

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

MR. FOOTE'S LETTERS FROM AMERICA.

V.—A VISIT TO CANADA.

MR. WATTS and I left New York on Tuesday evening, October 27. Prior to our departure Mr. Putnam took us to a Broadway photographer's to sit for our portraits. They had printed a shocking parody of my poor face in the *Truthseeker*, copied from a wretched thing published during my imprisonment, and it was necessary to correct the idea formed of me from that abomination. Mr. Putnam was anxious to have some photographs of both of us—up-to-date photographs—for the Chicago Congress. After facing the camera we crossed the Hudson by the ferry, and started for Toronto by the West Shore Railway. Mr. Putnam accompanied us to the depot, and bade us farewell when there was no longer room for any mistake. Toronto is more than five hundred miles from New York, and our tickets cost us nearly fifteen dollars each. For this we had accommodation in a luxurious sleeping-car, fitted up with a buffet and an elegant little smoking-room. The attendants were very civil and obliging, and, on finding we were Englishmen, did all they could to make us comfortable. One passenger was a member of the New York detective force travelling to Chicago. He introduced himself, and was a most agreeable companion. Our first stoppage was at a place called Cornwall, where we had an opportunity of seeing a sample of American electioneering. A big bonfire was blazing on an open space on the town side of the railway track, and a couple of hundred yards behind it was raised a handsome banner, under which the Republican orators were to discourse to the supporters of McKinley. A number of men carried lighted torches. They were dressed in astonishing costumes, and I asked the detective what body they belonged to. "Oh," he said, "that is campaign uniform." Some of these political campaign soldiers were on horseback, and did not in all cases seem used to that elevation. It was a curious sight for an Englishman, and I should have been glad to spend an hour in watching the humors of a presidential election meeting; but the engine bell began ringing, and off we sped again into the darkness.

Our next experience was a pleasing one. The buffet steward brought us the supper we had ordered, for we had eaten nothing since one o'clock, and we devoured it with relish. About half-past ten we retired to our sleeping berths, which were remarkably spacious, the American cars being wider than ours in England. Still, I could not sleep. The artificial heat kept me in a state of perspiration and restlessness. Eventually I sank into an unrefreshing slumber, broken by weird and fantastic dreams. Mr. Watts, however, who does not find the heat as distressing as I do, enjoyed a good night's repose.

We were called by direction on leaving Buffalo soon after six o'clock. At eight we arrived at Niagara town, where we had twenty minutes to breakfast in the station refreshment room. First came grapes, apples, pears, and bananas; then porridge, steak, ham and eggs, and tea; all for the moderate charge of half a dollar. Soon afterwards we crossed a high bridge over the Niagara river. The world-famous Falls were hidden by a dense morning mist, but we caught a glimpse of the Rapids leading to the Whirlpool. Crossing the bridge we were on Canadian soil, which just there is fertile orchard ground. I noticed piles of rosy apples lying on the brown grass, and wished

No. 801.

I could send a few hundreds of them, by some magical transportation, to my children in London. I pictured two rows of teeth, belonging to a dear little maiden of five, piercing the ruddy skin of those pippins; and her rogue of a brother stowing a dozen or two away in his pockets. (By the way, does anybody know the real capacity of a boy's pockets? Conjurors cannot equal him in producing vast quantities of unexpected things from strange recesses.)

Skirting the shore of Lake Ontario—the last of the great inland seas that give such a striking character to the north-eastern part of this continent—we at last reached Toronto. It was then about eleven o'clock, and we had been travelling nearly seventeen hours. Several friends were waiting for us at the depot. There were Mr. Ellis, who conducts *Secular Thought*; Mr. Risser, one of the Old Guard of Canadian Freethought; Mr. Watts's cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Platts and Mrs. Hall; and Mr. Bonsall, who had offered to entertain me during my stay in Toronto. Mr. Armstrong also was there, another good friend of the cause; and three other ladies—Miss Butland, whom I had met in England, Miss Stevens, and Miss Verrol. For the first time since leaving England I parted with my friend and colleague, Mr. Watts. We were sorry to sever, but we fell into good hands. Mr. Watts stayed with his cousin, Mrs. Platts, who, in an innocent way, is very much in love with him, and humors him in all his ways. But he could not have been more comfortably situated than I was. I lighted on a happy household. Mr. Bonsall is a man of much intelligence, who conducts a daily financial newspaper; and Mrs. Bonsall is a dear motherly woman, who, without any sort of fussiness, made me as happy as I could be away from my own home. There are three sons, all good fellows, and a daughter who possesses a voice worthy of a first-rate training. Another daughter is in London, trying to make a position for herself in the musical profession, with every probability of success.

I soon found that Mr. Watts had made many friends during his five years' residence in Toronto as a minister of the Gospel of Freethought. His open and genial nature had made him almost universally beloved. Had I been of a sombre temperament, I should have felt a little dissatisfied, for it was all "dear Mr. Watts," and it was hard to see where I came in. However, I was pleased for my friend's sake. My turn was to come. And it did come. I made friends in Toronto myself—you can't expect to find them always ready-made; and if ever I visit Toronto again, as I hope to do, I believe I shall meet with a very cordial welcome. At least, they tell me so, in accents of sincerity.

Mr. Watts has, of course, been pressed to return to Toronto, where he spent some happy years, and where he is remembered with such fond affection. But this is impossible. His sons and daughters are all settled in England, and as he is in the fullest sense of the words a family man, his deepest feelings would be lacerated by expatriation. Besides, we want him in the old country; and Canada, by this time, ought to grow its own propagandists. Anyhow, it can't have Mr. Watts. It had some of the best years of his life, and it must be satisfied with that.

Toronto is a fine city, well laid out and well built. It has an air of prosperity. There don't seem to be any paupers in this locality, nor many millionaires. There appears to be a general diffusion of property, or at least of income. I am astonished at the multitude of comfortable—and often more than comfortable—residences. I never saw anything like it in a city of the same size in England. It

is difficult to realize that there are less than two hundred thousand inhabitants in Toronto. The streets all run at right angles, and locomotion is rendered easy by the electric cars, which run at a high rate of speed—far higher than would be possible even in the suburban parts of our crowded London. As in New York, you pay five cents, and go where you please. Many ladies must have money to spare, or hate walking, for they take the car for two hundred yards.

Toronto air agrees with me. It is more bracing than I found the air of New York. I write this in an excellent state of health. Mr. Watts says I am another man since I left London. I certainly feel younger and livelier, and almost wish I could drop in for a day or two and ease the labor of my dear old friend and loyal sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, who is naturally often in my thoughts in this distant land. I have just seen the *Freethinker* for November 1, and must congratulate him on turning out such a capital number. It was quite a treat to me to read my own paper. I have generally had enough of it before the day of publication. Over here it has for me, as well as for others, the charm of novelty.

I am very fond of fruit, and fruit here is plentiful. Fancy good grapes at five cents a pound, and good apples so cheap that they couldn't well be cheaper unless the consumers were paid to fetch them. I think nothing here of eating half a pound of grapes before breakfast. To eat them in that way in England would be prodigal if one had a thousand a year. Other eatables are also low-priced. Beef runs at present from eight to fifteen cents a pound, and mutton from five to ten cents. Chickens run from forty to sixty cents a pair, turkeys from eight to twelve cents a pound, and geese from six to eight cents a pound. It would almost pay a Londoner with a large family to come over here for his Christmas dinner. (English readers must take a cent as about equal to a halfpenny.)

Before our first lectures here we attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Secular Union. This was on Saturday night, October 31. Captain Adams, of Montreal, presided, and I was delighted to make his personal acquaintance. I had known him "in the spirit" for many years, as it appears he had known me. Captain Adams is one of the finest men I ever met. I do not mean physically, for he is of but moderate stature, although he has a powerful, well-shaped head. I mean personally, socially, intellectually, and morally. His conversation is extremely entertaining. He speaks the purest English, with just enough American accent to lend his talk a pleasant piquancy. I judge him to be a man of exceptionally strong yet gentle character. Mr. Watts and I spent two delightful hours with him on the following Monday. He suffered heavy financial losses a few years ago, but is now pushing forward some promising enterprises in Western Canada. He looks forward to a retirement from all business engagements, and the pleasure of devoting time and means to the spread of Freethought. He has done much in the past, and hopes to do more in the future. I should say that no man's heart is more centred than his in the Freethought movement.

But I am forgetting the meeting. Mr. Ellis presented the annual report, and was afterwards elected President for the ensuing year, his daughter being elected Secretary. Various resolutions were passed, and a constitution adopted. Mr. Watts and I delivered brief addresses. We dwelt on the necessity of maintaining *Secular Thought*, which is not exactly flourishing. Mr. Ellis owns it, prints it, sells it, and edits it, besides lecturing from time to time in various parts of the Dominion.

