

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ROBBING MARY.

A VERY curious robbery has been perpetrated at Toledo, famous of old for its sword-blades. During the celebration of the Festival of the Virgin, who has been appointed, probably without her consent, as the patroness of the town, some robbers got into the cathedral and stole all her belongings, which are valued at something like twelve thousand pounds. Four watchmen, armed with carbines, and accompanied by several fierce dogs, guard the Cathedral at night. It is, therefore, supposed that the robbery took place just before the men and dogs came on duty. The police have absolutely no clue, and the population is indignant.

The Virgin was decked out for the Festival in her best jewels. One of them was a splendid necklace of brilliants and emeralds, presented to her by the great Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros, who was Regent of Spain at the accession of Charles V. Another was a ring of pearls with an enormous star-shaped black diamond, presented by Cardinal Mendoza, who went with the Catholic Kings to the conquest of Granada. These "precious, precious jewels," as Shylock would say, are gone with the rest, and the poor stripped Virgin is left desolate. The thieves even took away the large silver chain with which she was attached to a railing, leaving her to stand or fall as it happened. They did not mind whether she fell forward, backward, or sideways. They had her adornments, and did not care twopence about her person.

"Are there no bolts in heaven but what serve for thunder?" What was Providence doing to let those wretches commit that sacrilege? Why were they not blasted on the spot, or turned into pillars of salt, like Lot's wife? Their remains might then have been exhibited as a dreadful warning. People would have paid money to see them, and both religion and the Church would have profited by the transaction. As it is, they are off with their booty, smiling at "the one above," and putting their tongues in their cheeks at his holy priests.

Why did not the Virgin protect *herself* against this outrage? She appears still in some parts of Europe—generally, it must be admitted, to credulous peasants and hysterical females. Are we to suppose that the Mother of God does not share his ubiquity? Is she only in one place at a time? In that case, why was she absent from this special celebration? Had she more important business at that moment in some other part of the universe? This is conceivable, but it is not characteristic. Few ladies would attend to anything else (if they knew it) while a thief was appropriating their jewels.

Jesus Christ himself, who, being God, *is* ubiquitous, ought to have prevented that robbery. It is a miserable thing for a son to stand by and see a thief walk off with his mother's trinkets.

All this may sound blasphemous enough to believers, who

are full of faith and empty of reason; but, after all, it is downright sober sense. We can only go by analogy. We talk of God's wisdom and power, and we mean the same wisdom and power as we possess, only magnified *ad infinitum*; and we should expect him to act as we should act, only without our infirmity and lack of precision. Crying "Blasphemy!" is not argument. If you bawl it till you are hoarse and exhausted, the question remains where it was, and what it was, before you opened your mouth. It only means that you have lost your temper. So cool down, O true believer, and listen to a wise text from your own Book; "Come now and let us reason together"—not fight, nor call names, but *reason*.

If not a single one of the three persons who constitute God will lift a finger while the Mother of God is being robbed to the extent of twelve thousand pounds, what is the use of talking any longer about "Providence"? Just as an earthquake will knock down a church or a public house, just as a storm will sink a missionary ship or a slaver, just as disease kills a sinner or a saint, just as fleas bite parsons or infidels, so a thief may with equal profit and safety (unless he is caught) rob a cathedral or a gin palace. The laws of nature, and the laws of human nature, operate with mechanical certainty, quite irrespective of the power "beyond" which is fondly supposed to take an intelligent and ethical interest in the affairs of the universe.

There is another aspect of this matter, in dealing with which we may offend Catholics, though we shall have the sympathy of Protestants. What a system to gull the mob it is which fills churches with dim religious light, and the thick perfume of incense, and carved and painted images of saints, and statues of the Virgin Mother of God tricked out with finery and loaded with the costliest decorations! What a system to tickle the sensuousness of man it is, while pretending to influence his spirituality, which burns candles in daylight, and makes the altars blaze with jewels! It is by such agencies that priests keep their hold upon the multitude. It is so easy to kneel, and sniff, and admire! So hard to stand erect, and think and feel like a man!

No doubt there are plenty of poor people in Toledo whose stomachs might be filled, and their backs clothed, with the wealth which is lavished upon the wooden image of a woman who perhaps never existed. Where faith is the deepest the people are the poorest, the most abject, and the most miserable. Even in England it is notorious that our cathedral cities, in proportion to their size, have the greatest number of public-houses and brothels, and the biggest army of indigent loafers. All over the world the people are bamboozled and robbed by mystery-mongers, who take all they can in this life and promise their dupes unlimited fine things in kingdom-come. How much better it would be if these clerical drones were extinguished, and if the wealth they consume were spent upon the alleviation of human suffering, the education of the people, and the extirpation of poverty, vice, and crime.

G. W. FOOTE.

A FREETHOUGHT NOVEL.

The Reason Why: A Story of Fact and Fiction, by Ernest E. Russell, is a Freethought novel, received from the author and publisher, 13 Astor-place, New York. It takes for its motto the saying of Voltaire, "How I love men who say what they think," and traces the life and religious evolution, from boyhood upward, of Paul Granger, one who does say what he thinks. The book is full of such lifelike touches, and so well reveals the process by which a youth brought up, as Paul Granger is, in the close atmosphere of Methodist piety becomes a Freethinker, that I cannot help suspecting that this story of fact and fiction, like the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of Goethe, contains a deal of the author's autobiography. It is none the worse for that. It is all very well for Browning to say that, if Shakespeare put his own self into his writings, "the less Shakespeare he." All writers—even Browning and Shakespeare—do reveal themselves, and the successful novelist is the one who is not afraid to reveal his, or her, feelings and experiences exactly as they occurred. *The Reason Why* gives, as it were, a series of photographic pictures illustrating the evolution of a mind amid the American society of the present generation, and is valuable as a contemporary record of society and thought in a stage of transition.

I know of no previous work by Mr. E. E. Russell, but he is evidently a gentleman of culture, who loves truth and fair-play. He is fully acquainted with the details of theological controversy, and he is no novice in stating them. A deal of thought and talent has been put in the work; almost too much for it to become a popular novel. The author mentions in his preface his desire to help those who are groping their way out of the maze of error and uncertainty in which early orthodox religious teaching has left them. Otherwise the ordinary reader might complain that there is somewhat too little incident and too much incidental discussion. As it is, we suspect the dearly-beloved Major-General Reader will skip from the first part to the third; overlooking the second, which deals with the making of the Christian creeds—a section, of course, of special interest to myself, and which, on some other occasion, I may introduce to readers of the *Freethinker*. That even the most abstruse questions can be treated in an interesting fashion is often illustrated throughout the book. As a specimen, I reprint a short chapter, entitled "A Small Boy Wants to Know":—

"Ma," said Steve Willett one morning a few days after Mr. Gurley's sermon, "ef little babies die, they go to heaven, don't they?"

"Yes, I s'pose so, Steve."

"An' little lambs don't?"

"No, lambs don't go to heaven."

"Why don't lambs go to heaven 's well 's babies?"

"'Cause lambs don't hev no souls, an' babies do."

"Where does babies git their souls?"

"God gives 'em to 'em."

"Why don't God give little lambs souls too?"

"I don't know."

"Where does babies keep their souls?"

"I don't know 'xac'y; inside on 'em somewheres; perhaps in their hearts or their heads."

"Why don't lambs hev souls inside on 'em 's well 's babies?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, Steve. The ministers an the Bible says animals don't hev no souls; 't least the ministers says so, an' I s'pose the Bible dooz."

"Does ministers know any more 'bout it 'n you do, ma?"

"I s'pose they do, Steve; 't least they think they do."

Then there was a short silence, during which Aunt Sue wondered why she had never before thought of these things, and asked herself the questions Steve was asking.

"Ma," continued Steve, "don't little lambs know more'n little babies?"

"I don't know, Steve. What makes you think so?"

"Wal, course lambs can't talk; 't least not so 's 't we kin un'erstan' 'em, though the ol' sheep ac's 's ef she did. But little babies can't talk nuther. Lambs jes' says ma-a-a-a, an' babies jes' says 'wa-a-a-a.' But lambs kin run an' play, an' they ac' 's ef they knowed lots more'n little babies, thet can't do nothin' but suck an' squall."

Another silence.

"Ma, did you ever see a soul?"

"No, Steve, nobody can't see souls."

"Why?"

"'Cause ther' ain't nothin' to see."

"Wal, then, what 's souls, anyhow?"

"I don't know 'xac'y, Steve, an' I don't know 's anybody else dooz. They're so'thin' inside of us thet lives forever an' goes to heaven when we die, ef we've ben good. I guess mebbly our souls is what we think and love with."

Silence again.

"Ma, does little bits o' wee babies think an' love?"

"I guess not."

"Wal, why don't they, ef they've got souls?"

"I guess their souls hain't growed 'nough."

"Don't lambs think an' love their mas?"

"I s'pose they do."

"What do they think an' love with, ef they hain't got no souls?"

"I don't know, Steve, I'm sure."

"Does anybody know, ma?"

"I don't know, Steve. Some folks thinks they know a goo' deal 'bout these things, but I ain't sure whuther they really do know any more'n I do er not; an' thet ain't much."

Then Steve went to school.

That night, when the time came for Aunt Sue to have final say to the Deacon before they went to sleep, she related her talk with Steve, and added:—

"I'd care fer it, ef that Mr. Gurley ever comes here agin, I b'lieve I'll turn him an' Steve out in the back yard together; an' ef Steve don't make 'im climb over the fence inside o' fifteen minutes, it'll be 'cause he can't climb."

The minor characters of the novel are exceedingly well drawn. Among the best are Ned Gardner, the infidel doctor; Deacon Willett and his wife, the broad-minded, though Calvinistically-trained, Aunt Sue; and the various lights of Methodism who gather round them. We lack space to particularise them, much as we should like to treat our readers to the discourses of Higley Doom, and other lights of the Church, which are written with much humor. We give, instead, the serious advice of the infidel doctor to Paul, as a freethought discourse on the text, "Ba ye not unequally yoked with believers":—

"No matter how worthy in all other respects a woman may be, if she be a devout religionist there is bound to be an ineradicable difference of opinion between you. Your standards, your aims, your ideals, your whole theory of life and duty, and, above all, the controlling motives in the training of your children, must inevitably be, and remain, irreconcilable. This will lead to one or two results: either there will be constant disagreement and mutual dissatisfaction, or one of you must yield entirely to the other and permit your joint offspring to be reared under the controlling influence of teaching that one of you believes to be wholly false and productive of evil. You can certainly appreciate, to some extent at least, what such a state of things must mean to a man or woman of strong convictions and a deep sense of parental duty."

All the characters are graphically depicted, and will receive their full due of appreciation at the hands of the reader.

We do not wonder at Paul falling in love with Thalia Dorn, who, being Paul's classmate at the university, shares with him mutual confidences of heresy. She is one of the new women, who, taking part in the full, free life of human kind, has lost no touch of womanly charm. She is able to look after and, in time of need, to support her husband; for, happily, the story does not end with their marriage, but shows us the troubles, trials, and comforts of wedded life; though, unhappily, it ends with leaving her a widow with three little children. I confess I prefer happy endings to my novels. Life is too full of tragedies for one to need being reminded of them in stories. Death must fall on all creatures of clay, but the offspring of imagination can be immortal. So please, Mr. Russell, when you write again, or should *The Reason Why* require a second edition, as I sincerely hope it will, cut out all dry discussions on the Eutychean and other heresies. It may be hard to sacrifice one's display of learning, but Mrs Stowe, when she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, did not insert a long history of the rise and progress of slavery. So please cut down your second part, and let your hero and heroine "live happy ever afterwards." If you must kill someone, let it be a sky-pilot, and let even him die repentant. You may not thus satisfy your own purposes, but you will at least oblige one of your admirers.

