there man himself reaches his highest perfection—intellectual, social, and moral.

The forest-jungle of which I am speaking consists of the world's superstitions, amidst which nearly all the real elements of human progress are either wanting, or else are choked and stunted by the weeds and poison-plants around them. We argue, therefore, that, since up to date, the less superstition, the more knowledge—the more independence, the more virtue. If all superstitious jungle-forests were cleared away and burnt up, the world would be immeasurably the better for it in every sense.

As this is our belief, and as we respect mankind, lament man's slavery, his ignorance, his enslavement to priests and superstition, we are doing our best to destroy superstition wherever we can, with the full persuasion that, by so doing, we advance the interests of man much more than we possibly could do in any other kind of work we could undertake.

We know that our motive is good—the best and purest possible, in fact; and we know that our work is good.

Although most of our work is clearing the ground, yet we are incessantly dropping seeds of truth, of encouragement, of morality and good behavior, as we move about the field. Ay, when a favorable wind blows we stand on some elevated spot, and fling seeds of truth into the gale, that they may be carried and sown as far as may be in the forest-jungle of superstition. Much of this seed takes root and springs up here and there, putting new thoughts and emotions into the forest-jungle dwellers, and inciting them to set to work to cut down and cart away, or burn up, the enormous masses of fungus-growths, which merely tend to cheat, impoverish, mislead, poison, and torture them.

Those who oppose and vilify us and our work are of two sorts: 1st. The wild beasts and reptiles which abound in the forest-jungle, and there prey upon human dwellers. The whole round of parasites and creatures which live and flourish upon superstition are our deadly foes. 2nd. Those who either cannot, or do not, understand us are in a fright, thinking that, if we cut down the jungle, we shall leave the land bare, barren, and uninhabitable. They think

superstition to be the only shelter and only comfort for man; and some of them positively fear that the human race would perish without it. This, of course, is the result of ignorance—an ignorance priests and clergy do their best to encourage.

These, then, are the only foes we have—the only opponents of our pioneer work. Our task is to show the ignorant that, just in proportion as superstition abounds, so do poverty, ignorance, sickness, epidemics, and general misery—misery arising from physical evils, and also from panic fears and frightful creatures of the imagination. Our task is to show them that, as the jungle is cleared, and plants of knowledge and science flourish, so do civilisation and the good things of time increase and abound, while fears and bugbears cease to haunt the brain.

No work could be more humane than ours, or more helpful to man. We do not teach the virtues of trust in another, but of self-dependence. Our gospel is that, if a man is not saved, and blest, and happy upon earth, he never will be at all; that, if he does not contrive to save himself, there is no possible salvation for him; that his greatest need is salvation from his saviors, the various orders of priests and clergy, who hold him in bondage and fleece him here, under the shallow pretence of saving his soul in some impossible state after death.

I confidently call upon the lovers of truth and of humanity to help us in this great and glorious work of ours. At the same time, if we have honest and reasonable opponents, I ask them to send on their objections to our work for publication in this journal.

JOS. SYMES.

—*Liberator*.

### THE CREED OF INGERSOLL.

IN a sermon on Colonel Ingersoll, the Rev. Minot J. Savage recently made the following remarks, as reported in the *Boston Sunday Post*.—

The ideas of which Colonel Ingersoll is at present the most prominent exponent in this country are not new. I suppose he would not claim that they are. Nor are his methods original, except as far as they spring out of his personal characteristics and peculiarities. His ideas are very largely those of Voltaire, of Gibbon, of Hume, of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and of a good many others of our prominent revolutionary heroes; and, curiously enough, they are largely the ideas of the most intelligent Biblical critics of the modern world, of men who are still nominally connected with the orthodox churches. Yet, if his ideas are not new, Colonel Ingersoll has so identified himself in the popular mind with those ideas that they have come to take his name, and so he stands before the modern world as one of the marked religious signs of the times.

Colonel Ingersoll is, in my opinion, the most remarkable popular orator to-day on earth. I have heard the best speakers in this country; I have heard some of the best speakers in England, including Mr. Gladstone, and I do not know of a man living who is so mighty a master over a popular audience as is Colonel Ingersoll. And the secret of his power as a popular orator is not far to seek. He is a master of expression—wonderful in his power of moulding and shaping words to the utterance of his thought. Then, again, he is a poet, and he has a deep, high, broad sympathy with whatever is human. There is nothing that touches the interests of men that does not find an echo in his heart and brain. He feels with a power that is simply colossal. Moreover, he is the mightiest popular orator in his power, not only on religious, but on other topics which he treats. He has an unsurpassed fund of wit and humor; his power in this direction is exerted without malice and without effort.

Is Colonel Ingersoll an honest man? Does he believe himself to be a reformer, or is he only a vulgar, cheap sensationalist? Does he prostitute those gifts of his for the purpose of making money? This is the common charge that is hurled against him; and let me note here, as very significant, that this is almost the only one which is hurled against him, and for this reason—that no other can be made even for a moment. What were his antecedents? His father was a Presbyterian clergyman, and he tells us how, when a boy, he spent some hours looking up into the sky thinking of hell. His was the kind of childhood thousands

and thousands of boys have had to experience. It has been charged against him that he was without reverence for his parents in that he attacked Proslaveryism. But he himself has shown that men do no honor to their parents by going around swearing that the false views held by their parents were true.

I believe that he is as honest and as earnest as was John Calvin or Richard Baxter. I believe he is as sincere in his opinions—whether you choose to call them religious or irreligious—as any man that ever lived or spoke. Does he need to lecture on religious subjects to get money? If he had had no other resources, or if he made twice as much in that as in any other way, and if he devoted himself exclusively to that, the charge might have some basis. But he is able to earn money as a successful lawyer, and he does in that way earn all that he wishes or needs. Besides, he can earn money by lecturing, whatever his subject may be. Then, again, it seems to me that, so long as the great majority of ministers feel a divine call to leave a small parish and a poor salary in order to go to a large parish and a large salary, it is not quite safe for them to trust to the attempt to blacken Colonel Ingersoll's character by charging him with being influenced by pecuniary motives. I believe, then, that he is earnest and sincere.

Now, what are his positions regarding religious belief? He is the great red-hot antagonist of those teachings of the Church which he regards as incarnate and infinite cruelty. The great thing he attacks is the orthodox belief in hell, because he thinks it crushes the human heart, blots out human happiness, makes people afraid to think, turns the brain into a dungeon, and prevents human progress. Colonel Ingersoll's sympathy is the key to his character and career. I have never known a man more tender, more easily moved; he is as sensitive and sympathetic to all the movements of life and thought about him as the leaves of the poplar to the air. It is this tremendous power of sympathy that turns him into a flaming hatred of anything that seems causeless, inexcusable cruelty. So this one great, horrible, world-shadowing dogma of eternal hate has been the one thing that he has devoted his life to fight.

### EVOLUTION OF THE DEVIL.

THE Devil originates from the exact same spot as God—namely, from human fear. The earliest gods are all ugly devils. The first religious rites are spells to ward off evil, and sacrifices to bribe the powers that be to transfer their malignant attentions to somebody else. But as in the beginning there were gods many and lords many, so were there devils many, and early religion largely concerns itself with the question of how to deal with the devils. For they are all around and even inside of us. All sickness is attributed to them, and a whole legion may take up their abode in one person. The differentiation between gods and devils, in the sense of beneficent and maleficent powers, is in early times mainly the difference between ghosts of one's own tribe and those of hostile tribes. The ancestral spirit may be supposed propitious to his tribe, even though he be extolled as a cannibal delighting in blood; but the gods of other peoples—and often the peoples themselves—are set down as devils. Moreover, one's own parents and chieftains were rather feared than loved, especially after their death, so that the worship even of ancestral gods was mainly a propitiatory diabolism. The more deities were invested with arbitrary, irresponsible power, the less clear their differentiation from devils. And the gods, being derived from dead chieftains, ever tended in this direction. Jahveh was regarded by the Jews as their national protector. But, for all that, he was a dreadful and jealous god, who might manifest his displeasure in thunder, lightning, fire, or pestilence. Jahveh, indeed, asserts that he is the author of evil as well as of good (Isaiah xlv. 7, Amos iii. 6). He was a consuming fire, to be worshipped in fear and trembling.

In the story of the Fall in the Garden of Eden, as we find it in the Old Testament, there is no clear trace of a devil. The story is told to account for many puzzles—man's hard lot, woman's child-bearing, and the prone position and horror excited by the serpent, among other things. The most subtle beast of the field only developed into a devil

after contact with the Persians, who, as light and fire worshippers, had in their cult the glaring contrast of the principles of light and darkness, Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu; or, as the Greeks called them, Ormuzd and Ahriman. Before the Jews were brought into contact with the Persians these nature deities had assumed ethical characteristics—the god of light being the representative of all that was pure and beneficent, and the other of the opposite. Each had a kingdom of his own. Good men and women belonged to the kingdom of Ahura Mazda; bad ditto to that of Angra Mainyu. During the captivity in Babylon the Jews received this questionable gift of an adversary—Satan or the Devil.