Captain Adams took the chair at both our lectures the next day in the Auditorium, and made pretty introductory speeches. Mr. Watts occupied the platform in the afternoon. He had a grand reception, and I am told he said some nice things about me. I lectured to a fine meeting in the evening. My reception was all I could wish, and I never had a more appreciative audience. I may add that, as there are no Sunday cars in the pious city of Toronto, every person had to walk to the assembly. On the following Sunday the order was reversed: I lectured in the afternoon, and Mr. Watts in the evening; and there was an improved attendance, although a rabid Methodist minister had declared from his pulpit that our being allowed to speak at all was a disgrace to Toronto, and that infidel orators should be suppressed by the authorities. I said some pretty strong things in my lecture on "The Doom of

the Gods"; but my auditors did not hiss, they applauded. Mr. Watts wished me to take the chair at his last lecture, and I did so; taking the occasion to speak of him as a dear friend and loyal colleague, whose nature was above the jealousies which so often embitter public life. When the applause which greeted Mr. Watts's peroration had subsided, I pronounced the benediction. I begged all those hundreds of listeners not to rest satisfied with applause, but to maintain *Secular Thought* and join the Canadian Secular Union. There was much cheering when I said that Mr. Watts and I might live to visit Toronto again. Out in the lobby and on the pavement we were implored to stay in Toronto longer; some begged us not to go at all; one of us, they said, should stop anyhow. There is a splendid field here for a really competent Freethought lecturer, one in the prime of life, who doesn't mind hard work. Our principles are working everywhere under the surface, and such a man might bring them into the daylight.

G. W. FOOTE.

RELIGION IN JAPAN.

THE *Daily News* recently devoted two columns to an article on "The Christianization of Japan," from a Tokyo correspondent who had interviewed Bishop Bickersteth and other missionaries upon the subject. Although coming from sources not above suspicion, the article had some notable admissions. It set out by saying: "Unfortunately, the Nonconformist missionaries, as is the case throughout the whole of the East, are in the worst possible odor with the Europeans in Japan, who quite unhesitatingly charge them with selfishness of life, undue regard for their own personal comfort, with neglect of the spiritual and bodily welfare of their converts, and with a cowardly tendency to flee their posts at the first approach of disease and sickness." It could not be expected that the missionaries themselves would endorse these statements, though one of them, Dr. Green, was frank enough to say: "I think that no more missionaries should be sent out to Japan. The Japanese want to lead their own Christians. They feel they can walk alone, and they regard us as men who are striving to represent certain forms of Christianity with which they are not in harmony. They want a liberty we cannot grant, and so we are a source of irritation to them, which more than offsets the good we may do." The question as to whether Japan will be Christianized is of more importance than the conduct of the missionaries, and the writer considers it a matter of grave doubt. He says: "The Prime Minister himself, though desirous of assisting the Christians in every way, assured me that he considered such an event absolutely impossible. Those Europeans who know Japan best are of the same opinion." It is not simply that the Japanese Christians are bent on Japanizing Christianity. The mass of the people, and especially the educated ones, are utterly indifferent to its claims.

Christianity in Japan has had a chequered history. The Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, first took it there in 1549. He persuaded the authorities that, with thirty-five religious sects already represented in Japan, the country might well find room for a thirty-sixth; and, being befriended by the Daimios, the Roman Catholic faith spread rapidly, many princes embracing the Western form of Buddhism. Jesuits were followed by Dominicans and Franciscans, all soon showing that they aimed at worldly power. The Protestant Dutch traders, jealous, it is said, of the position of the Portuguese, accused the Catholics of attempting political ascendancy; and that intrigues were carried on by the Jesuits for the overthrow of the Shogun there is no doubt. Battles and massacres of Christians ensued, which have been grossly exaggerated by the Catholics. Only the Dutch were allowed to land, and they were required to tread under foot the sign of the cross. The trampling-boards are still to be seen at the Ueno Museum, Tokyo. The good Dutch Christians quieted any qualms by regarding this merely as a renunciation of Catholicism. Not till 1872, after Shintoism had been proclaimed the State religion, was the interdict against Christianity fully removed. Since then the Catholics have remade most headway. Russians of the Greek Church, and Protestant sects of all varieties, are now scrambling to get hold of the Jap. The Jap usually doesn't see it. He doesn't understand the divine plan of salvation, which

exonerates the guilty by the bloody atonement of the innocent. He fails to notice how much superior the Christian behavior is to his own. He can hardly credit the supernaturalism of his own sacred books, and he squirms at the nauseous doses offered him from Genesis to Revelation. Often he reads Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Free-thought literature, and discovers that the Christian scheme is a fraud founded on a fiction. Sometimes he puts on a specious pretence of Christianity, which is found a cheap and easy way of acquiring Western education. Christian success has not been excessive. Out of 40,000,000 of inhabitants in Japan not more than 112,000 are Christians. Of these over 50,000 are Roman Catholics, and nearly 23,000 belong to the Greek Mission conducted by Bishop Nicolai, "the apostle of modern Japan." The remaining 39,000 are members of the Anglican communion, and of other Protestant sects.

Dr. Weir, Dean of the Wesleyan Methodist School of Theology in Tokyo, one of the gentlemen interviewed by the *Daily News* correspondent, said that the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity were the chief stumbling blocks, for the Japanese are unwilling to accept what does not appeal to their reason. He also states that the Japanese mind, as a rule, tends towards a Pantheistic view of Christianity. Mr. Cobbold, in his booklet on *Religion in Japan*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, says (p. 79): "I was told by an English resident of long standing that infidelity is largely on the increase in Japan, especially among the men of the upper and middle classes." This is confirmed by the statement of Marquis Ito, that the educated Jap does not require any religion. Everyone who has met cultured specimens of the race know that Christianity never provokes anything but a smile.

Dr. Weir took credit to Christianity in that the Buddhists have started a Young Men's Buddhist Association and a Salvation Army of their own. Competition gives life to religion as well as to trade; but certainly all that is essential to morality was taught by the Buddhists before Christianity was heard of. The moral monopoly claimed by Christianity is indeed specially ridiculous in the face of Buddhism. Buddha did not confine his attempt to save the world to a paltry three years. He underwent many successive lives to that end. It is in his feminine manifestation as Kwanyin (*Jap.* Quannon) that he evokes most devotion. Here he is (if I may be excused the Irishism) the goddess of mercy, compassion, and all those feminine traits of sympathy and devotion which Catholic Christians symbolize in the Virgin Mother, Mary. In her Temple of San-ju-san-gen-do, at Kyoto, no fewer than 33,333 images of Quannon may be seen—almost as many as the statues of Mary dispersed throughout Europe.

The rivalry of Buddhism and Christianity in Japan seems likely to lead to mutual destruction. Both are essentially monastic faiths, while the Japanese mind, like the English, tends to the practical. The jolly old Japanese religion of Shintoism is supposed to be in decay, but it is rather a set of ancient customs than a creed, and it is possible that its pilgrimages may outlast both Buddhism and Christianity. A people so patriotic and so indifferent to religion as the Japanese may preserve their national religion without exactly believing in it, just as even Freethinkers still keep up some of the old Pagan observances at Christmas.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE CLAIMS OF THEISM.

(Continued from page 739.)

HAVING considered in my article last week what the principal claims of Theism are, we will now examine the reasons given in their justification. Before doing so, however, it may be serviceable to indicate the difference between belief and knowledge. It is quite true that we may, and do, have faith in that of which we have no real or actual knowledge, for we are compelled to exercise such faith in everyday life upon numerous topics. The point, however, to be remembered is that, if we are judicial or rational, we shall be careful that our belief is not opposed to knowledge. We may, and do, believe in countries which we have never seen; in the existence of persons with whom we have never come into contact, and of countless things of which we have had no actual experience; but, if we are

wise, we shall always be on our guard against taking for granted that which is highly improbable, if not indeed impossible. Belief should have a rational basis, or it is wild and chimerical. Faith is good in its place, but it must always be confined within the sphere of knowledge. A man can have faith in that which he never saw, and perhaps never will see; but the thing in which he has faith must be a possible one, or his faith is misplaced, and he himself deluded. Now, faith in the alleged supernatural is an unreasoning faith, presupposing a knowledge which we do not and cannot possess, since a knowledge of that which lies beyond nature is an impossibility. The sphere of faith is legitimate enough, but it is not a sphere distinct from that of knowledge; it is one which arises out of it, and should never go beyond it.

Of course there is a region in which speculation may be tolerated, but it must be tolerated as speculation, nothing more. The misfortune is that those, as a rule, who indulge in speculation make their theories do duty as facts. They not only invest their ideas with the importance of legitimate deductions from facts, but give to them the value of the facts themselves. It is against this that we protest. When men merely talk about matters of which no one can know anything, they may be harmless enough as dreamers; but when they endeavor to bend men of reason and thought to their way of thinking, resorting sometimes even to persecution to promulgate their idle whims, then they are dangerous, and can no longer be tolerated with impunity.