J. M. WHEELER.

The more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint.—Lavater.

A SECULARIST'S ESTIMATE OF CHRISTIANITY.

(Concluded from page 531.)

THE view which we propounded in our article last week as to the inception and nature of Christianity is corroborated by a further reference to the relationship which sprang up between early Christianity and the philosophy and paganism of that time. Heathen philosophy, falling more and more into decay, was more and more received into the Church, whose first simple theology thus became the complicated system of barren subtleties and metaphysical contradictions and confident assertion of things unknowable, which the modern Churches, much secularized despite themselves, have inherited from the Dark Ages, when their religion was supreme. And while Christianity thus freely drank of the dregs of the noble Greek philosophy, it was no less ready to adopt the rites of the old heathen superstitions. The ignorant Pagans clung to their old customs and festivals, and the Church, anxious for converts at any price, left them these, if they would but call them by new names. It is historically demonstrable that there is nothing supposed to be characteristic and important in the sumptuous and elaborate ritual of the great Roman Church—whether ceremony, festival, vestments, images, or the very Cross—which cannot be traced back to Paganism. The Christian theology was “developed” by free adulteration with an alien philosophy in its decadence; by the decrees of Councils procured by intrigues, force, and fraud; by the decrees of Popes which were sustained by forgeries, and often contradictory; the whole being bound firmly together by the webs spun out of their own minds by subtle schoolmen in their monkish cells.

Christians appear never tired of asserting that, in the preservation and growth of their faith, there has been something so wonderful as to be really “miraculous”—in other words, the hand of God is visible in it. But the fact is, the Christian sects lingered in an obscure and weak condition for a much longer period than many other sects have done, whose founders and first preachers were quite as poor and ignorant as the fishermen of Galilee. Why, in this respect, as in the confronting of perils and hardships, early Christians are very much inferior to Mormonism itself. Not till three centuries after the alleged date of the crucifixion of Christ did the sect rise into real importance by being adopted as an engine of statecraft by the ruthless Constantine. Compare this with the spread of Islam during the very lifetime of Mohammed, and within half a century after his death. Ah, reply Christians, but Islam was spread by the sword, while Christianity was spread solely by the peaceful power of the spirit. To which we answer that Mohammed did not resort to the sword until he was constrained to do so in self-defence, and that Christians appealed to the sword as soon as they were strong enough to do so with a fair chance of success. While weak they were very humble and mild; but as soon as they got the power they fulfilled the words of their Master (Matt. x. 34-6). With reference to the alleged wonderful progress of Christianity, it makes no real advances now, in spite of all its missionary efforts. It has never made any impression on Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or Brahminism. At the present time the Churches at home are rent by intestine divisions, and assailed on all sides from without by all that is vigorous, intelligent, liberal, free, and progressive in our modern civilisation. Christianity stands now as the mythologies of Greece and Rome stood at the period when it arose. The gods were more numerous than ever before, the temples more magnificent, the sacrifices and festivals more splendid, the priesthood more arrogant; but living faith had deserted them, the intellect of the age despised them, and its loftiest morality condemned them.

The pretension that Christianity was the inaugurator of peace and goodwill is entirely unsupported by even its own history. For centuries it was the great instigator and promoter of war and ill-will among the nations of the earth. The record of the doings of the professed followers of Christ has been one of bloodshed, cruelty, and fanaticism, unexampled in the annals of mankind. When they held undisputed power, scarcely a ray of intellectual light illuminated its dark path of ignorance and superstition; and the promotion of the liberty, comfort, and general welfare of mankind formed no part of their religious duties. It is a noteworthy fact that during the ages

when Christians directed human affairs political and social reforms, whereby the masses could be improved, were not even suggested. It was not until secular effort supplanted theological stagnation that the mundane advancement of the people commenced. Secularists regard the teachings of Christianity in reference to submission to evil, personal injury, reliance upon prayer, indifference to the things of this world, and obedience to God's will, regardless of what that will is, as being subversive of the best interests of the human family. We accept the advice to “love one another,” but we discard the injunction to hate our own flesh and blood; it is quite right to “be diligent in business,” but to take no thought for the morrow, or for our lives, would greatly interfere with our power to be so; to “prove all things” we regard as highly necessary, but for us to be damned because we cannot arrive at one particular conclusion seems to us the height of injustice; “let every man be persuaded in his own mind” is excellent teaching, but for a person to be “accursed” who preacheth any other gospel than that of Christ is the very incarnation of theological fanaticism. Thus we prefer the mental freedom taught by Secularism to the intellectual prostration inflicted by orthodox Christianity.

Secularists cannot fail to recognize that Christ's advice to love one another was intended to be very limited in its scope. It was evidently given only to his disciples, and not to all mankind. The New Testament abounds with passages which indicate that but little love was to be manifested to those outside the Christian fold. For instance, we read: “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto dogs.” “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. xv. 24-26). “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not” (Matt. x. 5). “Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven” (Matt. x. 33). “If any man come to me and hate not his father, mother, wife, children, etc.,.....he cannot be my disciple” (Luke xiv. 26). St. Paul's idea of loving one another appears to be as narrow as that of his Master's, for we read: “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. i. 9). “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.....he is proud, knowing nothing.....From such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. vi. 3, 5). Where is the love in the following threat: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9)? Surely this gospel of “love” can have no “glad tidings” for us Secularists, who cannot believe that Christ was the savior of man, for here is the punishment threatened to those who reject him: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.....And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. xxv.). This everlasting fire—wherein, as he declares on several occasions, the principal pastime shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—is to be the doom of the vast majority of us who have heard the gospel of good tidings. Our case is thus far worse than that of those who have never heard of Christ, for, in his own words (Luke xii. 47, 48): “And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.” So that the gospel called of Salvation is to most of us a gospel of Damnation, making heavier our punishment and prolonging it through eternity.

Briefly, then, the Secularist's estimate of Christianity is this: We see nothing, either in the alleged manner of its introduction into the world or in its nature, to induce us to consider it in any way unique; it failed to remove the evils or to correct the errors which surrounded its birth; its development was accompanied by strife, wars, poverty, and intellectual darkness; and after eighteen hundred years of trial, with everything in its favor, it has proved impotent to regenerate society. Our duty, therefore, is to propound principles which are in harmony with the needs, the aspirations, and the genius of modern life.

CHARLES WATTS.

SCHEME FOR DEFEATING THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.

AT the National Secular Society's Annual Conference I submitted the rough outline of a Scheme for entirely or partially defeating the Blasphemy Laws as far as they deprive Secular Societies of the right to receive and hold property in trust for the maintenance and propagation of their principles. The Conference decided that I should proceed with this Scheme, taking what assistance I needed from the Executive. I have talked the matter over with a few leading persons in our movement, and the principal details were considered at the last Executive meeting. I now submit the Scheme to the whole Freethought party. The legal language, which will appear in the Articles of Association of the Society I propose to establish, is here omitted. Only the substance is given in plain language which all can understand. I want those who are interested in this effort to read the following carefully, to consider it clause by clause, and each clause in relation to the whole. When they have done this, I ask them to send me any criticism or suggestion that may occur to them. All letters will be fully considered, and as soon as possible the Articles of Association will be completed, with a view to the immediate starting of the Society.

1. The object of the Society is to receive, hold, and administer property, accruing by gift, bequest, or otherwise, for the promotion of Secularism.

2. By Secularism is meant, the philosophy of life which is based upon human and natural considerations, to the exclusion of everything superhuman or supernatural.

[This will be amplified in the Articles of Association, in close approach to the Principles of the National Secular Society.]

3. The Society consists of an unlimited number of members.

4. Those who sign the Articles of Association for the purpose of registration are members without election.

5. Persons wishing to become members afterwards must be proposed and seconded, and admitted or refused by the Board of Management.

6. Members must pay an admission fee of half a guinea, and a subscription of five shillings annually.

7. No member shall derive any profit, by dividend, bonus, interest, or otherwise, from the Society. The Society's funds must be devoted absolutely and entirely to the object set forth in its Articles of Association.

8. The Board of Management shall consist of Twelve Directors.

9. Every Director shall be appointed for life.

10. Should a Director wish to resign, his resignation shall be tendered to the Board.

11. Any Director may be called upon to resign by a clear two-thirds majority at any annual meeting; and, in case his resignation be not tendered within one month, the Board is to remove his name from the list of Directors.

12. Five Directors shall form a quorum.

13. Should the Board by any contingency be reduced in number below seven, the Directors shall have power to appoint two themselves, subject to ratification at the next General Meeting.

14. The Directors shall appoint their own Chairman.

15. The Annual General Meeting of Members shall be held in London in the month of January.

16. Members can vote either in person or by proxy.

17. The Society shall not be wound up except by a clear vote of nine-tenths of its members.

I am advised that such a Society will be perfectly legal, after Lord Coleridge's judgment on the occasion of my trial in the Court of Queen's Bench. It would not be necessary if the Blasphemy Laws were abolished, or the Liberty of Bequest Bill carried. But short of that desirable end, which is not likely to be reached for a very considerable time, this Society will provide an ample guarantee to donors and legators. Money or property can be given or bequeathed to the Society. Its members will be numerous enough, and its constitution stringent enough, to afford a satisfactory security that all such money or property will be devoted to the objects for which it is designed. It will also be possible to give or bequeath money or property for a special object in a special locality, constituting the Society trustee, instead of one or more particular individuals.

G. W. FOOTE (*President, N.S.S.*)

ANCIENT SCEPTICISM.

THE interesting article by "Chilperic" on "The Antiquity of Scepticism," dealing with the Buddhist *Jataka*, reminds us that even in the Bible—especially in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes—we have evidence of Jewish scepticism. It would be hard to find a better expression of so-called modern scepticism than that of the Preacher, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccles. ix. 10). A very similar sentiment is expressed by Lucian in his *Dialogues*.

Diagoras, a pupil of Democritus, was one of the best known of Greek sceptics. It is related that he threw a wooden statue of Hercules on the fire to cook a dish of lentils, saying he would give the god a thirteenth work to perform. One day, at sea in a storm, the sailors attributed it to having an Atheist on board. Diagoras pointed to other vessels. "They are in the same storm, aren't they? Do you suppose I am in each of them?"

Pyrrho is said to have been so confirmed a sceptic that he originated the saying, "There's nothing new and nothing true, and it don't matter." He really taught the relativity of knowledge. So did Epicurus, who undertook to banish the dread of the gods. His follower, Lucretius, anticipated the evolution of philosophy. Euhemerus also anticipated Herbert Spencer in teaching that the gods were dead heroes. Euripides said plainly that religion was an affair of state "to gull the mob and keep them under."

Bion, the Borysthenite,
By his birth from Scythia known,
Did religious worship slight,
God's affirming there were none.

When Bion was shown in the temples the votive offerings of those who were saved, as an evidence of Providence, he said he should first like to see the record of those who were lost.

Xenophanes, seeing the Egyptians strike their breasts and lamenting the lost Osiris, said: "If he is a god, do not lament him; if a man, do not worship him." To him is attributed the saying that if oxen and asses had gods they would be fashioned after their own likeness.