Critics allow that Asmodeus, the demon who figures in the book of Tobit, is none other than the Zend demon, Aeshma Deva, with hardly a change of name. This shows a way was open by which the Parsee devils could enter into Judæa, and by the time of the Gospel writers they had got there in swarms.

Satan makes his first entrance in the Bible in the book of Job. This probably dates it, as Driver, Cheyne, and Davidson think, about the time of the captivity. Here, however, "the adversary" is, if not an angel of light, at least among the sons of God, and talks on familiar terms with the deity. In the Parsee books we read of the Opposition, and in Job it is in Hebrew *the Satan*, the presence of the article denoting a similar poetical abstraction. The next appearance of Satan is in the book of Zechariah, who saw "Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." Here again Satan is the opposing counsel, and the scope of his devildom is by no means clear.

In the book of Chronicles Satan stands out more completely, especially in its contrast with the books of Samuel. In the latter (2 Samuel xxiv. 16), which are by far the earlier, God moved David to number Israel, and then punished him for doing so. This is a real picture of the good old God who cannot be distinguished from a Devil. But in Chronicles xxi. 1 we are told that Satan provoked David to number Israel. No doubt a just reconciliation of these passages would make out God and the Devil to be one and the same, for which, as I have hinted, there is a good deal to be said.

In the New Testament, however, the Devil comes out clearly as a personality. As I have shown in my pamphlet on *Satan, Witchcraft, and the Bible*, far more clearly defined personal characteristics are ascribed to him than to the Holy Ghost. He is the head of an organised kingdom, with angels under him (Matthew xii. 24-26, Revelation xii. 9, Ephesians vi. 12), and is described as the prince, and even the god, of this world (John xii. 31, 2 Corinthians iv. 5). He has power to transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians xi. 14), and to deceive the whole earth (Revelation xii. 9, xx. 8). Belief in possession by devils naturally led to the horrors of witchcraft, and the rationalists who first threw doubts on the existence of witches were accused of Sadduceism and unbelief in the Bible. "The giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible," wrote John Wesley. It is more. All the considerations applied to show that the Devil has no real existence, but is only a poetical abstraction, can logically be brought to bear on his divine antagonist.

J. M. W.

A sporting Marquis, who married a Gaiety chorus-girl, prided himself on his hats. He went into his hatmaker's in Piccadilly, and asked for a new one to be made. The shopwalker took the hat, and walked to the far end of the shop to give the requisite instructions, leaving the hatless Marquis standing in the shop. At this moment there entered the short-sighted Bishop of X., also in want of new headgear. He looked behind the counter; there was nobody there. He only saw a small man, who might have passed for a shopkeeper, standing staring at him. So he took his peculiar hat off his head and went up to him. "Do you think, my good man," he said persuasively, "that you have a hat like that?" The Marquis looked at him for a moment speechless with indignation, while the shopkeeper, seeing what was amiss, hurried up as fast as he could. Unfortunately, the Marquis found his voice before the hat-man reached his client. "No," he said, giving the Bishop back his headgear; "I haven't got a hat like that, and if I had, I'm d—d if I would wear it." The Bishop doesn't go to the same shop now.

## BETHLEHEM OR GREENWICH.

IN nought B.C., or nought A.D.—  
It matters not, take either ;  
The whole affair is nought to me,  
So take them both, or neither.

At any rate, the dateless date  
Was found within a stable  
At Bethlehem, if parsons state  
A fact, and not a fable.

This zero morn a goblin child—  
Or bastard little stranger—  
Appeared amidst the straw, and smiled  
Or squall'd within a manger.

This stable stood on parallel  
North, two-and-thirty, nearly,  
And five-and-thirty east from hell—  
That is, from London, clearly.

The monks began, it now appears,  
To date from "Bedlam's"\* stable ;  
But not till full six hundred years  
Had sanctified the fable.

Now, all our books and deeds we date  
From Yahveh's "incarnation,"  
Or what we now denominate,  
In law, "affiliation."

The folk that claim the sign "A.D."  
For Christ are green as spinach,  
Since Time and all earth's belt must be  
Referred direct to Greenwich.

If birth of Him that saves our race  
From Eden's fell ophidian  
Begins our years, His natal place  
Should be our first meridian.

But no ; despite devout pretence  
Of sanctified obedience,  
The Christian has a lively sense  
Of secular expedience.

Once, three wise noodles chased a star,  
And found themselves in "Bedlam" ;  
Now, Greenwich and Polaris are  
Preferred to faith in *deal* Lamb.

O, Christians all ! for once agree—  
From pope to Stewart Headlam—  
And let your prime meridian be,  
Not Greenwich Park, but "Bedlam" !

G. I. MACKENZIE.

One morning last week, while waiting for the train, I overheard the following conversation between two young men, who were waiting also : " I say, Bill, our young Dick, as goes to the Church Sunday-school, was a-readin' in the Testament last night about things as I never knew before. He read as Jesus Christ's father was a carpenter ; but he was a bit of a preacher hisself, and he used to preach for nothing, and all his pals was fishing coves ; but after a bit the *biguns* killed him, by fixing him on two pieces of wood nailed crossways. Now, Bill, I thinks as if he and his pals could come alive again, and visit this country, and go into any of our churches, they would be forced to sit on the forms down by the door, where our poor people sits. But, Bill, I am sure they would not be here very long, as the bishops and parsons would soon have them nailed up again for preaching under price ; in fact, they preached for nothing at all, which would be playing the devil with the trade of the Church. What do you think, Bill ? " " Well, Fred, I thinks the same as you ; and I am sure that, if they went into any of the swells' seats, and sat on the beautiful cushions, they would soon be kicked out of the church altogether, and sent to Limbo."—T. DUNBAR HARRIS.

\* Contraction for "Bethlehem"—a mad-house.

## ACID DROPS.

LAST Sunday was Peace Sunday, and the representatives of the Prince of Peace were in the full flow of their cheap eloquence. Most of them, however, if not all, forgot to say that Christian nations do the principal part of the fighting on this planet. They also build the warships, make the artillery, rifles, bayonets, and gunpowder, and generally play the devil at every point of the compass. But on Sunday, and especially on Peace Sunday, they go to church and swear butter wouldn't melt in their mouths.

It is amusing to read the *Methodist Times* account of the great Nonconformist demonstration on behalf of the Armenians. Dr. Parker's speech is described as "too moderate." He actually "recognised difficulties in the situation." The other speakers didn't. They were very strong on "Cromwell," and yearning for gunpowder and blazes. There would be a pretty kettle of fish boiling if these fanatics were able to direct the foreign policy of England. It is well enough to sympathise with the Armenians. Every man of common sensibility must long to secure them against their oppressors ; and the tale of murder, mutilation, and outrage is enough to make the coldest blood boil. But what, after all, is it that stands in the way of their enfranchisement ? Simply the bitter jealousies of the Christian powers. Were they united on behalf of the Armenians, and animated solely by a desire to aid them, the Sultan would give way in five minutes.

Mr. William Watson, one of the most promising of our younger poets, seems to have lost his head over the Armenian business. His two sonnets in the *Westminster Gazette* on "The Purple East" are not lacking in a certain power of expression, but his concluding apostrophe of England is too bellicose—perhaps not for an irresponsible poet, but certainly for a responsible statesman.

How long shall they be borne, O England ? Up,  
Tempest of God, and sweep them to their doom.

We have a very decided objection to England's playing "the tempest of God." If the tempest once began, it would soon be the Devil's.

Perhaps the poet will tell us whether England was playing the "tempest of God" when she mowed down the Matabele with her gatlin guns.

We have no doubt that the American Freethinkers will do their best to damp down the jingo spirit in the United States. The idea of a war between the land of Ingersoll and the land of Bradlaugh is too shocking (if not ridiculous) for contemplation. President Foote, of the National Secular Society, can't think of pointing a rifle at President Putnam, of the American Secular Union. Give these two a bottle of good wine and a good cigar, and they would settle all the bother to the satisfaction of every honest and sensible "patriot." We suggest that they should be appointed arbitrators. It would be better than leaving the quarrel to the professional politicians, who would boil their kettles over hell without shuddering.