We are not concerned on the present occasion in defending the Atheistic position, inasmuch as, supposing such position to be untenable, the claims of Theism would not thereby be established. "Physicus," in his book, *A Candid Examination of Theism*, puts this point very clearly. On page 2 he writes: "A favorite piece of apologetic juggling is that of first demolishing Atheism, Pantheism, Materialism, etc., by successively calling upon them to explain the mystery of self-existence, and then tacitly assuming that the need of such an explanation is absent in the case of Theism—as though the attribute in question is more conceivable when posited in a deity than when posited elsewhere." Atheism does not affirm that a God exists; that he created the universe; that he controls and regulates the "order of nature"; that he is an ever-ready helper in the hour of need. These are affirmations made by Theists; upon them, therefore, devolves the duty of proving what they affirm. The province of Atheism, upon these points, is to try to ascertain whether or not the proofs put forward by Theists are adequate to make good their claims. It may, however, be said, in passing, that Atheism regards Nature as the totality of existence, as being boundless, and that nothing is known of anything beyond its domain. Neither the astronomer in his investigations above, nor the geologist in his explorations beneath, has ever in his pursuits arrived at a juncture when he could say: "This is the end of that universe of which I am a mode." Atheism looks upon the universe as the great store-house of the available remedies for the misfortunes of life. Do diseases or epidemics afflict and desolate society? Nature affords the advantages of science to alleviate the one, and to get rid of the other. Do political wrongs curse a nation, and does despotism strive to crush the freedom of its people? The heroism in man is at once stimulated, and his love for liberty aroused, so that he nobly and persistently toils to remedy the former, and to maintain the latter. Do social inequalities keep men in a false and unfair position in life? The natural yearning which all have more or less for the improvement of their position in the world induces them to try to break down the barriers to social equity and mutual enjoyment. The inspiration to these useful actions springs from natural impulses, and not from any imaginary supernatural agency. To Nature, therefore, the Atheists go, believing her to be the fountain of all goodness; and if, at present, to them many of her ways are inscrutable, they, working and waiting, are content to rely upon her capabilities, having faith that "Nature never did deceive the heart that loved her."

To us Theism appears to be a series of assumptions, which furnish a refuge for minds surrounded by mystery and by inexplicable existence. Persons who find themselves unable to explain the why and the wherefore of what they behold in nature take shelter in the supposition that there must be a God who is the cause of all they see around them. Thus Theism claims a first cause without the possibility of possessing any knowledge thereof. Final causes

we cannot discover. We know nothing of cause in the abstract. Cause and effect apply only to phenomena, not to absolute existence. The Duke of Argyle, in his *Reign of Law*, observes: "We cannot reach final causes any more than final purposes; for every cause which we can detect there is another cause which lies behind, and for every purpose which we can see there are other purposes which lie beyond." If Theists will continue to urge the fallacy that nothing can exist without a cause, the old but forcible and unanswerable question must be repeated, What caused God? The difficulties attending the supposition that God was uncaused appear to us immeasurably greater than those connected with the belief in an uncaused universe.

The postulates of Theism would not be conceivable by the human mind, even if they were true; and the usual "reasons" given for the purpose of verifying them are only opinions. It may be admitted that some men are not content without venturing an opinion upon what transcends human thought; but the question arises, What is the value of such opinions? It is not only *what* men believe, but *why* they believe, and how far the reasons they assign justify the claims they set forth. We contend that the position held by Comte and the late Professor Huxley, that all our knowledge is phenomenal, has not been disproved; and most strongly does this view commend itself to rational minds uninfluenced by theological considerations. For instance, if we grant the hypothesis of a creator, we have no evidence of what he created, but only of natural formation, which is a totally different process. Herbert Spencer, in his *First Principles*, maintains that, if we admit all the assumptions that Theism demands, the mystery of existence remains. He holds that, as to the origin of the universe, no tenable hypothesis has been given, and that none can be formed; hence, the first claim of Theism as to a creator and creation lacks demonstration. Theists frequently point to the wonders in nature as proof of the existence of its maker, forgetting that the existence of such a being would be a still greater wonder. Moreover, they overlook the possibility that the universe might always have existed in some form, in which case there would have been no need of any "maker." No satisfactory proof has yet been given to show that the universe did not always exist. Those who assert this theory should be prepared to advance sound argument in support thereof. It is admitted by both Theists and Atheists that something has always existed; which, then, is the more reasonable—to believe that that something is the universe of which we know much, and hope to know more; or that it is a being called God, of whom we know nothing, and about whom we have no fair grounds for expecting ever to become any wiser? Francis William Newman, the Theist, remarks: "That God has existed from eternity is to the full as incomprehensible as a world uncaused and existing from eternity."

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

THE C.E.S. AND THEIR "INFIDEL" TRACT.

TRACTS are difficult things to discuss. They can hardly be taken *au sérieux*. As a rule, they are brimful of pious nonsense, and may be described as the foam at the mouth of bigotry. They are principally valuable as providing cheap pipelights for smokers.

It rarely happens that one alights upon an "orthodox" tract which breathes the air of "infidelity." Tracts are as a tribe—painfully pious. When, therefore, a "godly" leaflet comes along loaded with the fire and brimstone of Freethought, it is time to rub one's eyes, so as to ascertain whether there are "visions about." It is just such a tract which recently crossed my controversial path; and the impious effusion being issued under the authority of the "Christian Evidence Society," one's surprise is all the greater at the unwonted treat.

The precious production is entitled *Is the Bible True?* The answer which the writer returns to this question is, from an orthodox point of view, damaging and evasive to the last degree. He compares the Bible, consisting, as it does, of a collection of writings, sixty-six in number, to a small shelf-full of books including, say, a tragedy by Æschylus, a volume of Plato, etc. And then, pointing to

this shelf-full of miscellaneous books, he says: "Let the question be—not 'Is this a most valuable, and even most precious, library, full of what is really educational and stimulating to a noble life?' but 'Is this library true?'" and immediately he spurns the idle question by asking: "Is there a man out of a lunatic asylum who would undertake to reply simply, Yes or No?" *The Bible*, he concludes, with a fine melodramatic touch of conscious victory, is like *that shelf-full of books*.*

Now, the C.E.S. must know that there are plenty of Christians still out of a lunatic asylum who do reply Yes to this question. The Christian Church has, indeed, been thundering its affirmative all during the ages, and the children are still being told to-day that the only proper reply is an equally emphatic Yes. Dean Burgon, who, in this matter, represented the average thought of orthodoxy, thus spake its opinion: "The Bible is none other than the Voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne. Every book of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God; not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the Throne—absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme" (*Inspiration and Interpretation*, p. 89).

The attitude of our tract-writer upon this question is a proof that still in these times the old Christian doctrine—"that it is not only lawful, but commendable, to deceive and to lie for the sake of truth and piety" (Mosheim)—is flourishing, and can find a home even at Buckingham-street, Strand,† itself. We are told that if a child, nine years of age, asks, "Father, is the Bible true?" we are to answer, Yes—notwithstanding the sweeping reference made to lunatic asylums. If, too, a sin-sodden man, having read in the New Testament about the love of God, *eagerly* asks, "Is this blessed book true?" the answer advised is, "Yes, thank God, it is gloriously true." "But [now note how these Christians love those Infidels!] if a mere, conceited, spouting quibbler should jauntingly ask me publicly, I should reply," he says, "Aye, *my friend*, far too true to suit you, I see." The venom of the viper, the sliminess of the toad, bubble over in this conspicuously Christian utterance. But if the same question were put to him by "some intelligent and tolerably well-informed man, I should say, 'With certain obvious and common-sense qualifications, yes, most certainly.'" The writer of this tract is clearly a descendant of Mr. Facing-both-ways. He is, like Paul, all things to all men—and some children. He imposes on the innocence of childhood; he trades on the fears of the ignorant; he flouts and gibes at the honest sceptic, and only the intelligent and well-informed man, who can read on the features of our polemical prophet the trace of any lying spirit that has gained a lodgment in his Jonah-like mouth, gets a straightforward answer. And this, mark you, is an answer which has been stolen without acknowledgment from the maligned Freethinker. That this is so will appear from the few words that follow.

He tells us that "all those writings that we call the Old Testament constituted the Temple Library of the Jews..... The Bible comes to us.....to be taken *for what it is*; to stand or fall, in its several parts, by its own merits." Freethinkers have never said anything less than this, nor have they ever claimed anything more. When the Bible is genuinely treated in this sensible manner, the days of C.E.S. craft are over.

It is astonishing to read in a C.E.S. publication that "inspiration does not mean infallibility on all subjects"; but surely, if we suppose that an all-wise God directs and controls the writing of a book—edits it, in fact—we may reasonably expect him to run his pen through obvious errors. All our authority contends for is merely "that Christians affirm *large portions* of the Scriptures to have been written under the direct influence of the Eternā Spirit of all Wisdom and Truth." Not the whole hog, be it observed, but only some of his bristles. The implication clearly is, that *other* large portions of the Book lack the element of inspiration. The same mental reservation is made concerning the Old Testament prophets. "For the *most part* we have their names, and know a good deal about them." But how about the names unknown, concerning whose owners little or nothing is, by implication, known?