Empedocles left sentiments which have been admirably modernized by Matthew Arnold in his *Empedocles on Ethna*. For instance—

Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away.

* * * *

All things the world which fill
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still
With what we fail at One.

* * *

Fools! that in man's brief term
He cannot all things view
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are gods who do.

Demonax, the cynic philosopher, and friend of Lucian, when a certain person said he was going to the temple to pray, inquired: "Are the gods deaf that they cannot hear you from their place?" Lucian himself mocks at all gods and religions, including that of "the impaled sophist of Palestine," preached by the hooked-nosed, bandy-legged Paul.

Sextus Empiricus wrote a treatise on scepticism, which anticipates some of the observations of Hume and Mill. Julius Cæsar denied in open senate the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The Cæsars themselves took what little worship was left in Rome.

In India scepticism dates before the time of Buddha, who undermined Brahmanism by teaching that the gods themselves were subject to Karma. The *Mahabharata*, book xiii., tells how an Indian Freethinker was changed into a jackal. Mr. Muir, in his *Religious and Moral Sentiments from Sanskrit Writers*, has given a specimen of the argument used by the ancient Hindu sect of Carvakas, or Materialists, to whom Colebrooke devoted an essay. I transcribe a few lines:—

Did God exist, omniscient, kind,
And never speak his will in vain,
'Twould cost him but a word, and then
His suppliants all they wish would find.

If God to men allotted woe,
Although that woe the fruit must be
Of men's own actions, then were he,
Without a cause his creature's foe,
More cruel thus than men who ne'er
To others causeless malice bear.

This reminds one of the lines of the Persian astronomer-poet, Omar Khayyam :—

Oh Thou, who man of baser earth did make,
And even with Paradise devise the snake
For all the sin the face of wretched man
Is black with, Man's forgiveness give, and take.

The scepticism of the *Rubiyat*, or quatrains of Omar, as rendered by Edward Fitzgerald, is not only modern, but the very best expression of the scepticism of to-day.

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

The revelations of devout and learned
Who rose before us, and as prophets burned,
Are all but stories which, awoke from sleep,
They told their fellows, and to sleep returned.

I sent my soul through the Invisible,
Some letters of that after-life to spell;
And, by-and-bye, my soul returned to me
And answered, "I myself am Heaven and Hell."

We find that wherever culture has reached a certain elevation it becomes sceptical and looks down on the creed of the crowd.

LUCIANUS.

SELF-SALVATION.

IN olden times it was the boast of every tribe which plundered its neighbors that its God was the strongest. The Egyptians bragged for Amon, the Greeks for Jove, the Jews for Jehovah. "Our God can lick your God" was the challenge; and they expected when they went to battle that their god or gods would fight for them. If beaten, they laid it to their god's shiftlessness or to his anger. So they changed gods, or else fasted and sacrificed to appease him. The Jews swapped gods frequently before settling down on Jehovah. It was in that way, you see, that they got the "only true God." They cheated the other fellows, and got the best of the bargain. The Jews have been distinguished for making good bargains ever since.

It has been much the same way with modern society. We have bragged that our Savior is the only Savior. There is no other way whereby men can be saved than to come to Jesus. On the other hand, the Arab swears by Mohammed as the great prophet sent of God. The Hindoo as ardently believes that in Buddha alone is life and salvation. The conceit and the dogmatism of this boasting are palpable. He is a savior who saves.

As a matter of fact, the Saviors of Asia are Brahm and Buddha. The Savior of Africa is, for the present, Mohammed. The Savior of Europe and European colonies is Jesus. And what are these Saviors doing, or what have they done? I re-quote from Herbert Spencer a list of testimonies which he has gathered for another purpose; but that does not detract from their validity for the purpose for which I use them.

It is easy for us to see from them that all the good which is accumulating under the sun is not from the faith of the Christians. In the Nehilgherry Hills of India dwell tribes of which Colonel Ouchterlong writes: "Drunkennes and violence are unknown among them." Campbell says of the Lepchas: "They have seldom any quarrels, and such as arise are settled by their chiefs without violence or malice." He also says: "They are singularly forgiving of injuries; making mutual amends and concessions." Colonel Hunter says of the Santals: "Crime and criminal officers are unknown." Of the Jakuns we read: "They never steal anything, not even the most insignificant trifle." Another author writes: "No part of the world is freer from crime than the district of Malacca—a few petty cases of assault or of disputes about property are all that occur." Of the Arafuous, Rolpt writes: "They have an ambition to gain the name of rich men by paying the debts of the poorer. In an election of chief the disappointed candidate was much grieved, but he finally said: 'Whether chief or not, I still have power to be of use to my fellow-villagers.' The old men said, yes, that was so—and it comforted him."

Miss Bird, a recent traveller of note in Japan, says that she found the Ainos, a tribe far inland, to be truthful, gentle, considerate. She adds, with a bit of romance: "I hope I shall never forget the music of their low, sweet voices, the soft light of their mild, brown eyes, and the wonderful sweetness of their smiles." Of the Dhimals we are told: "They treat their wives and daughters with confidence and kindness; while polygamy, concubinage, and adultery are not tolerated." Those who have read Tacitus no doubt recall his account of the chastity of the northern tribes of Europe before they were conquered by the Romans or converted to Christianity. Such accounts come from all ages and from many lands; truth, honor, chastity, gentleness, tenderness—such as are by no means universal in lands under the influence of Christianity.

Now, it is apparent that the great bulk of all this goodness is not the result of any kind of religion; but it is to be found in the lands of other gods than Christian gods, and race has more to do with it than religion. It is equally apparent that the great current of moral life in Asia is from three or four men who have taught high doctrines. It is equally true that the tide of morality in Africa sets in Mohammed. It is a cutting sneer which they fling at Christian tribes when they say: "He lies like a Christian." So far as Asia is saved to-day, or likely to be saved, by inspired men, it is by its own Brahma and Buddha. So far as Africa goes up in the power of a saving man, that man is Mohammed.

The world is coming together. Freethought has done it. Freethought has broken the shackles which chained the human mind to fear and to the worship of cruel gods. Freethought has caused the broad human radicalism of Christian lands and the growing spirit of tolerance and respect for good everywhere beginning to manifest itself. We can feel to-day the heartbeat of Chunder Sen in India. It is impossible to keep up religious antagonisms much longer, unless you destroy steam vessels, tear up the railroads, and tear down the telegraphs.

It is the constant fling and sneer of silly, stupid minds that we Freethinkers are tearing down the blessed Christian temple of salvation and of happiness, and are putting nothing in its place. On some future occasion I shall pay my respects to that foolish averment; but for the present I will only say: Come into our fold, you poor, benighted, withered remnants of a decaying, dying superstition, and you shall find more salvation, more happiness, more everyday comfort, more brotherly love, more beautiful thoughts and inspiring ideals—aye, and less sinfulness, than where you are.

H. ROWLEY.

—Boston Investigator.

ACID DROPS.

Justice, which describes itself as "*The Organ of the Social Democracy*," has for its motto *Fiat Justitia Ruat Cælum*. This is an old Latin exclamation, but we venture to doubt its value. We hope justice can be had at a smaller price. Our Socialist contemporary, which is a very good paper in its way, complains of the old school of Secularism, "with G. W. Foote at its head." It appears that the National Secular Society ought to become Socialistic. But it is neither Socialistic nor anti-Socialistic. To become either would be to lose its identity. The great primary bond of the National Secular Society is Freethought. *Justice* knows this very well, but it likes to sneer at those who are brave enough to bear all the odium of an anti-theological propaganda. This is the worst odium that can be incurred, even in the most "civilised" countries.

The great mistake of the Socialists is that they fancy religion can be set aside and disregarded, all the while that their children are being taught religion in the interest of priestcraft.

There are nearly a hundred thousand lunatics in this country. The number increased by more than two thousand last year. At this rate we shall all be lunatics in the course of time, unless something is done to check the evil. Children's brains are too much addled with religion, for one thing. We might at least put a stop to that.

According to the *Boston Congregationalist*, the Rev. A. Holden Byles, who is now on a visit to England, was once staying at Omaha, where he assisted the Presbyterian minister in starting a "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon." Mr.

Byles advised him always to trust to local talent; but the advice was disregarded, and the Hon. William J. Bryan (now the Democratic candidate for the Presidency) was invited to speak. He came over from Lincoln, and occupied fifty minutes in proving the existence of God. Some time afterwards Mr. Byles met a member of that Presbyterian Church, and asked how the "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon" movement was progressing. The reply was short—"Bryan killed it."

Jesus Christ is credited with a saying, found among the world's proverbs in various forms, to the effect that a house divided against itself cannot stand. The University Court of Aberdeen has been exhibiting how far the Presbyterian heads of the Scottish Kirk are in union. The court is making an inquiry into allegations made by the members of the Biblical Criticism Class against the method and adequacy of the teaching of the Rev. Professor Johnston, D.D. The poor man is not being pursued for heresy. On the contrary, he is altogether too orthodox for his students, who, it appears, when he speaks on the good old lines of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and talks of the inerrancy of scripture and its superiority to science, etc., let their sticks fall, laugh, or show other signs of their ungodliness, so that he appears to have lost all discipline over them.

Among the ungodly acts charged against the students was placing a chair for the professor which was lower than the one which was his by right, and upon which he might have come down plump. A professor who cannot guard himself against such indignities at the hands of budding young ministers of the gospel seems to endanger his own standing as well as his sitting in the chair.

The calling of evidence on the subject has led to a deal of rumpus; many divines, as well as students, not caring to appear as witnesses in such a ticklish matter. The Rev. E. Ritchie especially protested against some observations made by the president, Rev. Professor Dove Wilson, who said he did not envy Mr. Ritchie his moral capacity. The Rev. J. Mackay says the students are unruly and ungodly. He has seen them throw Bibles across benches, and one Bible almost struck the Professor. One cause of the disturbance was a discussion on Professor Drummond's *Ascent of Man*. One thing is very certain; some students do not relish having pumped into them the old stagnant ditch water that served many centuries ago. This is an encouraging sign of the times.

The result of the case, if confirmed and carried out, will be the deposition of Professor Johnston from his professorship. They find that sufficient cause has been shown for requiring him to retire on a suitable retiring allowance. The *Aberdeen Journal* (August 22), commenting on the case, says: "It is evident that the students almost to a man favor the views of the higher critics, and look upon the doctrines of the ultra-orthodox as fossilized and ridiculous. This tendency of the students cannot be ignored."

Reynolds's Newspaper says: "Heresy, like sexual offences, seems to be gaining strength in Scotland. The principal of the University of the Western metropolis is seriously tainted with the 'new thought,' and, worst of all, the professors under him take advantage of their holidays in picking holes in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Last week Professor Bruce was sojourning in Wick, in the far North, and in a lecture delivered there stripped the Nazarene of his supernatural claims with as little compunction as did Renan, the celebrated Frenchman."

Socialist parsons are having a warm time of it. The Rev. T. C. Collings has had to resign at Spitalfields, and the Rev. J. Dennis Hird at Eastnor. The latter has not only delivered a lecture on "Jesus the Socialist," but published a satire on "A Christian with Two Wives." We don't at all see why Mr. Hird should suffer for the latter publication. There is nothing in the New Testament to prevent a Christian from having twenty wives, if they can keep him or he keep them.

Margaret Taylor stole sixpence from her employer, and although it was her first offence, and the prosecutor recommended her to mercy, Alderman Alliston at the Mansion House gave her six weeks' imprisonment. A penny a week seems a small profit. Next time Margaret Taylor steals she will probably go for a bigger sum, and Alderman Alliston will have taught her to do so.