Christians in general have always had a surprising knowledge of what goes on (or doesn't go on) in supernatural regions. They talk about God—to use Matthew Arnold's expression—as though he were a man living in the next street, with whom they are on terms of personal intimacy. And of all these know-all Christians the Methodists would come out first in any examination. Here is a recent illustration of their excellence in this line. There is a Methodist Union movement in South Australia, and, according to one minister at Broken Hill Conference, it seems that "God, the angels, and all that is sensible and good are on the side of the union, whilst its only opponents are the Devil and a few Methodist preachers." In our opinion, this is a rather blasphemous way of asserting that the speaker is right and his opponents wrong.

Taking the name of God in vain is common amongst religious people. They might, however, leave the Devil alone. It is not pretended that they have any right to speak for him.

The Rev. W. Berger says of his fellow sky-pilots : "Often times ignorance is the helmet, bigotry the breastplate, hypocrisy the shield, and hate the sword with which they arm themselves." Mr. Berger is evidently a man of some Christian experience.

The following is likely to be a bitter pill to those who are for ranking Huxley among the Christians : "Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, September 14, 1890. Dear Mr. Hyde Clarke, I am glad to see that you are as active-minded as ever. I have no doubt there is a great deal in what you say about the origin of the myths in Genesis. But my sole point is to

get people who persist in regarding them as statements of fact to understand that they are fools. The process is laborious, and not yet very fruitful of the desired conviction. —Ever yours very truly, T. H. HUXLEY."

Dr. Miller, the founder of the Madras Christian College, which was established in connection with the Free Kirk of Scotland, is spoken of as almost a convert to Brahmanism. At any rate, he has given up all pretensions to Christianity being an exclusively divine faith, and, in an address to the students of the college, gave credit to Hinduism for presenting to the world, as no other religion has presented it, "the omnipenetrativeness of God" and "the solidarity of men."

Dr. Miller also gave utterance to the following language, according to the writer in the *Congregationalist*: "You have not to do with churches or with missionaries. The very plan of the world shows that in them there is evil and mistake. They have no authority as your guides. It is of Christ you have to judge. He stands apart, seeking to found no sect and to upset none."

The writer in the *Congregationalist*, who seems to speak from an intimate knowledge of the situation, says: "Many claim that these statements clearly reveal the reason why, during many years, so few of the students of that college have made an open profession of Christ. It certainly shows that Dr. Miller has a novel idea of the functions of a missionary college in a heathen land, and that he is entirely out of touch with at least nine-tenths of the Christian missionaries of India." The fact is, of course, that Dr. Miller is a little too enlightened for the Christianity which claims there is no salvation for any except those who rely on the blood of Christ.

Many reasons have been given for the fact that the missionaries in India have no success in the cities, and in the provinces the converts are mainly from the aboriginal tribes which have not been gathered up into Hinduism. The secret is an open one, illustrated by Christian missions in every part of the world. When it comes in contact with savagery, Christianity triumphs; but when with a civilised faith, whether Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, or Brahmanism, it makes no headway.

A survey of the whole field of Christian missionary enterprise proves conclusively that Christianity succeeds only where it meets barbarism, while in what are called Christian countries culture ever tends to replace and obliterate the distinctive features of Christianity. The Christian Churches may continue their missionary activity among barbarous peoples, but in the centres of the development of culture they more and more enter into the character of worn-out powers, and entirely fail to make impression on cultured peoples educated in other faiths.

On the other hand, the culture of the age, its material acquisitions, its science and its secular spirit, are ever extending their dominion. The races who will not accept our religion are mastering our science. All arts and industries are becoming world-wide. Despite competition, they tend to become means of union between the nations of the earth, while its various religions are the causes but of strife and division.

The *Crescent* says: "Brother Muslims, while you are reading this copy of the *Crescent*, calmly enjoying your right to serve God as your conscience deems right, a fellow man, named R. R. Whaley, of Church Hill, State of Maryland, United States of America, lies a prisoner in gaol, under a Christian law, prosecuted by Christians against a fellow Christian, his only offence being that he hoed cabbage plants on Sunday in his own garden. What a religion of peace and goodwill to men Christianity truly is!"

A real "dispensation" has happened at Fairmont, Tenn. The Rev. D. F. Levy has just died there of blood-poisoning, caused by running a splinter into his knee when he threw himself violently on to his knees to pray.

Jesus taught his followers not to be as the hypocrites are, who stand in the synagogues and corners of the street to pray, but to enter their closets, shut the doors, and pray in secret. Mrs. Hudson did not heed that direction while in church conducting a prayer meeting, so she is stricken down in a moment. Here is the telegraphic dispatch: "Anderson, Ind., November 24.—Mrs. W. W. Hudson, while kneeling in her pew at church to-day and conducting prayer, was stricken with paralysis. She was in the best of health when she entered the church."

Another warning comes from Clifton City, Mo., where George Steele, a well-to-do farmer, dropped dead in the Methodist church, while leading the choir at a protracted meeting. He was 45 years old, and was in excellent health

up to the time he was stricken. Probably the powers above did not relish G. Steele's sacred music.

According to a correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, there are four Conventicles of Luciferans (or Satanists) in Paris. He does not know much about them, but says that Madame de Montespan was a blasphemous devotee. They steal consecrated hosts and chalices, so it is certain they are believers. Indeed, they represent elements of early pagan faith never yet overcome by Christianity.

Real Devil-worship has conventicles everywhere, for what other is the worship of a being who condemns most of his creatures to hell-fire? Jahveh, we are told, is a man of war (Exodus iv. 3). He swore to have war with Amalek from generation to generation (Exodus xvii. 16). He burns with anger, his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is a devouring fire (Isaiah xxx. 27). A smoke came out of his mouth so that coals were kindled by it (2 Samuel xxii. 9). If these are not descriptions of the Devil, they might easily be mistaken for such.

What worse item of Devil-worship is there than belief in salvation for the guilty through the efficacy of the blood of an innocent person? Persons holding such a doctrine have not much reason to exclaim against Devil-worship.

A correspondent of the *Progressive Thinker* states that about forty years ago the Rev. Simon C. Hewitt, a Universalist minister, was engaged in a house in Boston constructing "The Mechanical Jesus of the New Dispensation." This was a spiritually directed apparatus which was to revolutionise the machinery of the world. The Mechanical Jesus died, but not by crucifixion. It had its heart torn out by a graceless mob, who regarded the idea as blasphemy. The correspondent of the *P. T.* considers "the Mechanical Jesus" was a sort of John the Baptist to modern electricity.

The burglar's wife who has joined the Salvation Army at Preston, and confessed where her husband—now in jail—hid the proceeds of his burglaries, recalls the story of the Frenchman. "No," he said, "I do not like it, when Madame has one of her pious weeks. She goes to confession? Yes, but it is *my* sins she confesses!"

A choice commentary on the efficacy of Christian preaching of peace and goodwill is that the Pagan Romans kept the peace of the world with less than a tenth part of the soldiers of Christian Europe. "Peace Sunday" comes just when the two nations who are foremost in spreading Christianity are quarrelling over the affairs of a country thousands of miles distant from either of them.

The Chicago Parliament of Religions was trumpeted as a sign of something more than the much-talked-of re-union of Christendom. It was supposed to herald the sympathetic union of all religions. The millennial time seems, however, still distant. Hindus and Moslems still fight in India; Jews and Moslems are still persecuted under the Czar; Christian missionaries have been massacred by Chinese, Armenians by Turks; and at the very centre of Christendom Italy has to take precautions against the preaching of a holy war for the restoration of the temporal dominion of the Pope. When will people give up looking for peace and goodwill to flow from what has ever been a fruitful cause of strife?

The Rev. Newman Smyth, a leading American Broad Churchman, says we might at first think repulsive the opening chapters of Hosea, wherein the Lord tells the prophet, "Go take unto thee a wife of whoredoms" (i. 2); and again, "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress" (iii. 1). But, viewed as a poetic allegory, we discern that "through his intense purifying love, stronger than sin or shame, Hosea had received his prophetic consecration." It is an historical fact that Jewish harlots were consecrated persons; but are these the sort of stories to be put indiscriminately before children?

The catechism of the Rev. A. F. Gace, vicar of Great Barling, Essex, which a lady teacher tried to introduce by *viva voce* questions in a London Board school, contains, among other choice items, the following: "Q.—We have among us various sects and denominations who go by the general name of Dissenters. In what light are we to consider them? A.—As heretics; and in our Litany we expressly pray to be delivered from the sins of false doctrine, heresy, and schism. Q.—Is Dissent a great sin? A.—Yes; it is in direct opposition to our duty towards God."

Another question was the following: "But why have not Dissenters been excommunicated? A.—Because the law of the land does not allow the wholesome law of the Church to be acted upon; but Dissenters have virtually excommunicated themselves by setting up a religion of their own, and leaving the ark of God's Church." This Catechism has

reached twelve editions, being very popular with High Churchmen.