Again the cloven hoof of infidelity peeps out. "Of the

* The italics here and throughout are our own.

† The Society's place of business.

historical books we do not know *all* the original writers, nor, therefore, all their qualifications"; which, of course, means that their credibility for veracity, their capacity to record accurately, the authenticity of what they originally recorded, and the reliability of the hypothetical original record, besides the subsequent accretions thereto, remain an open question. We are also told that "the Jews did not regard these historical books as directly inspired." This disposes at once of a crowd of miracles, besides, incidentally, damning a valued member of the C.E.S.

What we next read, concerning the Psalms, drops sweetly, like balm in Gilead. The common, or garden, Christian dubs these old Jewish hymns the Psalms of David; but we now learn that they are *not* David's. "The Psalms are, *many of them*, anonymous, though we know the *authors of several*." Then comes a passage which must vex the soul of Exeter Hall and set its teeth on edge: "Some of them [the Psalms] are national poems, in a few of which the fervid patriotism of the intensely national Jew hurried him into wrathful outbursts of indignation against the ruthless slaughterers of the women and children of his people. Utterances such as these are *not* to be justified from the New Testament or Christian point of view." Yet all this unjustifiable sentiment, with its glorification of child-slaughter (Ps. cxxxvii.) and "its wrathful outbursts" of savage cruelty (Ps. cix.), has been, and continues to be, the daily song of praise of Christians of all sects and of every century! Here again Freethinkers find the echo of their views sounded forth in this "infidel" C.E.S. tract.

Next comes a pail full of painful truths about the Pentateuch. Its author is Moses (of course), who, however, "uses materials which had been handed down from earlier generations." Shades of Colenso! But after the work was finished by the octogenarian interviewer of God Almighty "incidental additions by later hands may be admitted. Christ, nevertheless, sets his seal on the Pentateuch (still speaking broadly)"; that is to say, winking the other eye. But I would tearfully ask, How can we stake our eternal salvation on a faked-up revelation of this kind, which has been tinkered at, and tampered with, by all sorts and conditions of men?

Another tit-bit of evidential infidelity! The shielder of our faith hurls yet another fiery dart at the follies of orthodoxy. "No one pretends," he says, "or did pretend in our Lord's own day, that the very original manuscripts of any of the books were still extant, but *only copies*, and, for the most part, *copies from copies*; which accounts for variations and some palpable errors perhaps." Where is the ark of the Lord now? If the tract speaks fact, what reliance can we place upon the statements as to miracles and other extraordinary matters found in the Bible? We can have no guarantee of accuracy, nor place any check upon the fidelity of the record. But, we are told, we are in quite the same predicament as regards the originals of Homer or of Plato. Exactly so; but with a difference. Salvation is not made to depend upon Homer; neither prison nor brimstone awaits the sceptical critic of the text of Plato; but Holloway Gaol and hell-fire await the Freethought advocate who spurns the doctrine that the Jew Book came from an all-wise and variously-etcetered God.

The wind-up of this eye-opening tract is, as we shall see, a characteristically disingenuous shuffle—a shrinking evasion of important questions which must be answered—without importing extraneous questions into the answer—simply upon their own merits, and in a manly, straightforward manner. The writer says: "The grand question is not whether Balaam's ass actually spoke (*though all creatures speak in their own way, and we often understood their speech*), or whether the statement may be taken subjectively [on which I would remark that the question, small or great, is actually suggested to our minds by the no less circumstantial than sacred character of the asinine narrative itself, and that to take the question subjectively simply means that you decline to take the story in at all]; not whether the Creator.....was able to *conceal* a man in its *maw* ["maw" is a delicious euphemism for stomach]; not whether the story of the serpent in the beginning of Genesis is to be interpreted literally or allegorically; but whether—"why, whether Jesus was what he claims to be—the Redeemer of humanity! This is the reasoning of Colney Hatch. One thing at a time, my friend. I will only allow you to nail me to the cross after you have settled first that donkey's tale. The question, too, is not

whether an almighty God would be *able* to keep a man alive for three days in the belly of a fish, but whether such a being ever *did* the thing, for accomplishing which you claim him to be competent. And, further, if the serpent story is conceivably only true allegorically (that is to say, not true actually), then it is equally conceivable that Christ's mission was unnecessary and his death no sacrifice for sin at all.

The conclusion of [the writer of this terrible tract is a lame and tame one. After gushing around Christ in a fine, pulpitering fashion, he relieves himself with this wild exclamation: "Yes, that unique life is the main thing to be assured of. That established, all the rest is as secure as it needs to be." Now, what has the character of Christ got to do with Balaam's donkey or Eve's talking serpent? The two sets of questions raise quite distinct issues, and the truth, if any, concerning them must, in each case, be established on a separate and independent bottom. Nowhere but in religion can such halting logic be found.

I regard this tract as an indirect stab in the back of Christianity; a wound, in eight pages, in the side of Christ. Voltaire and Paine would have hung it over their pillows as a charm against priests. Omitting the verbiage and the gush therein as purely professional dust-throwing, it disembowels the old carcass of Christianity and takes the very heart out of it, and thus serves the good purpose of correcting the delusions of the orthodox concerning the morality and veracity of their fetish book. It is an eminently Freethought tract—with the Freethought watered down and mingled with a few innocuous drops of the blood of Christ. It is evidently the production of some *farceur*, once an "infidel," now "converted." How he must chuckle to find the simple-minded C.E.S. fathering his naughty tract, and promoting thereby the glory of Freethought and the confusion of Christianity.

W. HEAFORD.

FICTITIOUS PERSECUTIONS.

(Concluded from page 740.)

NONE of the voluminous writers on the persecutions of the early Christians have ever been able to explain under what law or custom of the Romans these persecutions were carried out.

They were all holy martyrs,
These pious men, no doubt;
But what the Romans killed them for
I never could make out.

Religious intolerance was unknown to the ancient world. If a man worshipped a different deity to yourself, he was not your enemy in consequence. His god was probably quite as good as yours. We find the Roman Empire simply overrun with all kinds of Oriental superstitions. The followers of Mithras, Serapis, Isis, and the rest, do not appear to have been interfered with, so long as they kept themselves within the ordinary bounds of morality and common sense. The Roman emperors spent large sums in beautifying the temples of foreign deities; and these stories of persecution are utterly out of harmony with the spirit and ideas of the age in which they are said to have occurred. The early "Apologists" tell us nothing about any laws against the Christians; and confine themselves to vague generalities about the unjustness of mob, judges, and everybody except themselves. The only things they profess to detail are alleged edicts in favor of the Christians, and these edicts will not stand examination. One of the earliest of these is quoted by Justin Martyr, who asserts that it was sent by the Emperor Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia. But even such an orthodox apologist as Professor Ramsay says*: "Rescripts such as that addressed by Hadrian to Fundanus were secret and confidential documents.....Hadrian's was quoted by Justin Martyr about twenty years or less after it was written. How had it become known to the Christians? This is a point of some interest, but an answer cannot be given with certainty. Possibly Hadrian himself may have intentionally allowed it to be brought to their knowledge.....It is, of course, possible that the Christians bought a copy of the rescript."

Tertullian asserts that the Emperor Trajan gave the

* *The Church in the Roman Empire*, by W. M. Ramsay, M.A.

younger Pliny certain instructions with regard to the Christians. More than twelve centuries after Tertullian a certain printer brought out an edition of *The Letters of Pliny*. Its success caused him to produce a second edition, which contained some additional matter, among which was the correspondence of Hadrian and Pliny mentioned by Tertullian. No explanation has ever been given as to why he did not include this correspondence in his first edition. Eusebius, with access to all the stores of learning of his time, with access to all the records of the Roman state, could not quote any official documents where an inquirer could find confirmation of these rescripts of Trajan or of Hadrian. His sole sources of information were the writings of Tertullian and of Justin Martyr.

It may be said that we are producing only negative evidence. But there is an important piece of positive evidence that can be produced to show the way in which the early Christian writers made assertions. Tertullian tells his readers that if they "search the records" they will find that Marcus Aurelius bore testimony, in a letter still extant, that on a certain occasion, when his troops were nearly perishing for want of water, they were saved by the prayers of the Christians. This statement is proved false by the coins of the Emperor, by the Antonine column, and by the testimony of the Roman historians. Neither Aurelius, the Roman senate, nor the Pagan historians appear to have dreamed that the Christians had anything to do with the relief of the army: that is what we find on searching the records. Yet Eusebius, who had all this evidence, and more, before him, calmly transcribes the falsehoods of Tertullian!

The same early Christian writers, who talk about the "Christians" being "persecuted" without being able to prove it, also give us other pictures of the condition of the Christian congregations. Cyprian (about 250 A.D.) enlarges on the wealth, luxury, and rapacity of some of the Christian bishops.* Tertullian, half a century earlier, mentions a gift of £1,700 to the Church at Rome. And, shortly after, we find the Christian congregations in possession of funds, lands, and churches; so that Christianity, under the Pagan-Roman domination, had greater rights and privileges than are accorded to Secularists by the Christian Government of the nineteenth century.