Harry A. Long has, according to his own account, discovered that only soot is gained by fighting a sweep. In his desire to rid Glasgow of another infidel-slayer, whose record was no better than it should be, he made facts public which resulted in an action for libel. Mr. Long won his case, with costs, but as "ye canna tak' the breeks off a Hielantman," and as the other party in the case, like Joseph, "is not,"

Mr. Long is left with a debt which his friends are asked to wipe off.

Cardinal Vaughan's *Tablet* says of the Anti-Masonic Congress, to be held at Trent from the 26th to the 30th of September: "The movement has received the warm commendation of his Holiness, Pope Leo XIII., and of a large number of cardinals and bishops."

The pilgrimage of French priests to Rheims is regarded by the French press as a sort of synod to consider a course of opposition to the Government.

The *Rock* hopes that the Christian shareholders of the Furness Railway Company will let the Directors know that they are deeply pained by their having entertained Li Hung Chang on a tour to see the beauties of the district on a Sunday. Even a Chinese Ambassador should observe the rule, "Let us all be unhappy on Sunday."

Rev. William Rowley, of Reighton Vicarage, near Budlington, has gone bankrupt, his gross liabilities being £2,425 and his assets £236. He attributes his failure to interest on borrowed money and law expenses. Once he bought a mission van to go round saving souls in the villages, but it was seized by his creditors, and we suppose the poor souls will have to go to Hades on this account. Parson Rowley is doubtless a true believer, but there are some texts he does not take literally; for instance, "O we no man anything."

A. H. K. B. tells a new story about a divine, who discovered in the middle of his sermon that the congregation, except the parish idiot, were all asleep. He stopped and sadly commended the solitary listener, who exclaimed: "If I hadn't been an idiot, I should have been asleep too!"

The Salvation Army Shelter, Blackfriars-road, has been the subject of several controversies as to its sanitary condition and general management, especially in the important "chucking-out" department. The *Morning Post* now calls attention to its economic aspect. In the course of 1895 more than 600 paupers went direct to the Southwark Union from the shelter. In addition to these there were more than 80 casuals for whom the cost had to be defrayed of a day and two nights' detention. Altogether, the Union put down a sum of £837 as the additional cost to the ratepayers for having a Salvation Army Shelter.

The dour sacerdotalism which obtains in Scotland makes itself frequently ridiculous in the attitude it assumes to Sabbath "keeping." Not so long ago it was discussed whether it was right to rescue drowning men on Sunday. The "rigidly righteous" took the ground that they should not be rescued, because it was the Deity's mode of punishment for infraction of His laws. A dreadful eyesore to the "unco guid" has been the construction of the Glasgow Central Underground Railway, opened last week. It took seven years to construct it, and the bulk of the work was done on the "Sawbath." The howling and execrations of Sabbatarians in the Press and in the pulpit went on unbroken for the seven years; and if the prayers of imbecile pietists avail anything, the promoters of the new line will have difficulty in paying a dividend.—*Reynolds's Newspaper*.

"Paddy" riots have taken place at Glasgow. Catholics and Orangemen displayed their usual brotherly love and Christian charity towards each other, and the result was broken windows and broken heads. It took three hours at the St. Rollox Police-court to dispose of the charges against the most obstreperous of these vehement disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus. One of them has a three months' holiday in the local gaol. It will cool him down.

A "Cathedral Car" travels on the Canadian Pacific Railway. A live Bishop rides on it, and deals out Kingdom-come to the villages *en route*. There is another running in Michigan. Russia boasts of six—one in the Caucasus and five in Siberia. Mass is celebrated in the villages along the line. Priests are always ready to make use of science—when they cannot kill it.

France, as it appears from the census of last March, has a population of 38,228,968, which points to an increase of no more than 133,819 during the last five years. This increase, small as it is, seems confined to the cities, and fully accounted for by Italian, Belgian, and other immigration, so that it may be said the population is stationary or decreasing. M. Marcet, writing in the *Journal des Debats*, deploras the result, but fails to indicate any remedy. The provincial population, even where Catholic priests enjoin increase and multiply, will not face the continued sub-division of the land.

Some plumbers working on the roof of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, at Ostend, accidentally set fire to the

building, a good part of which was destroyed, including the pulpit and the principal altar. Peter and Paul together couldn't save their own edifice.

The *Church Times* has to wail over the ended Session with the Education Bill and the Benefices Bill both wrecked. Further, it says, the Session "is deplorable for the action of the House of Lords in sanctioning marriage with a deceased wife's sister. If for nothing else, the Session which ended on Friday will be branded with a stain in the minds of Churchmen."

The *Church Times*, of course, counsels the Church party to be in entire agreement among themselves as to their demands. Luckily this has not been arrived at yet. The safety of honest people's property often depends on the disagreements of the other class of people.

The Act passed by the Jersey Legislature for legalising marriage with a deceased wife's sister has been sanctioned by the Queen in Council. Those who wish to celebrate these Church-denounced unions need not now travel to America or the colonies. A short voyage to the Channel Isles will ensure a legal marriage. The fact that Jersey has followed the example of other constituents of the Empire will doubtless help to settle the question in England.

Meanwhile the Church papers are very angry, and with reason. Jersey and the other Channel Isles are in the diocese of Winchester. The Bishop of Winchester voted against the measure, yet has to permit in one portion of his diocese marriage which in another portion he denounces as incestuous. The *Church Times* says: "In administering discipline within his diocese, the Bishop of Winchester will be forced to come into conflict with the civil law of Jersey. As a bishop of the Church of England, he cannot recognize or permit marriage with a deceased wife's sister, whatever the Jersey Legislature may say. If he stands firmly to his duty, a most serious struggle may ensue." When, however, the Church comes in collision with the State, it knows the fate of the clay pot knocked against the iron one.

"Jerusalem! All change here!" How funny it sounds. Yet this is what we presume is heard now that a railway runs to the Holy City. Had there been railways two thousand years ago, what special cheap excursions would have been run to witness the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

The Cairo correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* says that an Englishman has just done the journey to Jerusalem and back, on a dromedary, in nine nights—five there and four back. The Jews who left Egypt took forty years in reaching Palestine. How the devil did they put in the time?

The *Catholic Telegraph* says: "Cremation is an un-Christian way of getting rid of the bodies of the dead. It is pagan. It is praised by the Atheists as a sign of enmity to Christ. It is advocated by the devilish secret societies that have sworn to destroy the Church."

The Bishop of Lichfield has recently received a letter, signed by twelve English chaplains in the Riviera, setting forth the harmful influence exerted upon their work by English clergymen, when holiday-making, attending the concerts and being seen in the rooms of the gambling casino at Monte Carlo. Wherever worldly pleasure is to be found the man of God is sure to be present. It is an understood thing that he goes that he may be able to preach against wickedness with authority, testifying to that which he has seen.

A clerical writer in the *Ecclesiastical Gazette*, on the question, "Is the tendency of Ritualism to Romanism?" answers it in the negative. He holds that Ritualism is rather a rampart against the encroachments of Rome. But he fails to see that the real issue is between Rome and reason, and that Romanists carry out the principles of the Ritualists to their logical issue. Of course people are not logical, or this writer might see where the issue lies.

The *Church Review* does not like the prospect of Wesleyan ministers being relieved from the three years' rule. It even goes so far as to suggest that it is not honest to transfer endowments, which were left by John Wesley under specific directions, to an organisation without the restrictions which he devised.

Mr. Joseph Arch, M.P., for whom we are glad to know an annuity has been provided, says he used to preach for Wesleyans, Baptists, and Unitarians. "But," said an interviewer, "your creed was that of the Primitive Methodists." "The first article in the creed of the Primitive Methodists," replied Mr. Arch, somewhat evading the question addressed to him, "is a good bellyfull of food." The Primitive Methodists may fairly claim, if this representation be

correct, to have got to a primitive, solid, and universal foundation. We hope Joseph Arch, M.P., will be empowered to draw up any remaining articles of the primitive creed. Well begun is half done.

The death of Mr. C. B. Reynolds, the American Free-thought lecturer, recalls a curious fact in connection with his prosecution for blasphemy. One of the principal passages against him in the indictment had been taken from an article by Mr. Foote, entitled "God in a Cradle," which appeared in the Christmas number of the *Freethinker*, 1884. Readers of Colonel Ingersoll's *Defence of Freethought* will see that he did not hesitate to endorse Mr. Foote's description of the baby-god.

According to Professor Hilprecht, who is the head of an expedition sent out to Babylonia by the University of Philadelphia, the history of the Babylonian people as recorded in cuneiform writing on tablets is carried back at least two thousand two hundred and fifty years further than it had yet been known. In other words, there is now abundant written evidence that the Babylonian people existed, and were civilized enough to be able to write, at least seven thousand years before Christ. That is to say, it extends far beyond the utmost time that in Biblical chronology can be assigned to the birth of Adam.

Another result is that Sargon, who was found in the bulrushes long before Moses, is not, as some have supposed, a mythical character, but a real person. One of the new tablets speaks of "the year when Sargon marches against Palestine" (Martu). This was 3890 B.C., when Adam was still alive.

The followers of Jesus, known as Peculiar People, were brought before the attention of the county coroner of Kent by the case of James Gaskin, who, though afflicted with strangulated hernia, refused to call in medical aid, or to trust to any power save that of prayer. The result was gangrene set in, and the man died from exhaustion. A verdict to this effect was returned.

The uncomfortable aspect of India is presented by the return of the number of deaths for which wild beasts and snakes are responsible. The former take an average yearly toll of 3,000 lives, and the latter of over 20,000. This fact may throw some light upon ancient serpent worship, concerning which many have written learnedly with no better foundation of fact than the legend of the Garden of Eden.

The release of the Irish dynamiters, Daly, Whitehead, and Maloaney, after thirteen years of penal servitude, calls attention once more to the cold brutality of our prison system. No blood is shed, and no bodily tortures are inflicted, but the man is steadily destroyed; he either becomes a physical wreck or a mental ruin. There was really more kindness in the old system of rough ill-treatment occasionally, but with more personal freedom within the limits of the gaol, and more frequent communication with the outer world.

A circular on the Benefices Bill has been issued. In it the Bishop of Marlborough is represented as writing: "For myself, I hold that the present system of Episcopal patronage works well, and I am quite opposed to rash and needless changes. Anyhow, it suits me." The *Pall Mall Gazette* says: "This is a little too cruel."

At Waltham, Massachusetts, six officers of an Orange Lodge have been fined 35 dollars for cruelty to a member who was being initiated, and who was, among other things, branded.

Those who think that an omnipotent heavenly father has arranged everything for the best should read what Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the American humorous poet and essayist, said to Mrs. Stuart Phelps Ward: "Outside I laugh. Inside I never laugh. It is impossible. The world is too sad." Yet Dr. Holmes was a meliorist, and was universally renowned for his geniality. There was an old saying, *Ab tres medici duo atheni*. The wonder is that any who know the stern facts of life can be believers.

The L. D. O. S. got up a petition to the Great Western Railway asking for the abandonment of Sunday goods traffic and Sunday excursion trains. The chairman said the directors would take the memorial into their careful consideration, but he could not hold out the slightest hope that the prayer of the memorialists would be acceded to. A similar petition was presented at the Midland Railway meeting, where the chairman told the petitioners if they wanted any alteration they should petition Parliament.