Cardinal Vaughan stands up for Catholic schools as the most moral and religious. No doubt they are religious enough, but their superior morality is open to question. It appears that there are 397 Catholic children in Industrial Schools at part cost of the Manchester School Board. The number of Protestant children in the same category is 387. In other words, although Catholics are in the minority at Manchester, a larger number of Catholic children are under a magistrate's order of detention. Secularists' children don't seem to figure in the statistics.

Canon Gore preached at Westminster Abbey recently on "The Efficacy of Prayer." He appeared to think prayer was not sufficient in the case of the Armenians. Englishmen would have to make "sacrifices incomparably greater" than any they have yet contemplated; and thus, we presume, answer the prayers that fall unheeded on the ears of the Sphinx of the Universe.

An extraordinary case of superstition is reported in the French press to have just occurred at Begiers, near Montpellier. A Spanish woman, named Marie Riviere, living in the Rue du Seminaire, believed herself possessed of a demon. To exorcise this and die purified she soaked her clothes in petroleum and ignited them, persuading her husband to act similarly.

The Catechism used in schools in the Polish provinces of Russia declares, in the most unequivocal manner, that the authority of the Czar proceeds immediately from God. It says his humble subjects owe him "worship, obedience, fidelity, the payment of taxes, service, love, and prayer." "We should, if required, sacrifice ourselves in compliance with his will, both in a civil and military capacity, and in whatever manner he deems expedient." In short, the religion inculcated in this Catechism is mainly Czar-worship as "the Vicegerent and Minister of God, to execute the Divine commands." It is because the Pope is really in this respect a rival that every effort is made to drive Polish Roman Catholics into the bosom of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Mr. W. T. Stead is bringing out a series of *Penny Poets*, as a sort of opposition to the *Penny Dreadfuls*. We looked into his penorth of selections from Matthew Arnold, and found the whole thing ridiculous. Mr. Stead's introduction was longer than all the poems put together. It was such a little Arnold to all that intolerable quantity of Stead! And the paper was so wretched, and the general appearance so unlovely, that Arnold, had he been living, would perhaps have cursed his inclusion in this cheap and nasty enterprise.

Mr. Stead, however, is a good Nonconformist, though we don't know of what particular brand; so it is natural that he should be puffed in these papers and lifted sky-high on billows of flattery. One of these papers assures him that he has "raised for himself a monument more enduring than brass." *Brass!* What an ill-chosen word! Surely the praise of Mr. Stead's friend lacks finish; anyhow, it lacks discretion.

By way of apology for the sordid look of these *Penny Poets*, Mr. Stead's pious friend remarks that "the paper, binding, and illustrations are not the book after all, any more than the vile body is the man." *Vile body* is distinctly good. It is Christian philosophy in a nutshell. But the poor Christian is incapable of acting up to his principles. The carnal element will assert itself. When he is looking about for a wife, he likes the "vile body" of his future partner to be as comely as possible; and he forgets the "vile" altogether when he sees her decked out for the matrimonial altar.

The late Rev. Peter Mackenzie was an extraordinary clown, and his ridiculous mince-meat of Bible stories was heartily relished by thousands of Wesleyans who were afraid to go to a circus and smelt brimstone in a pantomime. They are going to publish his biography, and also to erect a monument. We suggest a statue, with the head grinning through a horse-collar. Peter might have taken a prize at any country fair.

The Rev. Dr. James Stalker, of Glasgow, says the Bible has a human, a very human side. Yet he advises people not to dwell on this. He says: "But the Bible has another side, through whatever human media it may have reached us; it is a gift from the Eternal Spirit, and it is intended to be the food of the human spirit. For the appreciation of this, however, there is requisite a totally different sense from that which weighs the *pros* and *cons* of evidence as to dates and authorships." This totally different sense, we should say, is nonsense.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has given a point blank refusal to the demand of Father Black that he shall put the Bishop of London on trial for infringing the canon law by permitting the re-marriage of divorced persons. The English Church Union, after receiving this rebuff, are going to petition the Episcopate to "stop the scandal," as they call obedience to the law of the land.

Professor Sayce did not relish the *exposé* of his dubious Assyriology in the *Church Times*, and he writes to that paper giving the authority of Mr. Pinches as backing him up. It turns out, however, that Professor Sayce has not even seen the tablet which he interprets as confirming Genesis xiv., while the *C. T.* reviewer has, and tells him that when he has had that advantage he will see good reason for admiring the caution of the late Eb. Shrader. The reviewer also mentions that his condemnation of Sayce's readings was largely based on the remarks of Mr. Pinches, who himself writes to the *C. T.* asking students to suspend judgment until the publication of the tablet texts.

In the French Midlands the pagan custom of having a Yule log, or *cosse de Nau*, on the household hearth at Christmas still survives. According to venerable tradition, it should be taken from an oak felled at midnight, and is kindled at midnight by the head of the family, after receiving a sprinkling of holy water. This is a survival of sun-worship.

The Jewish feast of Chanuka, held at this part of the year, is considered as a patriotic festival in honor of the Maccabees. It doubtless preserves remnants of an earlier nature festival, being a "feast of lights."

## CONDITION OF WOMEN IN BURMA.

OPONENTS of the Woman's Rights Movement are wont to remark that women have never proved their ability to maintain a position of perfect equality with man, and the advocates of the movement often base their arguments upon cases of such hazy antiquity that it is very difficult to accept the testimony. According to the *Journal of the Maha-Bodhi Society*, Calcutta, there is no need for this. There is a country in which women are as free as men, right at this present time, and that country is Burma. The paper gives an enthusiastic description of the Burmese women. We condense its main points as follows:—

Before the law, in religion, and with regard to the moral code, men and women are here perfectly equal. The women administrate their property themselves, and when they marry it remains in their full possession. The Burmese husband has no jurisdiction over his wife's belongings, nor over her person. She is perfectly free from the day of her birth. The age of the knights, who praised their women as goddesses and treated them like slaves, never came to Burma. No lover there composes sonnets in which woman is spoken of as a supernatural creature, only to look upon her as an inferior being as soon as he marries her. Religion in Burma has never described woman as the cause of all evil, and never warned man against her devices. On the other hand, no Pope has called her the "last hope of the Church." No mediocre literature has imbued women with false ideas regarding themselves, men, and the world in general. Hence they are left to decide for themselves what is befitting.

Married or single, all Burmese women have an occupation besides their home duties. Among the upper classes they look after their property; among the middle and lower classes they generally manage stores. Most retail stores are in the hands of women. As business is conducted during three hours of the day only, it does not interfere with their home duties. Women may, however, adopt any calling they please in Burma, without fear of shocking public opinion. Curiously enough, sewing and knitting are specially male occupations. The great liberty enjoyed by the women of Burma enables them to extend their views of life, and makes them tolerant. They know their weakness and their strength, and reckon with them. Divorce is obtained very easily in Burma, but less than one of every hundred marriages is ever annulled.

CHRISTMAS PAGANISM.—On the face of it, Christmas is a Pagan festival. The head of the house, who invites his scattered family to make merry with him at this time, does exactly what his Pagan ancestors did centuries before the Christian era. Nor has the strong arm of religion quite banished the Pagan name, for, in many parts, Yule-tide and Yule log and a glad Yule are still favorite terms.—"*Foot-steps of the Past*," p. 184.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 29, North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell:—6.30, "How and Why was Jesus Born?"

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

February 2, Liverpool; 9, Glasgow.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATT'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 1, Camberwell; 5, Birmingham; 8, Hammersmith; 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.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—Per D. Baxter, 4s.

J. W. SUTCLIFFE.—Pleased to hear you are forming an N.S.S. Branch at Bingley. Miss Vance is sending you the necessary information.

F. CRESWELL.—Received with thanks.

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.—Glad to hear from you again.

WELL-WISHER (Brighton).—West, 28 Edward-street, supplies the *Freethinker*.

C. W.—Mr. Wheeler's new book gives a pretty full account of Christmas customs.

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Seasonable compliments.

OWING to the holidays, and our going to press so early, the usual answers to correspondents mostly stand over till next week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Chicago Daily Tribune—Public Opinion—Monthly Record—Crescent—Boston Investigator—Hairdressers' Chronicle—Two Worlds—Melbourne Age—Glasgow Herald—Dublin Evening Herald—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Manchester Guardian.

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.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Dec. 29) in the Secular Hall, Camberwell, his subject being, "How and Why was Christ Born?" Next Sunday (Jan. 5) he lectures again from the same platform. On Sunday, January 12, he begins his course of three special lectures in the Banqueting Room, St. James's Hall. The tickets for this course are now on sale, and can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter-street, or personally from Miss Vance at any of the London meetings which she is arranging under the President's lecture scheme. The expenses of these St. James's Hall meetings are naturally heavy, and we hope our London friends will make a special effort to fill the room on each occasion. The subjects are calculated to appeal to the general liberal public as well as to Secularists.