Gibbon points out (cap. xvii.) that it was far more dangerous to be a Roman emperor than a Christian bishop. But the most lasting refutation of these legends of persecution are to be found in the catacombs of Rome. Even the Catholic explorers of these catacombs have been forced to admit that they were excavated solely for purposes of burial; and the idea that the poor hunted, persecuted Christians of fiction could dig out miles of tunnels, and carry out tons of earth, under the noses of the terrible Roman magistrates has proved too absurd for scholars. It is no longer maintained that the catacombs were used as places of refuge or worship, since it has been demonstrated that human beings could not long exist in them, and that originally there were no large halls or chapels therein. It is therefore certain that the Christians of Rome lived quietly under the protection of the Roman laws. They were permitted to have their own religious opinions, to acquire and use land for cemeteries, and to inter their dead in them in their own way. In life and death they witness the toleration of their government; and if ever the Christian congregations got into trouble with the authorities, it is often plain, even from the hysterical pages of Eusebius, to see that the cause of the trouble was chiefly of a political nature. CHILPERIC.

When I was a little Sunday-school boy, a school teacher named Decker tried to frighten me out of all my faults. Assuming a hideous disguise, he entered my bedroom and informed me that he was Satan himself. As I had been told that the Devil would get me for swearing, I was not much surprised. I said: "You're a hell of a looking devil, but I believe you're lying; I'll just call you with this iron bootjack." Satan didn't "get behind me," but he got.—*W. C. Brann.*

For all the goods that the heavens covereth, and that the earth containeth in all their dimensions of height, depth, breadth, and length, are not of so much worth as that we should for them disturb or disorder our affection, trouble or perplex our senses or spirits.—*Rabelais.*

* Compare also the story of Paul of Samosata, cited by Gibbon.

ACID DROPS.

OUR new Archbishop says that abolishing the sale of advowsons is impracticable. He proposes instead that bishops shall have greater power to refuse to institute clergymen presented for livings. That much-abused Gnostic, Simon Magus, was no doubt also greatly concerned for the good of the Church in commencing the practice of simony.

One-sixth of the benefices in this country are continually being bought and sold. Our dear new Primate does not wish to interfere with the traffic in souls, but only to give the bishops greater power to reject the duffers who are presented to livings. He said: "Incompetent clergymen did, unfortunately, exist, and it was possible for the Bishop to compel such men to keep a curate to perform the duties which they failed to carry out themselves. But what was the consequence of such a step as that? There was friction, and the curate was thwarted at every turn in his efforts to keep things going. The question, therefore, which presented itself was—What could be done? If a man were turned out of his living, he might have nothing but the workhouse before him, and to bring about that state of things would be nothing short of a scandal."

The Primate therefore suggests a retiring fund for incompetents. As, in our view, all sky-pilots are incompetent, having no chart enabling them to conduct aerial navigation, our only objection is that such a retiring fund, if complete, would absorb a great deal of cash. Still, it might be a good investment of capital.

Bishop Jayne says he should not be unwilling to part with "the Damnation Clause" of the creed falsely ascribed to St. Athanasius, in consideration for "a morbid feeling with which many regard it." Whereupon a writer in the *Church Times* says: "These many, of course, are Universalists. To deny the last clause but one of the Athanasian Creed [the clause, namely, which declares that all who do not fully subscribe thereto will perish everlastingly] is to be an Universalist."

Various Diocesan Conferences have been denouncing the re-marriage of divorced persons. The clericals forget that the Church was established by that Defender of the Faith, the much-divorced Henry VIII. In Australia, where, not being established, the Church can assert itself without quarrelling with its bread and butter, recent conferences have stigmatised the re-marriages of divorcees as "bigamous," "adulterous," and other choice terms.

Canon Hamond, vicar of St. Austell, defends "Sacerdotalism" in the pages of the *Church Times*. He says that the Jewish priesthood was instituted by God himself, and Jesus endorsed it by saying, "Go, show yourself unto the priests," and by saying that the shew bread could lawfully be eaten by priests alone. Canon Hamond forgets the text, "Can no man master." The men of God naturally uphold all that supports their own power.

The Nonconformist men of God are hardly a whit less worldly than those of the Established Church. They, too, aim after social position and endowment, and ape the Church in their churches and their own costumes. They, too, slide over the dogmas of their faith, seek to reconcile contradictions, and expound impossible ways of "How to make the best of both worlds," as the great Nonconformist preacher, Binney, entitled his most famous book. The Wesleyans even now are asking for chapel exemption from all rates, and the compulsory sale of ground for chapels. They would probably establish themselves at the expense of the public, could they manage it.

The *Congregationalist*, of Boston, frankly confesses that the American churches are becoming secularized. It says: "They are thinking of this world—not of the next. They are not much moved by the fear of hell or the hope of heaven." This is, and is intended as, praise. But it shows how far the Churches have drifted from their old moorings.

The *Independent*, of New York, remarks: "The outlook for the constitutional amendment to admit women to the Methodist General Conference is not very favorable. The vote of the fall conferences shows 3,955 for, and 1,587 against, the proposition. The affirmative vote lacks 201 of being three-fourths. Compared with the vote of last year, there has been an increase of 1 in the affirmative, and of 573 in the negative, column. It is possible that the spring conferences will change the result, but hardly probable. Last spring their vote turned the scale against the admission of women."

Last week "Chilperic" incidentally mentioned the story

of the martyrdom of St. Catherine as one of the fictitious persecutions with which he has been dealing. We notice that the *Dawn of Day*, an Anglican magazine, in its current number gravely records the martyrdom as if it were all pure history, although every detail it gives is glaringly unhistorical. But if people accept such stories as that of the massacre of the innocents by Herod, it is hard to say why they should refuse to credit the marvels in the lives of the saints.

Mr. Rouse, an American millionaire who is blind, has offered Edison a million dollars if, by the application of the Röntgen rays, his sight can be restored. In the old days such offers were made to the saints, and the churches frequently profited by them, as they asked for cash before cure. Now-a-days the afflicted apply to science on the better terms of "No cure, no pay."

While Captain Slocum, of the yacht *Spray*, was in New-castle, the mission steamer, *John Williams*, called for bunker coal. The sky-pilots paid him a visit, and openly expressed their astonishment at the hardihood of a man who could trust himself lone-handed in mid-ocean in such a craft. Their astonishment became still greater when they saw his navigating instruments, which consisted of a rusty sextant, an old-fashioned chronometer, and a battered telescope. "You must indeed trust a great deal in the Almighty," said one of the reverend gentlemen. "Well, yes, sometimes I do," said Slocum. On leaving the *Spray* they invited him to pay them a return visit. The following day Slocum boarded the *John Williams*, and was shown all round. The chart-room especially interested him. It was furnished with a couple of Sir William Thompson's spirit compasses, three of the latest type of chronometers, and with all the most recent forms of navigating instruments. Slocum examined them with great attention, and then gravely said: "I guess, gentlemen, you don't trust much to the Almighty in this hooker."—*Sydney Bulletin*.

A courageous town councillor has been found as far north as Inverness to propose that the free library should be opened for certain hours on Sunday. Of course the motion was defeated, but it is something that it should have been made. It was in Inverness where, when a Southerner ventured the remark that a certain Sunday was a fine day, he was greeted with the reply, "Hoot, mon, is this a day to be talking about days!"

Reynolds's Newspaper tells a story of a Glasgow public-house which has over the bar a notice, "Remember the Sabbath Day." A pietist expressed to the landlord the pleasure he felt in reading this notice, and on finding a man in his trade with such becoming reverence for "the Day of Rest." "Oh, that is not my reason for placing the notice where it is," replied the honest Scot; "its purpose is to remind my customers to bring their bottles to be filled on *Saturday evenings*."

The Quiet Sunday Society is not a Society instituted for the promotion of sleep during sermons, but for the prosecution of all who shout in the streets on Sunday. Summonses have been taken against various persons under an Act which the magistrate said was older than Queen Anne. We hope the Quiet Sunday Society will turn its attention to the Salvation Army.

There is one advantage in these stupid old Acts—namely, that there is often some provision or technicality which renders them of little use to the bigots. In this case, we believe that the penalty is merely forfeiture of the goods carried on Sunday, which, in the case of a news vendor, need hardly be an excessive penalty.

The soul-destroying influence of the bicycle is making itself felt at Brunswick (Vic.), where the churches have united to protest against the holding of cycling "church parades," owing to the fact that 70 per cent. of the Sunday-school children "wagged it" on the occasion of the last parade for the purpose of witnessing the exciting function. The "Church parade" is ostensibly a godly gathering of wheelmen and wheelwomen, who ride *en masse* to a certain Bethel to hear a white-faced man talk about hell. In reality, it is an association of lively youths and bloomed maidens who ride as far as the church, and then "go off in couples, like the animals out of the Ark, to look for wattle blossom," according to picnic precedent. The church is filled with the usual congregation and with a score of the promoters of the show, who go in for shame's sake. The average parade consists of about two thousand cyclists, and the average church where the service is held seats about two hundred.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

It is parson Bevan, of Melbourne, who has given up his coward's castle, and invites free discussion after his Sunday morning's sermons, which should now be better attended. The privilege of reply ought to enliven the proceedings a little.