At Childers (Q), a few Sundays ago, a missionary baptised a number of kanakas by immersion in a water-hole. The usual hymns were sung and the stereotyped exhortations

given, but immediately the boys got on dry land again a tribal row occurred, and they set at each other's throats in earnest. They had become militant Christians.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The *Morning Leader* says in an article on "Reverend Touts": "There is a clergyman at Deptford—one Hodson—who appears to have succeeded in adding a new terror to death. When arrangements are made to bury anyone in unconsecrated ground down there it seems that the clergy of the Church of England can get the names of the relatives and friends of the deceased by calling at the offices of the Burial Board. Then an active and pushing curate, one who can be relied upon to book orders, hurries off, and tries to nab the corpse for the consecrated ground. We believe that the most rigorous scientific analysis has failed to detect any difference between the chemical properties of the two sorts of ground; but it just happens that a burial in consecrated ground carries with it certain fees for the Church parson, while burial in unconsecrated does not. Hence this frantic desire to put the dear departed in the sanctified portion of a cemetery. There is money in most things now-a-days, and the clergy, no doubt, find this body-snatching game remarkably good business."

It gives a case in point where, when a funeral reached the cemetery for a burial in unconsecrated ground, the undertaker was asked for an extra four shillings and sixpence, so as to secure the benefits (if any) of a consecrated grave for the deceased. The undertaker declined to make the payment, and had the body taken into the chapel. Upon this one of the curates of the church informed the undertaker that he had taken upon himself a very serious responsibility—another manner of saying that he had diverted four shillings and sixpence from the coffers of the Church. And so, after all this hideous bargaining and ghoulish greed on the part of the Church, it gained the day, and the dead man was buried in consecrated ground.

Any one who supposes that the anxiety of the clergy was not for the fee, but for the soul of the deceased, over which, in the old days, it was supposed that demons had power if buried in unconsecrated ground, should read the sequel. The four and sixpence remained unpaid, and at the next funeral of a child by the same undertaker the money was demanded. He declined to pay, and thereupon the clergy took the amazing course of having their revenge upon the parents of the child, and point-blank refused to bury it in consecrated ground unless the fees for the burial of some one else were paid. The result was that this child was buried in unconsecrated ground against the wishes of its parents, and because of a monetary claim which, whether justifiable or not, had no more to do with them than with the man in the moon.

Mr. Virchand B. Gandhi, B.A., who represented the Jain religion at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, has been commissioned by his co-religionists in India to go back to America as a missionary of Jainism. He also hopes to interest Americans in the subject of free schools for the natives of India outside of those conducted by Christian missionaries, and especially in the education of female natives. All the present existing evils, Mr. Gandhi claims, have been the work of the priestly class, who in the present times greatly oppress the people and oppose all progress and education, knowing full well if the masses are educated they themselves would have to work.

The *Islamic World* chronicles fourteen converts from Christianity to Mohammedanism during the past year in Liverpool. This contrasts favorably with the one Arab mentioned in the *Missionary Record* as the sole convert, after four years' work, by the North Africa Mission.

Referring to the case in Ceylon in which a judge catechised an Agnostic witness as to his belief, and compelled him to swear, the *Straits Times* (July 23) observes: "We print a report of a scene in which Sir Winfield Bonser, formerly of the Straits, catechised a Mr. Horsburgh, a police magistrate. Mr. Horsburgh desired to affirm rather than to swear. In the end Sir Winfield Bonser caused Mr. Horsburgh to swear. We are not surprised at that. When Mr. Bonser had occasion to argue with people in the Straits, the keen and pointed nature of his arguments, and the remorselessness with which he pushed those arguments, had a tendency to induce people to swear. Possibly, if the truth were fully known, Mr. Horsburgh, in this case, may have sworn in a subdued manner even before he consented to swear openly."

St. George's Chapel, Windsor, is closed for its annual cleaning, and the Westminster Abbey service is dropped in the summer months. Yet St. Paul's Cathedral remains open. Is it because God's house really needs doing up, or is it because the keepers like a good holiday?

The members of the Latin and of the Greek Church in Palestine exhibit such intense rivalry that the Moslem soldiers of the Sultan have sometimes to be called in to keep the peace between them. It now appears that the members of various Protestant bodies exhibit similar rivalry. A difference has arisen between the German residents in Jerusalem and the English Bishop, Dr. Blyth. In 1892 the latter gave a decision in favor of his countrymen with regard to a part of the churchyard held in common by both the British and German communities. It is said that he now claims the administration of the churchyard as belonging to him alone. The heads of the German residents in Jerusalem have accordingly applied to the Foreign Office in Berlin in order to get their grievances redressed by help, if necessary, of diplomatic steps in London. The quarrel of Christians over the possession of sites, all equally bogus, must be an amusing one to Jews and Moslems.

The letter in the *Church Times* suggesting the incompatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity has evoked a great number of replies, most of those who answer deeming it sufficient to say that the Grand Lodge of England has excommunicated the Grand Orient of France for permitting the order to be open to Atheists. At the same time, they boast of its world-wide fraternity.

The ankle exhibition got up in connection with an American church has not been, as yet, transplanted here; but the *Church Times* says: "We learn from the *Lancaster Observer* the details of a bazaar in aid of a mission church in the diocese of Manchester, which show that we are only a short way behind our American cousins. To say nothing of an illegal lottery, in which the vicar of the parish won a prize, and a Sunlight Soap Competition among ladies, what are we to think of a Hat Trimming Competition for gentlemen? 'Each gentleman,' we are told, 'was given a hat and materials, and had to complete the work in two minutes. The vicar won the first prize.' That vicar ought to be put on view, wearing the prize hat.

Ellis, the Goole sailor under sentence of death at Leeds for the murder of his wife, continues to spend most of his time in writing letters to relatives and friends, in which he repeats that he is fully prepared for "the glorious world above," and that his happiest time is when he is paying attention to the chaplain. What a pity his friends have been seeking to detain him from the glories which await him above.

The *Church Times* lets out that the Bishop of Winchester was not only a prominent member of the Select Committee of the House of Lords which drew up a report in favor of keeping the Sunday laws as they are, but that the report was mainly due to his pen. What else could be expected from a bishop, even though he poses as a broad-minded one?

The Rev. John Vallency, of Roslinton, has been fined £2 and costs for brawling in his own parish churchyard, the prosecutor being the parish warden. The vicar ordered a grave belonging to a family named Wright to be hacked to pieces. A scuffle arose, and the man of God presented a revolver. A counter-summons, which he took out against one of the Wrights, was dismissed.

Judging from what has taken place at Stirling, there will sooner or later be a general revolt against the teaching of the Presbyterian Catechism in the public schools. Mr. Hogg, a member of the Stirling School Board, moved that the teaching of the Catechism be abolished in the Board schools. He was in favor of nothing further than Bible lessons. His motion was not seconded, but another motion to "amend in some particulars the syllabus of religious instruction in the schools" was carried by five votes to three.

George Gilmour, of the Cathcart-road Wesleyan Methodist Mission Band, Glasgow, has been arrested for stealing and pledging musical instruments to the value of £17. This was too much for his comrades, who sent for the constable, instead of obeying the Sermon on the Mount. Had they followed the teaching of Jesus Christ, they would have asked the thief to take a few more.

The great body of men affecting the name of good and pious have unconsciously abnegated the sacred privilege and duty of acting or of speaking the truth, and fancy that it is not truth which is to be acted, but that an amalgam of truth and falsity is the safe thing. In parliament and in pulpit, in book and in speech, in whatever spiritual thing men have to commune of or to do together, this is the rule into which they have lapsed; this is the pass at which they have arrived. We have to report that human speech is not true, that it is false to a degree never witnessed in this world till lately.—*Carlyle*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, August 30, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W., at 7.30, "Zola's Rome and the Pope's Ban."
September 6, Athenæum Hall; 7 and 8, Plymouth, Debate with the Rev. W. T. Lee; 13, Glasgow; 20, Liverpool.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—September 6, Manchester; 13, New Brompton; 27, Edinburgh. October 4, Glasgow; 6 and 7, debate at New Brompton with the Rev. A. J. Waldron.—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.

THE National Secular Society's new office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

DR MORTIMER.—Thanks for the papers. Pleased to see your handwriting again.

J. A. RICHARDSON.—Thanks for cuttings. We have noticed Father Ignatius's circular already.

C. C. CATELL, of "Emerson," Pokesdown, Bournemouth, will send a copy of each of his *Freethinking* and *Gems of Truth* post free on receipt of a postal order for 1s. 6d., being half price with postage added. Our previous announcement understated Mr. Cattell's offer, which is open to all readers of the *Freethinker*.

STANLEY JONES.—We note your address for Branch secretaries—52 Davenant-road, Holloway, London, N. Your list is too late for this week.

A. J. HOOPER.—Mr. Wheeler will be glad to see the brass piece you mention. Shilling Month subscriptions will be acknowledged next week. Thanks.

E. SMEDLEY.—Brewin Grant was a man of some ability, but a most unmannerly and unscrupulous *farceur*. Coleridge's statement, that not one man in ten thousand has strength of mind or goodness of heart enough to be an Atheist, may be found in his *Table Talk*, published in Bohn's Library. Mr. Bradlaugh's quotation from Bacon is accurate; the passage occurs in the Essay on Superstition. We are unable to answer your third question.

BERTRAM SMALL.—We have absolutely no knowledge of the person named Travers Chapman, who is boasting at Leicester of having debated with Mr. Watts and Mr. Cohen. Certainly he has never debated with Mr. Foote. Thanks for your promise to subscribe towards the expenses of the American Delegation.

E. GOTTHEIL.—Joachim Kaspary is a well-meaning enthusiast. No particular importance attaches to his opinion of Colonel Ingersoll's ability. Thanks, all the same, for your humorous letter.

J. M. R.—Cuttings received with thanks. Some of them, as you will see, have been utilised.

A. RILEY (Manchester).—We are obliged to you for the explanation. Our paragraph was founded on what appeared in the newspapers. According to your letter, it is the barbers themselves who are trying to put down Sunday shaving, in the interest of shorter hours of labor. With this object we have the heartiest sympathy. But this, of course, is a new aspect of the question, which cannot be discussed in a few sentences. It was Sabbatarianism against which our remarks were directed.

W. JOHNCOCK.—Will try to use both.

R. JOSLIN.—Funny documents. We may hang a paragraph upon them.

H. JONES.—Will notice next week and return.

J. E. B. HANCOCK.—*Humanity*, the monthly organ of the Humanitarian League, can be obtained at the League's office in Great Queen-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, W. C.

W. TRUMAN.—The best handy edition of Shakespeare we know is "The Victoria Shakespeare," published by Macmillan. It is in three volumes, well printed, price 15s., and should cost you 11s. 3d. The text is that of "The Cambridge Shakespeare." The Globe edition in one volume (3s. 6d.) is clearly printed, but the type is extremely small. You will be able to obtain selected plays by Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, and others, in the "Mermaid Series," published at 3s. 6d. a volume. Collected editions of the old dramatists, such as Bullen's of Marston and Middleton, are expensive.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND.—*Per R. Forder*:—J. Fulton, 10s.; S. L. (Leicester), £1. *Per Miss Vance*:—J. G. Dobson, 2s. 6d.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—*Per Miss Vance*:—M. Christopher, 5s. *Per R. Forder*:—E. Magnier, 2s. 6d.