Mr. Touzeau Parris delivers the last lecture (for the present) at Foresters' Hall this evening (December 29), and will doubtless have a good meeting. It is Mr. Foote's intention to work the West-end of London for some time in the new year, and Sunday evening lectures are being organised there accordingly.

Mr. Cohen is back in London. During his absence of thirty-two days he has delivered thirty-four lectures, nineteen of them being under Mr. Foote's lecture scheme.

A course of free lectures under the President's lecture scheme is billed to take place at the Athenæum, Godolphin-

road, Goldhawk-road, Shepherds Bush, London, W., on Wednesday evenings, January 1, 8, 15, and 22. The West London Branch will doubtless do its best to make these lectures successful, and to capture fresh members from the audience. Mr. Foote opens the course with a lecture on "The Curse of Creeds." He will be followed by Messrs. Watts, Cohen, and Moss. Of course there will be a collection in aid of expenses, which in this case are fairly heavy.

Another course of lectures is arranged to take place on the same Wednesdays in January at the Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell. Mr. Watts opens this course, and it will be closed by Mr. Foote, with Messrs. Cohen and Heaford intervening.—These lectures are under the auspices of the Camberwell Branch, whose members will probably try to fill the hall with residents in the neighborhood.

A third course of free lectures is arranged to take place in the Assembly Rooms, Edmonton, on Thursday evenings, January 2, 9, 16, and 23. This course will be opened by Mr. Foote, who will be followed by Messrs. Snell, Heaford, and Forder. The Wood Green friends will of course do their best for the success of this course of lectures.

Two other courses of free lectures are being arranged for Battersea and Islington in February, of which due notice will be given in the *Freethinker*.

Tickets are now on sale for the Annual Dinner, which takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday, January 29, which is Thomas Paine's birthday. The next day is the anniversary (alas!) of Charles Bradlaugh's death, and his services to the "good old cause" will not be forgotten in the after-dinner speeches. Those who defer purchasing tickets till a few days before this function should at least mark the date in their "engagements." We hope to see a big representative gathering of London Freethinkers.

Miss Vance and the committee are making arrangements for the Annual Children's Party. This is a function which must on no account be neglected. It is better than a play to watch hundreds of little ones, many of them very poor, romping, racing, eating, drinking, and generally having a high old time. And the climax comes when the prizes and toys are distributed. Of course a good deal of cash is required to pay the fiddler for this merry dance, but that has always been forthcoming. Subscriptions can be sent to Miss Vance, or to Mr. R. Forder, the hon. treasurer—both at 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, there will be a distribution of boots, etc., to poor children of the Balls Pond neighborhood at the Bradlaugh Institute, 36 Newington-green-road, N. Hours from 5 till 8 p.m.

On January 1 a portrait of Mr. Bradlaugh will be unveiled by Mrs. Bonner at the Bradlaugh Institute. Mr. George Anderson will preside at 8.15. Mr. Foote is unavoidably absent, being billed to lecture at Shepherds Bush.

*Nya Sanningar*, the organ of the Swedish Freethinkers has reached its twentieth number, and gives its readers an excellent portrait of Thomas Paine.

The *Hairdressers' Chronicle* has a sensible article on "Sunday Shaving in Barbers' Shops." It says: "The man who delivers milk and cream at our doors every Sunday morning, the carrier who supplies the Sunday paper, are public benefactors; they supply nourishment for the body and food for the mind, and why should they be denounced as violators of the law? Several men engaged in the labors of the day cannot afford the time to be bathed and barbered except on Sunday. If a man may perform this duty himself, why should he be deprived of the right to employ another to perform it? Does the employing constitute the wrong?"

The *Freethought Magazine* for December gives its readers a portrait of Mr. William J. Roe, who has contributed many bright, original articles to the American press under the *nom de plume* of "Hudor Genone." Mr. Roe's biggest book is entitled *Inquirendo Island*. Mr. T. B. Wakeman writes on "Thomas Paine in France," and Dr. Felix Oswald and Judge C. B. Waite pulverise the Rev. Dr. Kaye.

The Moslems in London have held a meeting and decided to start a mosque—indeed, have opened a temporary one at the West-end. There is a mosque at Woking and one at Liverpool, but the followers of Islam in London desire one of their own. The opinion was expressed that the movement should become a missionary one, and things made as easy for converts as possible.

## SHALL I LIVE AGAIN?

I DO not think it possible that I can have a conscious existence after death. My body and mind are the product of earth. They have been evolved out of the elements and the surroundings, or environments, of our solar system, except, perhaps, the ego, or the conscious atom, that first began the sentient life of this planet. That may have floated from some remote star, or been brought by a comet. The heaven that Jesus preached was to be in the renovated earth. He never conceived of any other planet or star. The only way we can live after death is by our descendants or our works.

The priests of old times invented heaven for their special benefit, and they offered it to the highest bidder.

The Greek poets used to sing the praises of eternal sleep; and it seems to me that they made it very desirable to a weary, worn-out soul. There were to be in the heaven of Jesus mostly uninteresting persons and things. There were to be no earthly, sensual, or devilish things in his heaven. Why did he not tell us what the enjoyments there would be? My answer is, Because he knew nothing of such a place. St. Paul labored long and arduously to establish the belief in a future existence; but what did he think he would find to do in heaven? Even Theodore Parker could give no account of the heavenly kingdom. No learning, no science, no philosophy, has ever shown any knowledge of such a state of existence. Man's soul is not fitted to that kind of a place. It would be there like a fish out of water. All our faculties would be useless. No Almighty Being could turn our souls into angels. He would have to make creatures with not one particle of the old earthly nature in their composition. As old Job asked, "Will ye lie for God?" The poet Pope aptly complains that—

Men would be angels, angels would be gods;  
They quit their proper spheres and rush into the skies.

—Investigator.

DEAN DUDLEY.

## HUMAN SACRIFICE!

A SAVAGE king, it seems, has, in respect  
Unto the mem'ry of an ancestor,  
Offered up human lives as sacrifice;  
That thus their souls might company his shade  
As fitting escort to the unknown world.

Hearing of this, a nation civilised  
Becomes infected with the mania  
That leads men thus their kind to immolate.  
Believing not that *their* dead need a train  
Of subject souls to furnish regal state  
During the passage o'er the waves of Styx,  
They yet a counter superstition have  
To set against the savage one;

For they  
Are curst with worship of the God of War;  
And at the shrine of blood and human groans,  
Reeking from myriad, age-long sacrifice,  
They purpose slaying those who volunteered  
To give themselves in satiation of  
This demon's ever-searching crimsoned lust.

Which people civilised is, and which  
The savage race? Placed in the balance, weigh  
The merits of these superstitions dire;  
Which call ye worse? When, when will England cease  
To look upon another's fault alone?  
When seek to right the wrongs that press upon  
The lives of her own crowded populace?  
That greater wisdom were by far, and thus  
She only *can* throw off the shackles of  
The prison-night of war; emerging to  
The sunlit atmosphere of human peace.

F. W. THORRINGTON.

Mrs. Loftie—"The organist at our church is the most stupid fellow in the world, and is always playing the most inappropriate selections. Why, at Carrie Curfew's wedding he played, 'Trust her not, she's fooling thee.' The very idea!" Mrs. Posted: "Stupid? Indeed he is not. He was once engaged to Carrie himself, and she jilted him. He knew what he was about when he selected that tune."

## GOD'S NOSE.

"The nose of the Ancient of Days is life in every part."—  
"Zohar," *Idra Rabba*; sec. 201.

I HAVE been taken to task by a correspondent for, when writing on "God's Blood" (*Freethinker*, p. 741), alluding to various other portions of the anatomy of deity. It is supposed that, because I mention the Lord's nose as one of his prominent features, I can have no poetry in my soul, and am like the person devoid of music, "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." Now, I am rather partial to poetry, though I prefer Shakespeare to Ezekiel, Tennyson to Zechariah, and Morris to Malachi. But I happen to hold a theory about poetry, which, whether right or wrong, I am entitled to maintain till shown to be in error. My view is this: Physics come before metaphysics. Belief in the literal concrete fact precedes belief in the abstract allegorical expression. The metaphors of the poet are often remnants of actual beliefs. "Breath" was known before "spirit"; the sun was regarded as the eye of heaven, before there was any notion of an all-seeing deity; it was thought that magicians could actually stop the course of the sun, before theologians discovered that the narrative in Joshua was poetry.