The success of the *Sign of the Cross* has led on to the staging of *The Sorrows of Satan* at the Shaftesbury Theatre, where the Prince of Darkness will be represented by a gentleman friend of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who will enact the heroine. What would Lord Shaftesbury have thought of this? At the same time a mystery play on *The Pilgrim's Progress* is to be produced at the New Olympic.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was the subject of some magisterial remarks last week at Westminster. A woman named Annie Sheldon was prosecuted by the Society for sending her child, who was hideously deformed, to beg. The mother was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, and the magistrate, Mr. De Rutzen, asked what was to become of the child. Mr. Phillips, who appeared for the Society, said it had no power to spend its funds in a case of that kind. Mr. Nelson, the Court missionary, then threw a bull's eye on Christian charity by remarking that no charitable institution would take the child in without money. From £10 to £20 was the very least sum required. Mr. Rutzen observed it was a shocking thing, and that a rich Society like the N.S.P.C.C., which gets so much money from the public, should do something in such a case, whereupon its solicitor observed that the Society was £15,000 in debt.

The Rev. B. Waugh, the secretary of the Society, who gets £500 a year besides his expenses, afterwards wrote to the papers to say that its solicitor was under a "misapprehension," which, of course, is not a denial of their unwillingness to take the child. Nor does he explain to whom the Society is so largely indebted.

Jerusalem the golden is chiefly remarkable for its fleas and filth. An intelligent Jew at Port Said, says the Rev. J. Lamond in his *Modern Palestine*, tried to dissuade him from going on to Palestine. "I have been there," he said, "and never wish to return. It is five thousand years behind the rest of the world." Mr. Lamond's own experience was similar. Jerusalem he found disappointing and dirty, and the Jordan not to compare to the Tay.

Father Chiniquy, the ex-Catholic priest, was challenged by Father Becque for £150 to substantiate his statement that when he was in church he had to repeat daily the prayer, "Mary, thou art the hope of sinners"; and a big gathering took place in the Argyleshire Hall, Oban, to witness the issue. The words were read from the *Breviary* for September 9, but Father Becque's point was that they were in a sermon, not in a prayer, and need be read only once or twice a year. The meeting seemed to consider that the essential point was, "Were the words there?" for it passed a resolution that Father Becque was in honor bound to hand over £150, which, however, the Father said they would never get.

Canon Davies has been assuring the Wolverhampton public that the Roman Inquisition was one of the mildest courts in Europe, and that in its treatment of Galileo it was doing its best to encourage science. How times do alter our point of view. Three centuries ago Canon Davies would have made a good Inquisitor himself.

P. Sabela, of St. Mary's, Grantham, is a good begging-letter writer. A little while ago he sent out a circular asking for money for a new church, and promising to pray for the dead relations of subscribers. Now we have before us a fac-simile lithograph letter beginning "A Merry Christmas," and ending with commending "My poor mission to your charity and pious prayers."

The States may be the land of political liberty, but they are hardly the land of social liberty. Even "king-deluded Germany" would not tolerate the Puritanical Sunday legislation which is in force in New England, and we see that sumptuary laws are proposed in Alabama, making it unlawful for women to wear tight-fitting jerseys, bloomers, or divided skirts. It is also proposed that it shall be unlawful for the top of any bodice to be more than three inches below the junction of the chin and the throat. These Puritans, in effect, pass a vote of condemnation on God Almighty for bringing children of both sexes into the world in a state of nudity.

Piety-pugilist Henry Varley howls aloud in his *Searchlight* apropos the prohibition of capital punishment. "Why should we break a God-ordained law?" And why does Varley chew ham and eggs, seeing that pig is also loaded with a God-ordained prohibition?—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The *Gibbon (Nebraska) Reporter* contains the warning words: "Chickens, Roost High." The cautionary utterance is explained by the information immediately following: "The annual meeting of the Grand Island District Baptist Association is in session at the Gibbon Baptist Church this week."

In the Court of Special Sessions, New York, the Rev. Robert Clayton, an Oxford graduate, who was formerly a vicar of the Church of England, pleaded guilty to the larceny of \$13.56 from the New York Life Insurance Company. Sentence was suspended upon his refunding the money.

A canting scoundrel named Mantell has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for obtaining small sums of money from domestic servants on the pretence that he was secretary of the Stepney Free Meal and Fresh Air Fund. His begging was all for Christ's sake and for Christ's little ones. He signed his begging letters "Yours in Christ."

Rabbi Abrahams has been copying "If Christ came to Chicago," and lecturing on "If Moses came to Melbourne." The *Sydney Bulletin* says, if he did, the Gentiles would never rest until they had induced him to lead another exodus.

Fanny Simonsen used to claim, as in her own experience, the story of the old woman who knelt to a statue of the Madonna: "Holy mother! you know me—me and you is alike. I have had a son guillotined, and you have had a son crucified. We have both of us had a deal of trouble in our family."

November 27 commemorates the greatest saint in the Christian calendar, and this, its greatest saint, was no Christian at all. The day is that of St. Josaphat; but St. Josaphat, as Professor Max Müller, Mr. Joseph Jacobs, and others, have shown, is merely a legendary person, whose adventures are founded on those ascribed by the Buddhists to the founder of their faith, Gautama Buddha.

If you want information concerning the Deity, you must go to Washington, D.C. Talmage is the man who knows just what God almighty is occupied with. He says: "God has an instantaneous photograph of all your sins." Fancy the old gentleman taking a snap-shot at every little boy in the act of stealing the jam. When he gets to heaven's gates—no further—there he will see, as in a kinetoscope, the developed photos of himself stealing apples, and, by the application of the Röntgen rays, the state of his inside thereafter. He will draw the moral then, and reflect: "What a pity I did not see these photos before." But God's ways are not our ways—which is, perhaps, fortunate.

In the case of an unfortunate suicide at Shields, named John Heckford, the jury brought in a verdict of temporary insanity, that the body might have "Christian burial." At Preston Cemetery, however, the clergyman engaged (the Rev. Rudolph Downie, of St. Faith's Mission Church), as soon as he ascertained whose corpse was before him, absolutely refused to perform the service, or to be any party to burying such a body in consecrated ground. A Methodist preacher present offered to read the service, but was not allowed to do so, as he had not given the fifty hours' notice, and the funeral had to be delayed till a more complaisant clergyman was secured.

A little while ago we called attention to the fact that a school built in Singapore, mainly by subscriptions from the Chinese, was being used to proselytize their children to the Christian religion. It seems likely that something as bad, or worse, has been attempted in Ceylon, where the majority are Buddhists. A Hospital for Women has been built at Colombo. Some of the heaviest subscriptions were from Buddhists and Moslems. Yet, at the opening, the venerable Archdeacon Boyd not only offered up prayer, but his petition, as reported in the *Ceylon Independent* (October 13), shows that the institution is intended for proselytizing purposes. After a word for the doctors and nurses who ministered to the body, he prayed at length for those who minister to the souls, that "their zeal may be profitable and their words not spoken in vain." He then prayed that the patients might "see in their sufferings the good hand of thy Fatherly mercy." "Give them time for repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and comfort of Thy Holy Spirit." This looks much like "Let them suffer until they embrace our faith," as it is followed by a prayer that the dying may prepare themselves by repentance "for their departure hence in thy faith and fear." We should think that after this Buddhists and Moslems will be chary of sending their wives and daughters to the Lady Havelock Hospital.

The pulpit of the Abbey Chapel of Romsey, one of the oldest Puritan churches in the kingdom, being vacant, the vicar of Romsey offered to take over the whole concern and run it himself, of course on Church of England lines. The property is valued at £16,000. The vicar's generous offer was declined with thanks. Probably the Churches would like to acquire all Dissenting property on similar terms to those proposed.

The competition among clergymen attached to Melbourne General Cemetery is one of the most interesting develop-

ments of true religion. Several denominations have representatives there daily ("corpse-watching," it is termed), and directly the sound of wheels is heard these gentlemen, or some of them, hurry towards the *cortège* in best sprinting form, with the hearse for winning-post and the undertaker for judge. If the corpse is guaranteed to have had a special brand of faith, the representatives of the other denominations retire, and the lucky man composes his face to an expression of woe and gets through the patter, returning to wait for another dead 'un. If the referee declares that the deceased had no particular religion, the gospel-grinders compete as vigorously for the job as hawkers canvass for customers at the markets on Saturday evenings, until the planter of stiffs ends the debate by his decision. The alleged favoritism shown towards one particular clergyman has given rise to suggestions that he has managed to euchre his rivals by dividing the "commish" with the corpse-carters.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

More sweating! A Melbourne parson has owned up that he receives 25s. a week from a matrimonial agency to marry people—"take 'em as they come, no matter what denomination."—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Some Scotch clergymen made a census of the church-going people recently, and met afterwards to compare notes and discuss the results. One clergyman expressed regret that the tendency of the age, as he had found it, was to "half-day hearing," meaning one service a day; another reported that only one family in twenty-seven in his census area attended any place of worship, while another summed up that the general results showed non-church-going to be largely on the increase.