A. F. WALTER.—Thanks for your good wishes and subscription towards the visit of Messrs. Foote and Watts to America. Acknowledgments are postponed till next week, which opens Shilling Month.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Isle of Man Times—Aberdeen Journal—Post—Krugersdorp Sentinel—People's Journal—Echo—Justice—Free Review—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—South Wales Echo—Secular Thought—Freeman's Journal—Liberator—Two Worlds—Freidenker.

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.

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

SPECIAL.

READERS of the *Freethinker* are reminded that September is Shilling Month. Every one who has a real interest in Freethought should subscribe something. I do not want anyone to send me less than a shilling, but I shall be glad to receive as many more shillings as he or she can send me. My desire is to realise as large a sum as possible for the following purposes:—(1) my visit to America, with Mr. Charles Watts, to represent the National Secular Society at the special Chicago Congress of the American Freethinkers; (2) my Lecture Scheme, which is the Forward Movement of our party; (3) the National Secular Society's general fund, which needs recruiting, especially now that we have taken a new office at 377 Strand. Cheques and postal orders should be crossed. All subscriptions will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

Branch secretaries, and all others concerned, are requested to note that the new office of the National Secular Society is at No. 377 Strand, where all letters should be addressed to Miss E. M. Vance.

G. W. FOOTE.

PERSONAL.

I PEN the following lines with a feeling of humiliation, not on my own account, but on that of the National Secular Society, of which I have the honor to be President. This office is a very thankless one in some respects. Its occupant is an obvious mark for every critic and grumbler. All who have grievances of any character, all whose egotism is wounded by unsatisfied ambition, all who fancy that their services are not only insufficiently appreciated, but inadequately remunerated, look upon the President as the embodiment of the causes of their dissatisfaction and disappointment. There are other persons who object to a President altogether, and vent upon him their ill-will against the Society's constitution. Another class of persons, at the opposite extreme, regard the President as a sort of providence, and hold him personally responsible for everything. These look upon every difficulty and every misfortune as the result of *his* want of zeal, foresight, or energy.

All this, it may be said, is more or less inevitable, and it is idle to complain of what cannot be prevented. But I should never have complained of this merely. It is for a graver reason that I break through my general policy of not printing what may serve our enemies—for a graver reason that I take the party thus publicly into my confidence.

During the last two or three years, in addition to the common unpleasantnesses of my office, I have been the victim of systematic defamation, and this has now reached such a climax that I am compelled to do one of two things—either to retire as M. Casimir Perier did from a situation in which he was open to incessant attack without any means of defence, or to speak out regardless of etiquette. For the present, at any rate, I choose the latter alternative.

For some time it has been surreptitiously whispered that I have appropriated to my own use a sum of money bequeathed to me for the National Secular Society. One member was summoned to appear before the Executive to answer a charge of having made this statement, and was expelled from the Society. But lies are not easily killed. As Ingersoll says, they have a very vigorous vitality. This one in particular has been industriously spread over the whole country. It is now being more openly told by a man who quarrelled with me in January because I had "the incredible meanness" to pay him only a guinea and a half (out of my own pocket) for a single Sunday evening lecture.

Six years ago I was for the first and only time in my life left executor to a will, which was drawn absolutely in my own favor. The testator gave the will, together with a written statement of his wishes as far as they concerned the Freethought party, into the hands of Mr. Robert Forder. I visited the testator several times before his death, and he communicated to me some private wishes

in the course of conversation; but with these no one has any concern. When he died I took the will to my solicitor, and left the written statement in the hands of Mr. Forder, where I thought it should remain. I have never seen it since, and it is for Mr. Forder to say (if there is any necessity) what became of it. I carried out all the dead man's wishes to the letter; paying £100 to the N.S.S., a certain sum to Mr. Forder, the old secretary, and a smaller sum to Mr. Reynolds, the treasurer—in both cases for their personal use. With respect to the remainder of the estate, which has been grossly exaggerated, I owe no man an explanation. No secret was made of the matter. It was well known on the Executive, and no one raised a question. Mr. Reynolds took the cheque I sent him for his own use, as well as the one for the N.S.S. Others who wink at this lie sat upon the Executive with me for years afterwards, and attended several Annual Conferences. If I had done wrong, why did they not protest? Why did they wait until they had quarrelled with me? I am disgusted at this wretched and untimely calumny. I did not make the Blasphemy Laws; I have suffered under them; and if it is meant that, being President of the N.S.S., I must never receive any bequest expressly intended for myself, I will resign to-morrow sooner than give a moment's countenance to such a monstrous injustice.

My libellers circulate extraordinary reports of my income. One of them has said in Regent's Park that I get as much as a Bishop. He did not indicate the sources of this splendid revenue. As a matter of fact, I am deriving extremely little from the *Freethinker*, and what I receive for my lectures is a very open secret. At one place, where this ridiculous story has recently been causing perturbation, I received on the occasion of my last visit the sum of £2, out of which I paid my hotel bill and my railway fare to and from London.

But this is not all. The libellers violate the privacy of my home and insult my wife, who takes no active part in the movement, and has never injured them. They talk of my palatial establishment, the champagne (!) we consume, and our retinue of servants. There are few houses in which the living is habitually simpler, and my wife looks after four children and does all the domestic work with the sole assistance of a girl aged sixteen. Three of our children go in the democratic way to a Board school.

It is sickening to have to mention such matters, and I shall never recur to them. I say now, once for all, that only one or two very intimate friends know the difficulties and embarrassments of my position. For years I lost money every week on my paper, so that at last I was obliged to raise the price from sheer exhaustion. I have carried on publishing (for Mr. Forder only *sells* my publications) with a sadly inadequate capital. And I have never spared my pocket, any more than my energies, in the service of Freethought.

Those who have watched my career, those who know something of my work, those who think that even the President is entitled to fair play, those who hate libels and detest libellers, should rally to my support, and show practically, by responding to my appeal for open and legitimate objects, formally sanctioned by express votes at the Annual Conference, that they do not mean our movement to suffer from this malignant conspiracy.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. FOOTE lectures this evening (August 30) at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject "Zola's Rome and the Pope's Ban." This is a subject that should be of interest to Freethinkers, and perhaps a good many persons who do not quite belong to our party.

Another N.S.S. open-air demonstration was held on Clerkenwell Green last Sunday morning. Mr. Wilson again kindly provided a brake and a pair of horses. Mr. Bate acted as chairman, and Miss Vance said a few words as secretary. Mr. Watts being absent on account of the weather, which was more threatening in the locality of his residence, the work fell almost entirely on Mr. Foote, who spoke for three quarters of an hour. A little rain fell while he was speaking, but the crowd steadily grew in dimensions, and there was a splendid assembly before he concluded his address. A

Christian Evidence man within earshot retailed some cheap personalities, which tickled his hearers at first, but soon wearied them, and they gradually drew off to the Secular meeting.

A greatly improved audience assembled last Sunday evening at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, to hear Mr. Charles Watts lecture upon "Heaven or Earth: Which?" Many strangers were present, including a large number of ladies. The lecture was evidently enjoyed, judging by the repeated and hearty applause. Several pertinent questions were asked, to which Mr. Watts (who was in capital form) replied. Miss Vance presided and made a neat little speech, expressing her pleasure at seeing so many ladies present. One lady, who had attended the hall for the last three Sundays, joined the National Secular Society.

The National Secular Society lost one of its most valuable and respectable vice-presidents by the death of Mr. N. B. Billany, of Hull, whose obituary appeared some time ago in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Billany was held in high esteem as a man and a political and social reformer by many of his fellow citizens outside the Secular party. We are pleased to see that a scheme is on foot for raising a Memorial Fund, which will be applied in harmony with his wishes and principles. The chairman of the Committee is Mr. James Stuart, 22 High-street; the Treasurer is Mr. Charles Judge, York Union Bank; and the Secretary is Mr. G. T. Hall, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street, from whom subscription sheets can be obtained.

Mr. Arthur Reade, writing in the *Manchester City News* an account of a tour up the Rhine, says: "We admired the charming way in which the people spent their Sundays. Where they went we went—to the Volksgarten and the Flora. The latter is the finest 'beer' garden in the city. Each of these places was crowded with well-dressed people strolling about the gardens, listening to good music, dining, or drinking Rhine wine or bock. There was no drunkenness, no rowdyism, no police. Everybody seemed happy and contented; and we could not help contrasting the bright and healthy life of the people of Cologne with the sad and unhealthy life of the people of Manchester. Here, the Puritan and the parson try to make us as miserable as possible on Sunday; there, everybody tries to make everybody happy. The crank is unknown, and the parson minds his own business. But this remark applies to all Continental cities. Certainly, life is sweeter abroad."

Lord Justice Fitzgibbon's place on the Irish National Educational Board has been filled by Mr. Edward Dowden, Professor of English Literature in Trinity College. The *Freeman* says the appointment makes a new departure. "Hitherto," it remarks, "the National Board has been always composed of men who, however they differed in detailed views, were professors of the common doctrines of Christianity. Mr. Dowden used to boast of his fidelity to the teachings of Comte, and was the leading light among the small band of Irish Positivists. He differs from the ordinary Comtists, however, by his bitter antagonism to Catholicity." We should hope that, as the majority of the Board are Catholics, who endeavor to sway education in a religious direction, Professor Dowden may act as some counterpoise to their schemes.

There appears to have been a blunder in the advertisement of the approaching debate between Mr. G. W. Foote and the Rev. W. T. Lee at Plymouth. It was originally arranged to take place on August 31 and September 1, but was afterwards postponed to September 7 and 8, at Mr. Lee's request. Somehow or other, the wrong date got upon the bills, which have had to be altered. Our readers at Plymouth and in the neighborhood will no longer be perplexed. They will understand that the debate is really fixed for Monday and Tuesday, September 7 and 8, in the Co-operative Hall.

Mr. Foote's debate with the Rev. W. T. Lee at Swansea on "Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead?" took place in Wood-street Congregational Church. Amongst the advertisements for Sunday, August 23, in the *South Wales Echo*, we notice one of a sermon in that same church by the Rev. W. Spurgeon, who, we presume, is the pastor. Apparently the reverend gentleman reviewed the debate, as after the question discussed by Messrs. Foote and Lee he puts "Freethinker and Christian." We should be glad to receive some report of the sermon. Anyhow, it shows that the local interest in the debate has not died away.

Mr. Charles Watts has reprinted in neat pamphlet form his articles entitled *A Secularist's Catechism*, which have lately appeared in the *Freethinker*. Many readers will doubtless be glad to have it by them for use and reference, and also to lend to their orthodox friends who may be open to "see the other side."

WHAT IS "DIVINE PROVIDENCE"?

A WEEK or two ago, having occasion to pass through the vicinity of Westminster Abbey, I was seized with the inclination to revisit the "venerable pile," and a few minutes afterwards found myself one of a large congregation—chiefly composed of provincial sight-seers—listening to the choir beautifully rendering an anthem. Certainly the old Abbey was looking its best, which is saying not a little: a great building, architecturally noble, suffused with mellow light, music and singing of high-class floating through its chancels and chapters up to its vaulted roof, to say nothing of the "spiritual presence" of the many great departed whose tombs surround us, is quite sufficient to elevate or beautify the thoughts of either Christian or Atheist. The clergy, so far as their own pockets are concerned, are certainly good business men; they know the disposition of the people for whom they cater; they know the truth of the words of Pope:—

Some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.