Just so with God's nose. If now a poetical symbol, it was once as real as any other portion of the deity. All early gods are "magnified non-natural men," and the Bible God is no exception. He has the form and feelings of man. Like man, he has eyes, only sharper. Like man, he has a nose, only keener. He not only rests, but is "refreshed" (Exodus xxxi. 17). Genesis says that when Noah offered a sacrifice "the Lord smelled a sweet savor" (Genesis viii. 21). Could such an expression have been used if the original idea had not been that the Lord was altogether such another as man? Nay, Herbert Spencer thinks that Jahveh, like other deities, was originally a dead chieftain. Again, God says (Leviticus xxvi. 31): "I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors." And once more (Amos v. 21): "I will not smell in your solemn assemblies"—i.e., on the day of feasting. Upon this Gerald Massey remarks: "This divinity, like the Kamite (Gold Coast) Amanse, the spider-god, talks through his nose" (*Natural Genesis*, i. 80, 81). When, then, the Lord's nostrils are spoken of, I form the inference that originally the Lord was supposed to have a nose. Why else were sacrifices and incense so constantly offered before him? I take it he was first supposed to like roast meat, and then had to be content with the smell. Belated Ritualists continue to offer their decrepid deity incense, though he has long since lost his olfactory organs. As the organ of smell was of greater relative importance to archaic man; as the lower races still greet by rubbing noses, and smelling is synonymous with knowledge, I am not joking, but quite as serious as one ought to be in writing upon such a solemn subject, when I say that probably the proboscis of deity was originally the most prominent thing about him.

LUCIANUS.

## MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

THE following bits on Missionary Enterprise are all clipped from the *Yorkshire Evening Post* :—

It is difficult to say if, or how far, the missionaries themselves have contributed to the *emeute*. But their own testimony is not encouraging. "I stayed in An-Hsien," writes Mr. David Callum, one of the foremost of the missionaries, "for about two months, preaching and book-selling—preaching on the street, by the riverside, in the markets, and right inside the temples in front of the idols!" What would happen, I wonder, if a party of Chinese missionaries forced their way to the altars of our churches and commenced a vigorous onslaught on the Christian faith?

Missionaries in China reckon their harvest as amounting to a fraction more than two Chinamen per missionary per annum.

One missionary in China, after laboring nearly six years, confessed he had no male converts. This is the usual experience.

For every converted pigtail a thousand of our own heathen at home might be done good to.

It is a melancholy fact that there is spent annually on the despairing task of converting the heathen Chinese a sum of £350,000, which is equal to the combined incomes of the ten chief London hospitals.

The entire scheme of missionary work in such places as China is utterly useless, expensive (of money that could be employed to far better ends at home), and demoralising. So writes a correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

In one province of China 23 missionaries claim to have converted 11 Chinamen in eight years.

Most of our missionaries who have toiled in Madagascar for years confess that they are beginning to despair of this race.—*Times*.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT.

"At the St. Pancras Vestry last evening the Electricity Committee recommended that the charge for supplying current for churches and chapels be 5d. per unit, the rate charged for public street lighting. Dr. W. Smith, in moving the adoption of this recommendation, said that at present only one of the seventy churches and chapels situated in St. Pancras was lighted by electricity; and, as an inducement to the others to follow this example, it was deemed desirable to make a reduction in the charge as compared with the cost to private customers of 1d. a unit. Of course until dusk the charge would be uniformly 3d. per unit, as hitherto. Mr. Menzies stated that an additional reason for desiring to get places of worship to use the electric light on Sunday was that on that day the staff had little or nothing to do. The motion was adopted."—*Sun*, December 12, 1895.

Is not this lovely? One church has contracted to take the light, some of the others will, and all are hoped for by the Electricity Committee.

We have all heard the tales of the sweated labor employed by the great Bible-producing societies, but this is a new development of the sharp commercialism of the modern church, whipped up by a deliberate premium on Sabbath-breaking. The churches are to have an advantage over the ordinary customer of 1d. per unit, a bonus which is to be made by what is really an intensification of the Sunday labor of the staff of the electrical works. It is just possible that there is a legal aspect to this question which it might be worth while raising. It is a point of some delicacy, and would require some careful looking up; but any Freethinking vestryman or ratepayer, with the legal turn of mind and patience of Charles Bradlaugh, might give the clerical members a cold shock by suggesting that the rebate of 1d. per unit in favor of the church lights is an illegal relief of church expenses, at the cost of the ordinary ratepayer. That this is not so far-fetched as at first sight may seem will be admitted when recalling the actions raised by several London vestries against the London County Council to recover rates levied on London parks—one of the stupidest things ever done by pig-headed vestrydom, for the vestries themselves have to raise the money with which the C.C. has to pay the rate to the vestry, *plus* the awful law costs.

T. S.

## RELIGION.

RELIGION makes enemies instead of friends. That one word, "religion," covers all the horizon of memory with visions of war, of outrage, of persecution, of tyranny, and death. That one word brings to the mind every instrument with which man has tortured man. In that one word are all the fagots and flames and dungeons of the past, and in that word is the infinite and eternal hell of the future.

In the name of universal benevolence Christians have hated their fellow men. Although they have been preaching universal love, the Christian nations are the war-like nations of the world. The most destructive weapons of war have been invented by Christians. The musket, the revolver, the rifled cannon, the bombshell, the torpedo, the explosive bullet, have been invented by Christian brains. Above all other arts the Christian world has placed the art of war.

A Christian nation has never had the slightest respect for the rights of barbarians; neither has any Christian sect any respect for the rights of other sects. Anciently the sects discussed with fire and sword, and even now something happens almost every day to show that the old spirit that was in the Inquisition still slumbers in the Christian breast.

Whoever imagines himself a favorite with God holds other people in contempt.

Whenever a man believes that he has the exact truth from God, there is in that man no spirit of compromise. He has not the modesty born of the imperfections of human nature; he has the arrogance of theological certainty, and the tyranny born of ignorant assurance. Believing himself to be the slave of God, he imitates his master; and of all tyrants, the worst is a slave in power.

When a man really believes that it is necessary to do a certain thing to be happy forever, or that a certain belief is necessary to ensure eternal joy, there is in that man no spirit of concession. He divides the whole world into saints and sinners, into believers and unbelievers, into God's sheep and Devil's goats, into people who will be glorified and people who will be damned.

A Christian nation can make no compromise with one not Christian; it will either compel that nation to accept its doctrine, or it will wage war. If Christ, in fact, said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword," it is the only prophecy in the New Testament that has been literally fulfilled (also Luke xii. 49-53, xiv. 26).—*Robert G. Ingersoll*, in "Some Reasons Why."

## THOMAS PAINE.

FREETHINKERS must frequently have been surprised at the long-continued prejudice concerning such men as Paine and Voltaire. Even liberal papers like the *London Echo* still persist in speaking of "Tom" Paine. It appears that Christians inculcate prejudice even in the school-room, and school-books contain some notable examples of pious fraud. In Mackenzie's *Nineteenth Century* (p. 14) occurs this startling footnote: "The primary object of Voltaire's attack was Christianity, as represented by the Roman Catholic Church of his day," etc. On the next page Voltaire is referred to as "the withered unbeliever."

In another book by the same author, *America: A History* (p. 104), a great man is thus sneered at: "Conspicuous among those whose writings aided in convincing the public mind stands the unhonored name of Thomas Paine, the infidel." It is well to mention that both these school-books are published by Nelson and Sons, Paternoster-row.

Singular that almost every Christian engaging in controversy violates the Christian principle—charity. It is a liberal education in religious tactics to know the real Paine from the "bogey" set up so long by orthodoxy. The Religious Tract Society is chiefly responsible for the continued publication of the recantation lie about Thomas Paine.

Paine, as a writer, is not wanting in the more finished graces of imagery and illustration. Edmund Burke himself might have envied the illustration of his too exclusive compassion for the sufferings of the *noblesse* in the French Revolution. "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird."  
C. E. S.

## FREETHOUGHT IN INDIA.

IN a Church paper of recent date there appeared an article from a missionary in India, bewailing the fact that infidel writings have found their way to India. Listen to his tale of woe. Speaking of the educated Hindus, he says: "They adopt Atheism or Agnosticism, following such teachers as Mrs. Besant, Madame Blavatsky, and Colonel Olcott, whose writings, as well as those of such men as Ingersoll, Huxley, and Spencer, have flooded the country."

How strange that the Hindu, whose religion teaches him to hold all life sacred, should reject a religion whose meek and lowly Savior said: "Those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay before me." How unreasonable for him to adopt Atheism instead of a belief in a triple God who sacrificed one-third of himself in order to partially appease the wrath of the other two-thirds. How it must strengthen his heathenish double of the Christian Bible to find a large number of the missionaries' own countrymen doubting and ridiculing it; to find them asking for an explanation of its numerous contradictions, and condemning its obscenity and immorality. Is it not shocking that the poor benighted heathen, who has been taught to place morality and justice above all else, should fail to appreciate the beauties of a religion which has left in its wake such a record of crime and bloodshed as has no other which the world has ever known; a religion which has, whenever possible, silenced all opposition by torture and imprisonment; which is to-day making a desperate effort to regain its legal hold upon the people? Terrible, indeed, is the thought that the record which nature has written of her evolution from a low to a high order of being should be placed in the hands of the pagan, that he may contrast it with the Biblical mud man and spare-rib woman.