The German is not a great church-goer. Berlin, with a population of nearly two million, contains at present only 115 public places of Christian worship, the chapels located in some of the public buildings included. The Protestant churches number ninety-nine, and the Catholic fifteen, while one is a Greek chapel. There are, besides, two large synagogues.

Katherine A. Tingley, the successor of Helen P. Blavatsky, has been touring in India, and, her followers say, has been attended by similar supernatural marvels to those which accompanied the founders of the Theosophical Society. Miracles always do happen when they are expected, and we should fancy Mrs. Tingley's will not be quite so crude as the disappearing brooches, saucers, and other trifles of H. P. B.

J. H. Ratten, writing in the *Tablet*, pretends to give some genuine account of Diana Vaughan, the lady Palladist Mason, who is said to have had an interview with Lucifer in person at the Grand Lodge at Charleston on April 8, 1889, when Lucifer ordered that she should be appointed Inspectress-General of Palladist triangles. Lucifer is said to be like a handsome young man. Diana was then a lady of twenty-five. It is satisfactory to read that, by the favor of Lucifer, she escaped the rite of the *pastos*. Mr. Ratten says: "Prayers, even lives, were offered up for her conversion." Whose lives were offered up, we wonder. Yet some dispute whether she is converted, or even if she ever had any existence at all.

In contrast to the usual advertisement for good Christian people, a recent advertiser for a married couple in the *Times* says: "Good character essential, religious views immaterial."

Parson Collings, formerly of Spitalfields, where he was known as the Dossers' Parson and the Smoking Parson, in giving his farewell address at Hanbury-street—whence he has had to depart for his Socialistic proclivities—made a few straightforward remarks. "The Church," he said, "was a class institution, and the sooner it was disestablished, the better for the people. It had been captured by the brewers, capitalists, and landlords, who had engineered it in their own interests." He was prouder to have been the Dossers' Parson than he would had he been Archbishop of Canterbury.

It is stated that a movement is again on foot among a section of the clergy and laity to have the Revised Version of the Bible used in churches. The bulk of the men of God taboo it as touching the sacred ark, and so indirectly affecting their own holy positions.

"General" Booth said at Aberdeen that he had a scheme of universal emigration by which men could be passed to any country where their labor was required. Before asking money for new schemes, the "General" might explain what has been done with his old ones for raising the submerged tenth. Where is his Colony over the sea? Some time ago he put forward a scheme of peasant settlements which were to relieve the congestion of population in some districts of India. He would do well to show some success in this smaller task before asking for the millions necessary to carry out a similar work on a world-wide scale.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LETTERS for the *Freethinker* must be addressed to the Editor or Mr. Wheeler. Letters addressed to Mr. Foote will await his return from America.

C. H. TURNER (Hackney).—We hope Mr. Ward's final lecture will be well supported by local Freethinkers.

P. J.—Shows how these Christians love one another.

J. MORTAN.—It was Disraeli who said one half of Christendom worshipped a Jew, and the other half a Jewess. The comparison of his own belief to the blank page between the Old and New Testament was adapted from Sheridan.

A. H.—Thanks for returning paper. We are always pleased to be of service to our readers.

J. WATTS TREASURE acknowledges for the Bristol Lecture Fund: Mr. Verney, 1s.; Mr. Morrish, 5s.; Mr. Treasure, 3s.; Dr. Stevens, £1; Mr. Jones, 1s.; Mr. Harvey, 2s. 6d.; Friend, 10s.

OBADIAH.—Greek is said to be the original language of the New Testament, though all the early Fathers speak of Matthew as having been written in Hebrew. The Vulgate Latin Version is derived from the Greek. The Revised Version is an improvement in respect to more manuscripts having been known and investigated, but it is doubtful if it is an adequate rendering, the translators living in a totally different atmosphere of thought from the writers.

J. WILLIAMS.—The Oaths Act, permitting affirmation instead of taking an oath, in all places, and for all purposes where an oath was required by law, was passed in 1838. It was the erasure of the resolution excluding him from the House of Commons which was passed while Charles Bradlaugh lay dying.

A. H. GERHARD (Amsterdam).—Freethinker sent as directed. *Salut.*

W. HINDE.—The references given in the *Progressive Thinker* were wrong. "Drink ye and be drunken" occurs in Jer. xxv. 27; "Therefore will I howl" in Jer. xlvi. 31.

A CONSTANT READER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

LECTURE FUND.—Mr. Cohen acknowledges collection at Glasgow, November 22, 18s. 9d.; Mr. Marr, £1.

B. MUNTON.—We appreciate the gallant efforts of yourself and your colleagues in Hyde Park.

E. D. H. DALY.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

E. J. PAGE.—If it were customary to insert replies from authors to the reviews of their books, there would be no end of controversy. It would be different if you had any misrepresentation to complain of, but you admit that "from the standpoint of Freethought the notice is generally fair enough."

T. MACLEISH.—You are to be congratulated upon your effective dealing with the Carlisle authorities.

JAS. BROWN.—Thanks for cutting.

C. PASH.—You can obtain Paine's Theological Works complete in one volume from Mr. Forder for half-a-crown.

FOREIGNER.—(1) Mr. Howard Collins edits a summary of Herbert Spencer's philosophy, published by Williams and Norgate. (2) Taine's *Philosophy of Art* is published, we believe, by Longmans. (3) Ballantyne's *Hindu Philosophy*, in Triibner's series, can be obtained from Kegan Paul, Charing Cross-road.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Ceylon Independent—Blue Grass Blade—Freethought Ideal—The Crescent—Dunoon Observer—Dunoon Herald—Secular Thought—Oban Herald—Boston Globe—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—De Dageraad—The Literary Guide—Free Review—Progressive Thinker—Newcastle Leader—Stoke-on-Trent Gazette—New York Public Opinion—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Für Unsere Jugend.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

As already stated, Mr. Harry Furniss, the famous English caricaturist, was a fellow passenger with Messrs. Foote and Watts on board the *Germanic*, and had several chats with them on deck and in the smoking-room. Mr. Furniss went to the Chickering Hall reception on Sunday evening, October 25, where Mr. Foote introduced him to Colonel Ingersoll. During the proceedings he took material for some sketches, which were printed on the front page of the next Sunday's (November 1) edition of the *New York Herald*. The sketches of Ingersoll are very clever and very funny, and although to some extent—as caricature *must*

be—they are at the subject's expense, we have no doubt that the Colonel thoroughly enjoyed them. There were also sketches of "Two English Freethinkers who came over on the steamship with Furniss." Mr. Watts's face is "a caution." You couldn't tell it is his unless you were told; but when you *are* told there is just enough resemblance for identification, and you have a good laugh. Mr. Watts is a genial man, and *he* laughed. Mr. Foote's head is another "caution." The artist has made the most of his travelling cap, which is also introduced in the letterpress. Mr. Furniss wrote as follows: "Here is a sketch I made of these gentlemen on board the steamer. Although of distinctly opposite types, they each bore striking individualities, from their travelling caps to the soles of their boots. The travelling cap of Mr. Foote and the foot of Mr. Watts linger in my memory still." The reference to Mr. Watts's foot will be understood when we say that he had a pair of boots clumped before leaving England, and the solid John Bull thickness of those soles was one of the ship's wonders.

Mr. Furniss said it was "interest in these two gentlemen" that prompted him to go to Chickering Hall, and "there was the additional attraction of hearing Colonel Ingersoll." He was charmed with Ingersoll's wit and humor, but wanted to hear him several times before giving an opinion of his oratory. "There is no doubt," he says, "that Colonel Ingersoll would prove as great an attraction in England as he does in his own country.....As champion of Freethought in America, one at once compares him with Bradlaugh, its late leader in England. The similarity between the two is most striking. In face, in figure, the resemblance is so strong that comparisons would at once be made even had not Freethought linked the names of these two remarkable men together."

Secular Thought (Toronto) is delighted with the visit of Messrs. Foote and Watts. "Mr. Foote's first appearance among them," it says, "has gained the hearts of the Canadian friends. His lecture at the Auditorium was a pronounced success. It was constantly cheered throughout its delivery, and was rewarded with a most enthusiastic outburst at its conclusion. 'Our old war-horse,' as he has been repeatedly and fondly named during our meetings, Mr. Charles Watts, was in excellent trim, and, as of old, delighted his audience with his clever and logical address."