Unable to penetrate more than a few yards beyond the door, I sat down at the foot of a statue immediately opposite that of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, on which, after his name, were inscribed the words, "Under whose Administration Divine Providence exalted Great Britain to an height of Prosperity and Glory unknown in any age." *Divine Providence!* Now, this is a common, everyday expression. It is constantly in the mouths of the more pious of Christians. To them it is an explanation of every occurrence which happens to be at the same time unusual and personally beneficial. Perhaps, however, constant use has made it but a figure of speech. It is charitable to hope so. But this excuse certainly cannot be made for the words wrought in large characters on the memorial of Chatham. Surely, nothing irrelevant, from the Christian point of view, would have been allowed to have been inscribed there! No, there is nothing else for us to believe but that these words mean what they say. The motives and the actions of Chatham are believed to have been specially inspired by God, and, therefore, a glance at these motives and actions of the first Pitt will answer the question, "What is Divine Providence?"

William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, was a patriot in the strictest orthodox sense of the word. Were he living today, he would be an advanced Jingo among the Jingos. Evincing throughout his life a total disregard for the rights of others, he displayed the greatest arrogance towards all foreign nations, and thereby, as a matter of course, greatly pleased John Bull, and instilled into him the belief, which has not yet been eradicated, that he was the equal of ten foreigners. Pitt acted as if he believed the whole world to be at the disposal of England for the purpose of plunder, and that any country which dared to say us "nay" was an enemy which must be humbled to the dust. His prominence in the world of politics was derived from his power of breathing a martial spirit into the English people, and he knew that unless wars could be kept up his influence would fade. Hence his cry throughout his life was "War, war, war!" Tens of thousands of men might die on the field of battle, homes might be rendered desolate, enormous taxes might be imposed, huge debts incurred, and consequent poverty display its tatters in every corner; but Pitt must keep his high estate, and England must be exalted to a position in which she might fear no rival; she must be absolute, dominating, mistress of the world.

Perhaps at no period of our history have English politics been in such a thoroughly corrupt state as during the reigns of the first two Georges, particularly when the Government was in the hands of the Pelhams. The Duke of Newcastle, who succeeded Henry Pelham in 1754, regarded bribery and general corruption with pleasure. Pitt, who professed great disapproval of bribery, nevertheless entered into an alliance with this unscrupulous, but weak and vacillating, aristocrat, on the understanding that the one governed and the other bribed. Two years later the Seven Years' War broke out; England, throughout the whole of it, playing a very prominent part. This war was one of the most ignoble in history. It was absolutely needless—it was nothing else than a struggle, in which most of the countries of Europe were engaged, for territory; in which England, with Pitt at her head, showed, as usual,

that she had no equal in the art of stealing other people's property. Arrogant as he was towards foreign nations in general, the chosen instrument of Divine Providence was quite ferocious in his hatred of France, and he exerted the whole of his great powers in the life-long attempt to bring about the complete ruin of that country. But he was not successful; Divine Providence was not quite strong enough for that. In 1761 he resigned office because the Cabinet would not declare war against Spain in the midst of the great conflict then raging. When, however, war was declared against the Spaniards in the following year, Pitt once more returned to power. And so the murderous business went on in this strain, England's "glory" and debts rapidly rising, until the American colonists made up their minds to teach the old country a lesson. Indirectly Pitt may be considered to have been the cause of the outbreak of the Colonist revolt. His arrogance had been instilled into the hearts of some of his colleagues, Grenville in particular; and Grenville followed in the footsteps of his master in dealing with his countrymen beyond the seas. Now, whatever else Pitt might be, he certainly knew where to draw the line, and he knew that arbitrary and harsh measures of policy towards the colonists would, in all probability, end in disaster. Hence he urged an amicable settlement. But that his desire for peace was only diplomatic or skin-deep is revealed in the fact that when, America having entered into a treaty with France, it was proposed to the Duke of Richmond to remove the ministers and make peace, ill though he was, Pitt (or Chatham) went to the House of Lords, protested against "the prostration of Britain before the throne of the Bourbons," and declared that war, *with whatever issue*, would be preferable to the proposed terms of peace. The address secured a majority against the motion, and the war was continued. This was the last public act of "the great patriot."

We thus see what Divine Providence means. It means needless bloodshed—perhaps I had better say murder—it means robbery, it means tyranny, it means hatred of so-called enemies, it means inconsiderate bullying by the strong over the weak, it means the brute-force ascendancy of one nation over others, it means everything that is vile, selfish, and cruel. Surely the day is not far distant when the rottenness of the hypocritically much-belauded "Divine Providence" will be manifest to all.

CHARLES STIRRUP.

PALESTINE AND JOSEPHUS.

By comparing Palestine with the description given of it in the Bible it must be confessed that they are not only dissimilar, but the description in the Bible is diametrically opposed to the facts. Palestine is a comparatively unknown country, and, since those who have visited it and have written about it were mostly pious Christians, the truth has not been told. Many writers have taken their ideas from Josephus, and even the writers of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* seem to have been influenced by him; and yet it must be confessed Josephus is almost as untruthful as the Bible, as far as the description of the country goes. While his descriptions are enormously exaggerated sometimes, at other times they are entirely untruthful.

Josephus claims that the fountain of Siloam is sweet water. Nothing is more untrue. The water is bad, and runs only in the winter and spring. When the rain and snow fall on the high ground north of Jerusalem it sipes through fissures in the rocks, and some comes out below Jerusalem, forming the fountain of Siloah or Siloam. The rocky formation through which it sipes contaminates the water, and as the geological formation of a country cannot alter much within two thousand years the water must have been useless at Josephus's time. He speaks of the tower of Psephinus being 70 cubits high (about 128 feet), and affording a view of Arabia at sunrise, and of the Hebrew possessions on the Mediterranean. Nothing could be more untrue. Had Josephus affirmed that in his days the cow jumped over the moon, it would have been no more ridiculous. The tower would have been much lower than the summit of the Mount of Olives. Upon that summit there is a tower much higher than Psephinus, and yet neither Arabia nor the Mediterranean can be seen from its top.

In his description of Palestine, Josephus not only exaggerates, but tells as facts that which he knew to be untrue. He speaks of Palestine as a large country, while, in fact, it is smaller than the county I live in, which forms but a small part of California. He claims Palestine to be a rich agricultural country, while the fact is the country consists mainly of barren limestone cliffs, with not an inch of soil upon them. There are but few acres of arable land in the mountain districts, and the rich strip of land along the Mediterranean the Jews never owned, according to the Bible. He speaks of the rivers of Palestine, while, in fact, the Jordan is the only river Palestine possesses; a gulch through which a torrent sweeps during a rain, and becomes dry again when the rain is over, is not a river. He says there is no want of rainwater in Palestine. Let us see what the facts are. Palestine has a climate similar to California; it rains only during the winter, and in the summer rain is unknown. Now, the average rainfall at Jerusalem is claimed to be eighteen inches annually. The evaporation in that dry, hot climate cannot be less than three-eighths of an inch per day. So, if every drop of water remained where it fell, the last drop would be evaporated in less than two months. As it is, the naked cliffs contain little or no soil, and during a rain the water rushes into the gulches, leaving the country as dry a few hours after a rain as it was before. When there is not sufficient rain during the winter to fill the cisterns the want of water during the summer often causes great suffering among the people, and there is not one inhabitant to-day where Josephus claims hundreds were living in his day; and if we add to this the innumerable herds of cattle he speaks of, we must conclude that men and beasts in his day lived on sunshine and rocks. There is no truth in his description of the country. And his descriptions of Jerusalem, of the Temple, and of the siege of Jerusalem are equally untruthful.

Josephus claims that the value of gold fell fifty per cent. when Jerusalem was taken. How could a people who inhabited a sterile country, and who, on account of that sterility, could never be numerous; who had neither agriculture nor commerce, and subsisted partially by robbing their neighbors, and partially on the few goats their country supported, accumulate such an amount of gold as to make the price fall fifty per cent. on the taking of a little town like Jerusalem. There is no truth in the statement. He claims that the name of God was written over the temple in four vowels. In his day the Hebrew language had no vowels, and how could a name be written in characters which did not exist? Hebrew writing at Josephus's time was more or less unintelligible, as the alphabet contained no vowels, and no writer could express a clear idea in Hebrew till the seventh century of our era, when the vowel points were added. Hence so many mistranslations in the Bible. We are told that the country was full of trees. Palestine is an almost treeless country now, and from its nature it must always have been nearly treeless.

The number of men engaged in the siege or at Jerusalem at the time are over-estimated by Josephus beyond all conception. We are told that 600,000 dead bodies were carried out through one gate alone. Without knowing through how many gates the dead were carried, since Jerusalem is encompassed by deep, rocky gulches on three sides; and on the fourth the Romans lay close to the wall, the dead were carried out and thrown into the gulches, for the Roman soldiers occupied the other side of the gulch. Now, supposing there was but one gate on each of the three sides through which the dead were carried, it would give us 1,800,000 dead carried out through the gates. Now, we are further told that many of the dead were simply thrown over the wall; that the Romans every day killed 500 of those who ventured outside of the walls; that many houses in Jerusalem were filled with dead bodies, and then closed up; and that the dead lay in heaps upon the streets and in the open places in Jerusalem. Summing it all up, it is a low estimate to say that 2,000,000 Jews died during that siege, and the estimate would be low likewise if we assumed that one-third of the population remained alive. Therefore, according to Josephus's statements, no less than three millions of people were inside of the walls of Jerusalem at the commencement of the siege. According to recent measurements, the walls of Jerusalem enclose now 210 acres. According to Josephus and other statements and present indications, at Josephus's time the walls

enclosed about one-fifth less ground than the present walls. Supposing they enclosed 200 acres, we have 968,000 square yards for three million people, not only to stand upon, but upon which to perform their daily vocations, trading, warlike movements, etc. As the houses in Josephus's time were but one story high, and in Jerusalem they are not much higher now, the walls of the houses took up a good deal of the space; so, if the walls of Jerusalem contained 3,000,000 people, there must have stood from four to five men on every square yard.

R. GUNTHER.

—*The Independent Pulpit.*

CHRIST AND WOMEN.

NOT only in the Old Testament and the Epistles, but in the Gospels themselves, we look in vain for tenderness towards women. If Christ be the personage the Church declares him to be, one would naturally expect to find, at times, even he seemed to be sadly in need of that respect and devotion natural on the part of a son to his parents; take, as an instance, the familiar story of his parents searching for him and finding him, apparently indifferent to their feelings, disputing with the doctors in the temple.

We can imagine somewhat the anxiety and worry felt in the mother's heart, as she searched in vain for her boy. One fancies, too, that even the most undutiful son, upon discovering what trouble and sorrow he had caused in his thoughtlessness, would have expressed his sorrow; but what was Christ's reply. Was it an expression of regret or sorrow? It was positively rude, and unnaturally indifferent; and this seems characteristic of him.

Christ, in choosing his twelve disciples, did not choose a single woman. Apparently he never loved one; evidently he never married one; he never uttered a single word in reference to woman's rights; he never emphatically and distinctly denounced the man who was wanting in respect and proper feeling towards them; he never uttered one word about a woman's love, while his views concerning marriage were, to use Professor Newman's phrase, "peculiarly monkish."