Must not his doubts be still further increased by learning that our planet in its present condition is the result of a ages of growth, instead of a nice flat world on "pillars," which was created in a few hours, with a firmament set with cute little stars which "sang together," and could go frisking about upon occasion, and finally land in a stable; and, worse yet, must he learn that the sun is an immense body many times larger than the earth, the centre of our planetary system, around which the world revolves, instead of being a light in the sky which will stand still when man orders it to, while a horde of barbarians whip other barbarians?

How sad to think that the poor missionary, who has devoted his life for a good salary to the spread of the Gospel among the heathen, should have to contend with Western scepticism as well as Eastern heathenism. What wonder that he cries: "Woe is me! Christianity is falling! is falling!"  
A. CRAMER.

"I have no fear of the future," said a sad-looking man; "I suffer so terribly from rheumatism that all I want is to be somewhere where it's warm."

## BOOK CHAT.

ON January 1 the catalogue of Renan's library will be published, with a view to sale by auction. It is especially rich in works of Biblical and Oriental interest. There are more than three thousand works, in several languages, comprising the chief literary sources of Biblical criticism. It would be a pity if such a collection were dispersed, and it is to be hoped that it may find a resting-place in some public library or institution. Renan, before his death, expressed a hope that it might be kept together. He was at much pains to make it complete and representative, and its unique value, of course, remains only so long as it is undivided.

\* \* \*

Dean Hold, in his *Little Tour*, tells of a Chicago man who came one morning to his office with such a radiant smile that his partner could not refrain from inquiring the cause. "My dear fellow," he replied, "my doctor ordered me to walk here from my house, and this morning I have been able, in consequence, to do three splendid acts—enough, surely, to make any man happy. As I was passing one of the churches I saw a poor woman with a baby in her arms, weeping bitterly on the steps. I inquired the cause, and she told me that she had brought her little darling to be baptised, but that the priest said she must pay a dollar, and that she had no money. I told her that I had nothing in my purse but a ten-dollar note, but that she might take it to the priest, and I would wait outside for the change. She brought it, with such profuse expressions of gratitude and praise that in my modesty I hurried away. Hear now what I have done, and refrain from envy, if you can. I have dried a poor woman's tears; I have placed her little one upon the heavenly road; I have passed a false ten-dollar note, and have got the change in my pocket!"

\* \* \*

*England, the Remnant of Judah, and the Israel of Ephraim*, by the Rev. F. R. A. Glover, is one of the many cranky works devoted to the Anglo-Israel mania. Mr. Glover thinks that "Ollan Fola of Tara," in Ireland, was really Jeremiah, who migrated there after the taking of Jerusalem—in search, we presume, of a milder climate. He took, it appears, the daughters of Zedekiah with him, and there is no record of his return, or theirs, to the land of Judah; whence it follows that our own royal house is descended somehow from the daughters of Zedekiah. Selah!

\* \* \*

A powerful anti-Christian work has been published in Japan by Inone Tetsujiro, a professor of the University of Berlin, where he holds the degree of Doctor in Philosophy, and who has seen the actual working of Christianity in Christian lands; and he shows that, wherever the Christian religion is in the strongest force, there the people are worst off, and the nation weakest, while the most educated classes hold it in but half-disguised contempt. The absence of patriotism and of the inculcation of citizen and domestic duties is a strong point with Dr. Tetsujiro, who says that patriotism is the true religion of Japan. He urges that "Christianity is contrary to the welfare of country and home," and therefore unsuited to the Japanese State and the Japanese people.

\* \* \*

Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (3s. 6d.) comes to us from A. and H. Bradlaugh Bonner, Took's Court, E.C. Mrs. Bonner states that this is a collated edition, based on the earliest issues of the work, and especially on the Symonds issue (1792), which is said to have been revised by Paine himself. Mr. J. M. Robertson furnishes a long and excellent biographical introduction. The book is well printed, and stands midway between the shilling edition and the expensive edition of Mr. Conway. It is intended to be the first volume of a complete issue of Paine's writings.

\* \* \*

*The Introduction to the Talmud*, by M. Mielziner, Ph.D., Professor of Talmud at the Hebrew Union College, Chicago, reminds us of Christian books on the Bible, in that it exalts the beauties of the Talmud, while passing over its absurdities and obscenities. It must be allowed that the Talmud contains some fine ethical maxims. Indeed, some Christians, recognising this, have pretended that they may have been taken from unrecorded sayings of their legendary Christ. Professor Mielziner closes his brief though careful survey of the ethics of the Talmud with this characteristic passage: "The liberal spirit of Talmudic ethics is most strikingly evidenced in the sentence, 'The pious and virtuous of all nations participate in the eternal bliss,' which teaches that man's salvation depends not on the acceptance of certain articles of belief, nor on certain ceremonial observances, but in that which is the ultimate aim of religion—namely, morality, purity of heart, and holiness of life." This is certainly better than "He that believeth not shall be damned."

\* \* \*

At Munich is being published a collected edition of the

works of Wilhelm Weitling, a Freethinking Social Democrat, who was born at Magdeburg in 1804, and died in America in 1871. The most famous of his writings was *The Gospel of Poor Sinners*, of which an English translation appeared in 1848. He also wrote *The Workman's Republic; Humanity as it is and as it should be*, etc. The edition will have an historical biography of Weitling by Dr. C. Hugo.

## DUTY.

WERE I to know beyond dispute  
This life ends all,  
I would go on nor change my way  
From this same path I tread to-day  
Whate'er befall.

Duty is ever duty still;  
Nor need we care  
What lies across the great divide;  
There's work enough upon this side  
For all to share.

To do some good deed every day,  
To lift mankind  
From lower depths to higher planes,  
Are worth far more than sordid gains  
Of any kind.

Yea, even to have brought one soul  
Into the light  
Of hope and love is better far  
Than wealth and fame and glory are  
To any knight.

—Myron H. Goodwin.

## French Views on Death.

*Le Journal* of Paris recently asked several notables their views on death. The late A. Dumas, who has since met death, answered: "I maintain that we should think often of death if we desire to have at all times a fairly correct conception of the things of life.—A. DUMAS, Fils."

Other replies were as under:—

"If death is an evil, it is an indispensable evil, and, as a matter of simple justice, ought not humanity to be subject to the same lot which it metes out to the inferior orders of creation? We must one day disappear and pass into Paradise, hell, Nirvana, or nothingness. But as for that, let each one believe as he will. You don't expect me to speak about the beyond, do you?—WILLIAM BOUGUEREAU (*Member of the Institute*)."

"Death is the quarter of an hour after life's banquet which Rabelais speaks of. I sincerely hope that you will ask me on the day of the next carnival what I think of life.—JULES CLARETIE."

"According to the ancient myth, death and love are brothers; the one gives life, and the other takes it away. In a word, death is the necessary end of every act and every form of being. Without it the world would be insensible, immobile, and, according to our conceptions of things, a mere void.—BERTHELOT (*Secretary of the Academy of Sciences*)."

"Death is the close of a more subtle life. In the flower it sets free the perfume, in the chrysalis the butterfly, and in man the soul.—JULIETTE ADAM."

"If there were no old age, death would be an abominable thing; but, as there is old age—H. MELLHAC."

"Death is only the end of life. It is good, because it frees us from the imbeciles and the canaille, with whom we are forced to come into contact.—J. L. C. JEROME."

"Kindly excuse me. I think so badly of death that I could not, in a grave matter of this kind, express a properly impartial opinion.—PAUL STRAUSS."

"There are no theories which will enable one to bear with resignation the death of others, of those whom one loves, or, at any rate, such theories cannot be set forth in a newspaper interview.—MARCEL PREVOST."

"Here is my reply to your question, 'What do you think of death?' Chut!!!—ALPHONSE DAUDET."

## Civilisation.

Christians claim that our civilisation is due to Christianity. The claim is not true. The cause is mistaken for the effect. Our civilisation has modified Christianity. It was once a Christian duty to murder Freethinkers and witches, and to uphold slavery. Christians now deny that such things were ever right. Christianity has changed. New interpretations have been put on Scripture to make it less repulsive to mankind. Christianity is following up the march of civilisation, but keeps a long distance in the rear.—*Boston Investigator*.