Although, during his life, several women were remarkable for their love and devotion to him, his life was not remarkable for any especial devotion towards any woman. One anointed him with an expensive ointment, as a token of her devotion to him; but what act in his life towards a woman compares with it? True, he wept at the grave of Lazarus, but whether it was because of the sisters' sorrow or because of the loss of his friend is doubtful. No, at least on this question the Old Testament is substantially at one with the Gospels, and the teaching of the Gospels is identical with that of the Epistles; and wherever the teaching of Christianity has been practised women have held a subordinate position. Sir Henry Maine, in his *Ancient Law*, p. 168, says: "The situation of the Roman female, whether married or not, became one of great personal and proprietary independence. But Christianity tended to narrow somewhat from the very first this remarkable liberty." And, again, he says: "No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is ever likely to restore to woman the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle Roman Law." The Christian priests have always used their influence to keep women from enjoying equal liberty with men.

"She was represented as the door of Hell, the mother of all ills. She should be ashamed at the very thought that she is a woman. She should live in continual penance on account of the curse she has brought into the world. She should be ashamed, especially of her beauty" (Lecky's *European Morals*). Yet no body of men have done more to degrade and demoralise women than the Christian priesthood. When will women cease to fill our churches, when will they cease paying to hear the impudent falsehood uttered time after time from the pulpit, that Christ was the best friend women ever had? When will they realise that, instead of that being true, the truth is that the Bible and the Christian priesthood are her greatest enemies?

W. WITT-LEAVIS.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or anything else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his own writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground. The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told exceeds everything that went before it.—*Thomas Paine, "The Age of Reason."*

BOOK CHAT.

THE Pope has had Zola's *Rome* placed on the Index Expurgatorius. Henceforth no Catholic can read it without a special dispensation. This is the Papal way of answering an unpleasant book. But will it serve the turn? We suspect not. It is a splendid advertisement for Zola, and will probably increase the number of his readers.

* * *

Mr. J. M. Robertson issues the second of his penny "Papers for the People" under the title of *The People and their Leaders* (R. Forder: London). It is ably written, of course, and deserves attention. Mr. Robertson advocates the creation of efficient political machinery, and the permeation of the Liberal party by the more advanced schools of reform.

* * *

The *Free Review* for September opens with an able paper on Mr. Spencer and Mr. Balfour, by E. H. Parker. "Love's Coming of Age," by F. Rockell, is a laudatory criticism of Mr. Edward Carpenter's book with that title. J. M. Robertson continues his illustrations of the relations of Shakespeare and Montaigne, incidentally rebutting the contention of Mr. Feis, that our poet disliked the philosophy of the French sceptical essayist. "Daniel in the Critic's Den" is a reply by Chilperic to a book on the subject, by Dr. R. Anderson, whose ignorant incompetence is well exposed. W. A. Leonard shows the lack of clear belief in immortality by the Jews of Old Testament times. Monsieur A. Fournier writes on Mlle. Couedon in connection with "The Angel Gabriel's Visit to Paris." J. P. Gilmour's "Perisciana" is a philosophic reverie, evidently written on the Firth of Clyde. Geoffrey Mortimer writes, in his ever-interesting manner, on the subject of subjects to man, "The Human Animal." Mr. Ernest Newman writes humorously on "The Philosopher at the Music Hall." Cyprian Cope treats of "A Mormon Record"; Zophiel of "Marriage on Lease"; and last, not least, "R. V." deals with Nietzsche and Schopenhauer in his review of "New Books."

* * *

Mr. Ernest E. Russell, the author of *The Reason Why*, noticed by Mr. Wheeler in another column, is editor of *Public Opinion* of New York, one of our most valued exchanges.

* * *

Nietzsche's poetic rhapsodies, entitled *Also Sprach Zarathustra*—(Thus spake Zoroaster)—has been translated, and, with an introduction by Professor Tille, forms the second volume of the series of the complete works of the German Anarchist.

* * *

Longmans & Co. announce for the autumn season a work by the Rev. F. W. Fownby on *Education and Modern Secularism*. Another work likely to be of interest to our readers is *The Bible: What it Is, and what it is Not*, by Dean Farrar. It will perhaps be found to be the most important book yet written by the Dean of Canterbury. Dr. Farrar says that, "while supporting the unique grandeur and inestimable value of the Scriptures," he must point out "the dangerous errors which have sprung from their misrepresentation and from humanly-invented theories as to the nature of their inspiration."

Obituary.

PROFESSOR JOSEPH DELBOEUF, of the University of Bonn, Germany, whose death is announced, was one of those Belgians who have made culture and Freethought synonymous. Born at Liège in 1831, he devoted himself to physics, and was one of the earliest exponents both of evolution and of hypnotism.

Died, on August 17, Haridas Roy, a grandson of the famous Freethinking Reformer, Ramonhun Roy. He leaves a widow and infant son. Indian papers please copy.

We regret to record the sudden death, at Seattle, Washington, on July 31, of Mr. C. B. Reynolds, a well-known American Freethought lecturer, whose name was brought prominently before our readers in 1886 and 1887 on account of his trial for blasphemy in the latter year. Mr. Reynolds was born on August 4, 1832. He was brought up religiously, and became a Seventh-day Baptist preacher, but was converted to Freethought and took to the Freethought platform. For a pamphlet entitled *Blasphemy and the Bible* he was indicted by the bigots of Boonton, New Jersey. Colonel Ingersoll defended him, and his magnificent five hours' speech to the jury, published here as *Defence of Freethought*, though it did not result in an acquittal, probably stopped all further prosecutions. The offended majesty of heaven was vindicated by a fine of 25 dollars. Mr. Reynolds's death resulted from a fall from a swing, causing concussion of the brain.

SERMONS WHICH MUST NOT BE PREACHED.

BUT THE CLERGYMAN DELIVERED ONE BEFORE THE LOCAL RADICALS, AND NOW HE FEELS HIMSELF COMPELLED TO RESIGN THE LIVING.

THE Rev. J. Dennis Hird, M.A., is about to resign his living as rector of Eastnor, near Ledbury, Herefordshire, to which he was presented by Lady Henry Somerset on his retirement from the position of organizing secretary to the Church of England Temperance Society for the diocese of London. The reasons for this step are associated with certain theories which the rev. gentleman has felt himself impelled to advocate as a matter of serious personal conviction. Last year he announced in his parish the delivery of a series of Advent lectures, the subjects of which were: "Mistakes about the Bible and in the Bible," "How Man was Made" (a statement of the theory of Evolution as distinguished from the Scriptural account of Creation), "How the Devil was Made," and "Jesus, the Socialist." Owing to the nature of the titles, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been apprised of the contemplated series, took steps to prevent the lectures being delivered in the church. That

ON "JESUS, THE SOCIALIST,"

was, however, given by request to the Ledbury Radical Association. In April last Mr. Hird published the whole of the lectures in book form, and another volume containing a story entitled "A Christian with Two Wives," which, he explains, is designed to "show the folly of a man (Bretton) who believes that the whole of the Bible is the Word of God, and proceeds to put it into practice." At a subsequent service, attended by the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans and Lord Arthur Somerset, Mr. Hird announced that, as he was not permitted to preach his own discourses, he would in the future read to his congregation the sermons of other Church of England ministers, and on this occasion he read a sermon by the Bishop of Liverpool. In consequence of the publication of the books referred to, and the general tendency of Mr. Hird's doctrinal views, negotiations were instituted, which have resulted in the rev. gentleman agreeing to resign the living of Eastnor. It may be mentioned that in 1894 Mr. Hird was called upon to resign his position as secretary of the C.E.T. Society, in consequence of his having stated in their official organ that he was a member of the Social Democratic Federation. Lady Henry Somerset and several other influential members of the church were opposed to his resignation, as during his period of office, dating from 1887, the work of the society had, through his efforts, been greatly extended, the income having increased from £145 to upwards of £3,000 per annum. —*Star*.

PROFANE JOKES.

Florence says: "Though I obey the Fifth Commandment and honor my papa and mamma, yet my days are not a bit longer in the land, because I am put to bed at seven o'clock."

Weary Mother (to troublesome offspring whom she has been trying in vain to coax into saying his evening prayer)—"Come, Tommy, this is all nonsense. You know that prayer as well as I do, and I want you to say it." Tommy (sweetly)—"Well, mamma, I was only just trying to tease God a little bit."

Mr. Longtext—"Johnny, can you tell me where the bad little boys go?" Johnny—"To Sunday-school, where there's goin' to be a Christmas-tree."

Sunday-school Teacher—"I suppose you pray for your daily bread every day at home, don't you, Emmie?" Emmie—"Oh, yes, for we like it fresh."

Mother—"Children, have you said your prayers?" Tilly—"Yes, mamma." Mother—"You were very quick about it." Tilly—"I prayed one-half, and Daisy the other."

A Sunday-school teacher was talking to her class of the necessity of a divine friend, both in life and death. Finally she said: "Charlie, if you were about to die, what would you want most of anything?" And Charlie replied, with practical wisdom: "A doctor." He was recently matched, however, by another small boy. "Johnny," asked his teacher, "what must we do before our sins can be forgiven?" "Sin," replied Johnny.

A sky-pilot told a negro he should love his enemies. "Me do lub 'em." "What enemies do you love most?" "Rum and cider, massa." Another negro used to empty the Communion-cup, and smack his lips as he said: "Me lub my Jesus."

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Zola's Rome and the Pope's Ban."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, R. Forder, "Blasphemous Poetry." September 5, Smoking Concert.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30 A lecture. Conversazione postponed.
PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "Charles Bradlaugh."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, J. Rowney.
CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.
CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch): 11.30, A lecture.
DEPTFORD BROADWAY: 6.30, S. E. Easton will lecture.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss will lecture.
HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, A lecture. Thursday, September 3, at 8, Stanley Jones will lecture.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. Rosetti, "Bible Blunders"; 3.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.
ISLINGTON (Highbury Fields, Highbury Corner): 11, Stanley Jones, "Church and Science."
KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, A lecture.
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen will lecture.
MILE END WASTE: 6.30, Mr. Ward, "The Faith that Failed."
OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, W. Tanner, "Faith and Fact." Collection for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.
REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester Gate)—N.W. Branch: 3, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, A lecture; 3.15, J. Rowney will lecture.

COUNTRY.

BLACKBURN: 7, Fortnightly meeting at 18 St. Peter-street.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Lawrence Small, B.Sc., will lecture.
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street): 3, Monthly meeting; important business.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. Heaford—11, "The Battle of Belief and Unbelief"; 3, "The Free-will Fallacy"; 7, "The Bible, the Child, and the Higher Criticism." The morning lectures will be given near the Monolith, weather permitting. Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, A reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—August 30, m., Ridley-road; a., Regent's Park; e., Battersea.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—August 30, m., Wood Green; e., Edmonton. September 6, m., Westminster; a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 13, m., Mile End; a., Finsbury Park; e., Bradlaugh Club; 20, m., Camberwell. October 4, m., Westminster; 11, e., Bradlaugh Club.

POSITIVISM.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Church of Humanity, St. Mary's-place. Service and Discourse every Sunday evening at 7.

SUNDERLAND.—Conversational meetings, open to all, at Mr. Coates's, 13 Derby-street, every Sunday, at 7.

Information and literature may be obtained from Mr. Malcolm Quin, Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne, who will be willing to consider applications to deliver lectures on Positivism gratuitously and without expense, where such lectures may be desired.

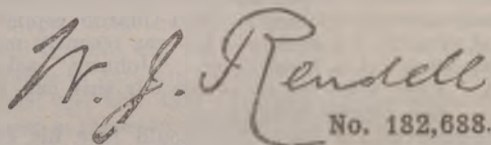
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