### Distance of the Stars.

The sun is but a small star compared with others much further off; but even it is ninety-one millions of miles from this earth. A railway train, running at the rate of forty miles an hour, without stoppages, would require 90,625 days, or 248 years, in getting to the sun. There are other suns a great deal further off; one of the nearer ones of these is "Alpha of the Centauri," which it would take the above train many years to reach; and some of the further-off ones the train would not reach for some centuries. Astronomy can verify this. Then where is the heaven above? Is it a mental fiction, like the soul *said* to leave the body at death, but of which there is no proof, though people die daily in our midst, with every opportunity of seeing all that occurs? Will some well-educated Christian give a few words of explanation?

GEORGE ANDERSON.

### Sorry for Aaron.

The *Youth's Companion* tells of a church choir that repeated many times, "Oh, turn my pi—, Oh, turn my pi—, Oh, turn my pi—, Oh, turn my pious soul to thee." Dean Hole tells in his *New Memories* how one of these anthems annoyed the first Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Connecticut, Dr. Samuel Seabury. The Bishop was visiting the parish of Middletown, and an anthem, composed by a local musician, was sung. The words were those of the 133rd Psalm, and eight times the singers repeated the phrase, "That ran down upon the beard." At a dinner, after the service, the Bishop was asked, at the suggestion of the composer, what he thought of the music. "Oh," he replied, "I daresay it was very good, but I sympathised so with Aaron that I could not attend properly. I thought that the running down of the ointment eight times could hardly have left a hair upon his head."

### Bits from Ingersoll.

Religion is supposed to consist in a discharge of the duties we owe to God.

If God is infinite, we can neither give, nor can he receive, anything. Anything that we do, or fail to do, cannot, in the slightest degree, affect an infinite God; consequently, no relations can exist between the finite and the Infinite, if by relations is meant mutual duties and obligations.

Some tell us that it is the desire of God that we should worship him. What for? Why does he desire worship?

We cannot assist the Infinite, but we can assist our fellow men.

The civilisation of man increases as the secular power of the Church decreases.

Man, in his helplessness, has, by prayer and sacrifice, endeavored to soften the heart of God?

Why should a Christian believe in religious toleration, and yet worship a God who does not?

Side by side across the open Bible lie the sword and fagot.

Every church is a cemetery, and every creed an epitaph.

Reason, Observation, and Experience—the Holy Trinity of Science—have taught us that happiness is the only good, that the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so. This is enough for us. In this belief we are content to live and die. If by any possibility the existence of a power superior to, and independent of, nature shall be demonstrated, there will then be time enough to kneel. Until then let us stand erect.—*Selected by L. Levine.*

### Obituary.

We have to notice the death of two New England Free-thinkers of standing, Mrs. Ellen Batelle Dietrick and Dr. O. B. Frothingham. Mrs. Dietrick was one of the editors of the *Woman's Bible*. She was founder of the Women's Industrial and Educational Union, of a home for old women, a cooking school, and a kindergarten. By her pen she did a good service to the cause of Freethought and woman's emancipation in the pages of *Liberty* and the *Twentieth Century*. Dr. Frothingham, at one time a clergyman of the Unitarian Church, became more radical, and was first president of the Free Religious Association. He became a disciple of Mill and Spencer, and in 1879 severed all his church connections, and was reckoned among the Agnostics. He had reached his seventy-third year.

We regret to record the death, on December 19, of Mrs. Mary Attwood, who expired at 2 Trinity-road, Sheerness-on-Sea. Mrs. Attwood was a lifelong and consistent Free-thinker, interested in everything and everyone connected with the movement. In accordance with her own wishes, her brother-in-law, Mr. A. W. Marks, carried out a silent funeral.

### FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

DURING the first few centuries after the fall of the Western Empire, literary activity at Constantinople had fallen to its lowest ebb. In the West, amidst the general neglect of learning and literature, the collecting of books, though not wholly forgotten, was cared for by few. The charge of books, as well as of education, fell more and more exclusively into the hands of the Church. While the old schools of the rhetoricians died out new monasteries arose everywhere. Knowledge was no longer pursued for its own sake, but became subsidiary to religious and theological teaching. The proscription of the old classical literature, which is symbolised in the fable of the destruction of the Palatine library by Gregory the Great, was only too effectual. The Gregorian tradition of opposition to pagan learning long continued to dominate the literary pursuits of the monastic orders and the labors of the scriptorium.—*Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. *Libraries*.

In Christian England, when it first becomes known under that name, one of the most striking features is the popular belief in the power of human beings to make contracts with demons. Special penances were provided for those who, by evil practices, acquired the art of sending forth tempests: in this and in similar cases it is always clear that the punishment is inflicted, not for believing in the influence of the demons, but for making use of that existing influence to attain an end. The demons themselves seem commonly to be identified with the old pagan gods, who were held in honor many generations after Augustine's mission. Even as late as the beginning of the eleventh century it was thought necessary to enact that Christianity should be maintained and Heathenism expelled. The clergy, during the whole of this time, seem to have been most firm believers in the power of those who styled themselves magicians or enchanters; and it was even decreed that, if one of the clergy himself practised the forbidden arts, he should be degraded.—*L. O. Pike*, "History of Crime in England," p. 38.

There is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and of action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is when the garment of make-believe, by which pious hands have hidden its uglier features, is stripped off.—*Professor Huxley*.

Mankind has never groaned under the yoke of a more atrocious combination of moral, mental, and physical despotism than at the period when the Christian hierarchy had reached the zenith of its power.—*Dr. F. L. Oswald*.

### PROFANE JOKES.

In the S— family desert was sometimes jokingly called "the afterwards." The kitchen girl, coming in at dinner with a message from the lazy cook, lost the sentence by the way, and announced, timidly: "Please, mum, there's no hereafter."

Tired Child (at church)—"Mamma, how much did you put in the collection?" Mamma—"A penny, my dear." Child—"Well, the preacher gives an awful lot for his money." Mamma—"Yes, my dear; but it was like one of your soap-bubbles—very big, but mighty little substance in it."

"Mamma," said the little boy, in a whisper, "is this church buildin' insured?" "Hush, Johnny," she answered. "I presume it is." Johnny was silent a few moments. Then he returned to the attack. "Couldn't the Lord take care of it?"

"If a church burns down when it hain't got any insurance, don't it show that the Lord takes better care of the insurance companies than he does of the church?"

Aged and infirm Old Man (to country parson, who has been reading the Bible to him)—"Lor' now, sir, and how many wives does it say Solomon had?" Parson—"Seven hundred, William." Old Man—"And how many concubines?" Parson—"Three hundred." Old Man—"Laik a mussy, sir, but what a blessed privilege them early Christians did enjoy."

Judge Stringer: "I understand that during his recent illness Tarantula Jack experienced a change of heart?" Alkali Ike: "You bet he did. When he found himself at death's door, with Dr. Slade doing his level best to pull him through, he sent for Preacher Harps, confessed his sins, made his peace with heaven, and resolved to lead a better life if he was spared. And when I dropped in to see him this afternoon I found him propped up in bed before the open window, with his revolver in his wasted hand, peacefully shootin' the glass out of the back winders of the Salvation Army hall, across the alley."

## 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, Touzeau Parris, "The Mystery of the Birth of God."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): Tuesday, Dec. 24, 5 to 8, distribution of books, etc., to poor children. Thursday, Dec. 26, at 8.30, social party. Sunday, Dec. 29, at 7, C. Cohen, "Gods and God-Makers." Wednesday, Jan. 1, at 8.15, unveiling of portrait of the late Charles Bradlaugh by Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner.

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, select entertainment and dance. Tuesday, at 8, special social gathering. Thursday, at 8, members' general meeting—election of officers and other important business.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "How and Why was Christ Born?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Roman-road): 3, Sunday-school: 7.30, Zona Vallance, "The Old Faith Grown More Wide."

PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspari will lecture.

WESTMINSTER BRANCH (42 Vincent-street): 8, members' meeting.

WOOD GREEN (Club and Institute, 4 Lawn-villas, Stuart-crescent, opposite Wood Green Church): 7.30, a lecture.

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 12, F. Haslam will lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30—lectures, weather permitting.

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 5, tea and soirée.

DUNDEE (Tally-street Hall): 6.30, discussion.

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion—W. Reid, "Utopias Unlimited"; 6.30, Zosimus, "The Gentle Art of Criticism."

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Saracen, "Priests and Progress."

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, musical and literary evening.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, J. Roberts, "Greek Philosophy: Socrates—Antisthenes."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, a lecture.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street, near Grey's monument): 5, tea; 7, social. All Secularists invited.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, select entertainment. Wednesday, at 5.30, tea, soirée, and ball.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, music; 7.30, a lecture.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (32 Dovecote-street): 6.30, a meeting.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

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

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

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