Elsewhere, in a summary report of the Auditorium lectures, *Secular Thought* says that "Mr. Foote's lecture was a brilliant effort, and only a verbatim report could do justice to it. It was full of bright and epigrammatic sentences, and was delivered throughout in a remarkably clear and captivating manner. The audience was most enthusiastic, and rewarded the speaker with many bursts of hearty applause.....Mr. Foote dealt in a similarly witty and sparkling fashion with the questions of soul and body, spirits, future life, Theosophy, the resurrection and day of judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory, etc., all of which were treated in a masterly manner, affording many fine opportunities for the display of Mr. Foote's great abilities as an orator, and for a succession of witty sallies that brought round after round of applause and laughter."

Mr. Heaford had last Sunday a surprisingly good audience at the Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road, seeing that London was enveloped in a heavy fog. This Sunday Mr. Moss holds forth on the question, "What do Christians Believe Now?" With decent weather, he should have a good audience.

On the following week (Dec. 6) Mr. Chilperic Edwards, author of *The Witness of Assyria*, has consented to lecture on the topic which he has made his own, "The Monuments and the Bible." Mr. Edwards is best known to the readers of the *Freethinker* as Chilperic, and as this is his first lecture to a Freethought audience, his many admirers should endeavor to be present.

When the new rules as to Hyde Park meetings were put in force, many of the assemblies dropped at once. Not so with the West London Branch, which has carried on lectures both in the morning and afternoon. Despite the bad weather, it still continues its work. The sale of literature has, however, been interfered with by the police, and our friends would do well to let it be known where it may be obtained.

Last Sunday afternoon the gentle lambs of Jesus were frolicking in Victoria Park. Led by representatives of the Christian Lack of Evidence Society, they directed a charge at the Freethought platform, where Mr. H. P. Ward was lecturing. Fortunately, the police frustrated their object. In case the attack should be renewed this Sunday afternoon we trust that a goodly band of Freethinkers will be present to ensure that the last lecture of the season is given without disturbance.

Mr. Cohen reports that he has had excellent meetings in the West of Scotland, those at Glasgow being the best he

has yet had. This Sunday he lectures three times in the Labor Hall, South Bridge, Edinburgh, where we hope he will be well supported.

The *Dunoon Observer* gives a good report of Mr. Cohen's recent lecture there on "Foreign Missions," and also devotes several paragraphs to his visit. The *Dunoon Herald* also gives a fair report.

The Carlisle Town Council tried a game of bluff to prevent, if possible, the delivery of the first Freethought lecture in their town. The gentleman who let the hall to Messrs. Black and Macleish wrote saying that, "After seeing the contents of the bills you have published here, the Council find that it is not in accordance with the constitution of the hall. I am therefore instructed to inform you that you cannot occupy the hall on Monday first." To this a reply was sent that the lecturer's name, the title of the lecture, and all particulars had been given when the hall was applied for, and that an action for damages would be instituted if they were prevented from entering. The Council climbed down immediately.

A Progressive Union for the propagation of Freethought in the United States has been formed. There are four local secretaries—H. L. Green, 213 E. Indiana-street, Chicago; Laura Knox, 327 South Third-street, Arkansas City, Kansas; S. F. Benson, Pierson Town; and J. D. Shaw, Waco, Texas.

There is no doubt that the Chicago Freethought Convention, of which Mr. Foote will send an account shortly, has been a success—to which the presence of the English delegates and Colonel Ingersoll largely contributed. A special building—the large MacVicker's Theatre—had to be taken for the Sunday evening address by the Colonel.

The Oregon Secular Union has held its eighth Convention at Silverton. Pearl W. Geer was elected president, Miss Nettie Olds vice-president, and J. Kemp secretary. It was decided to issue a local organ of Freethought, to be entitled the *Torch of Reason*.

Mr. John E. Remsburg has a long article in the *Truthseeker* on "General Grant's Religious Opinions." He gives evidence that the General was a Freethinker, who never joined any church, or made any public profession of religion. He was in favor of the schools being completely secular.

In the *Carpenter and Builder* (November 20) Harry Hems, of Exeter, has a good article on "The Cross not Originally a Christian Emblem."

The secretary of the Carlton and Netherfield Branch of the N.S.S. writes in glowing terms of Mr. Heaford's recent visit. He "delivered a lecture which made a lasting impression upon the memories of his hearers." The opposition appears to have been of the usual order; one gentleman desiring to know if the lecturer thought a special appeal to Almighty God would have the effect of staying the Armenian outrages! The Branch officers are to be congratulated upon their meeting-place, which is the Carlton School Board room.

The *Literary Guide* for December gives a variety of information and reviews of interest to all Rationalist book lovers. Among the contents we notice an account of our new Archbishop's withdrawn contribution to *The Essays and Reviews* of 1861.

The *Sydney Bulletin* thinks the influence of God and of the Queen is declining in the colonies. It says: "No community can take an active interest for ever in a very ordinary-looking person whom it never saw, and is never likely to see, and who, if she was seen, would look very much like any other ordinary-looking person. The percentage of the population which has ever been within less than 10,000 miles range of the Throne is steadily diminishing, and loyalty at 10,000 miles range is a very much strained emotion. And as for the common Deity of nineteenth-century commerce, absence and the collection-plate and the doings of His alleged priests, and a growing suspicion that He isn't anything like the Deity of the New Testament teachings, are gradually dropping him also into oblivion."

The Freethinkers of Rangoon, in Burmah, have organized an Agnostic Society. Rangoon is described by the organizer of the Society as a "parson-ridden" town, which it must be, since only those Freethinkers who enjoy "independent positions" are expected to become active members; others are asked simply to join. Religious proscription follows Christianity around the globe.

There is matter of interest for all Freethinkers in the *Secular Almanack* for 1897, and as all profits are devoted to Freethought we do not scruple to urge its claims upon the attention of our readers.

G. MACDONALD ON MR. FOOTE.

MR. G. W. FOOTE, President of the National Secular Society of Great Britain, has been looking over New York for several days previous to this writing, and New Yorkers have looked him over during that time. He has not told me how our "institutions" impress him, but if they stand the scrutiny as well as he does, their permanence is in no danger. He is not one of those who have believed, in the face of contrary evidence, what Americans tell one another about personal and religious liberty in this country. He is not surprised, therefore, at our trepidation in the presence of the minions of Roosevelt, and Sunday restrictions are taken as a matter of course. Probably he will forego invidious comment on the circumstance that "Yankee Doodle," the tune to which our independence was achieved, cannot be played publicly on the Lord's day in the city where the historic tea-party occurred. He knew before he arrived that he would find less liberty and more disorder in New York than he left in London. That was to be expected among people who regard freedom as a heritage, and permit the ministers and the politicians to act as trustees, instead of attending to the business themselves, after the fashion of Englishmen. So his surroundings do not evoke judgment. The word "imperturbable" describes him fairly. Other Englishmen, I have observed, are at times impatient. They are choleric or jolly, as the occasion may dispose. Foote is blande or humorous. We were on the way to New Rochelle, N.Y., by rail to visit the Paine monument. The weather should have been pleasant, but was not. As the train passed gloomily through the land of melancholy days somebody apologized for the rain. Foote paid interested attention, and replied, "Well, you can't help it, you know," and thereupon composed himself for forty winks. You see, he might have said "beastly," but he scored a point by not offering that criticism. But although oblivious or indifferent to what can't be helped, and while he would not ostentatiously defy meteorology, Mr. Foote is obviously alert and curious. He observes and inquires, and before he said so at the Chickering Hall reception, I had received the impression that he would be more grateful for a fact imparted to him than for a detailed expression of thought. He is quite candid. His criticism of American ideas is that they are superficial; and he has a right to that opinion, for America has no thinker like Spencer, nor any observer like Darwin. We don't encourage the domestic culture of that kind of people in this country, though we sometimes take them second-hand, as Wakeman says, from elsewhere. If one of these "first-hand souls" should volunteer to be born here, he would starve, or be stunted, or winter-kill on his native soil.

Our religious population has seen to it faithfully that no Bradlaugh ever represented a constituency in the national Congress. Germany can have its Haeckels and Buchners, and England its Huxleys and Tyndalls in high places; but America is satisfied with Talmage. Even among our lay-clerics we have nobody but Rising Sun Stove Polish Morse of Massachusetts, and John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, to stand off against Gladstone and the Duke of Argyll. These facts bring the blush of shame to the cheek of patriotism, but it takes a liar to deny them. Foote attributes the American lack of the highest scientific attainments to our assiduous pursuit of the mighty dollar, and he is right to this extent—that our promising men are liable to be absorbed into politics, colleges, or public office, where their rewards are conditional upon their silence about controverted questions of theology.

I am saying less about Mr. Foote than I intended, but the condition of things on this side is disconcerting to the mind and conducive to flying the track. Personally, then, Mr. Foote is handsomer than he looks—that is, than he looks in any of his pictures. He would be taken for a doctor, or at least a "professor," since he has the manner of the learned. He is cosmopolitan, though, and might be a German or an American, except for his speech, which is United States with only occasional lapses into English. He brought the essential number of h's with him, and uses them in their appropriate connections. His dress is not peculiar, like that of Dr. Aveling, who was here a few years ago in clothes so loud that they interrupted conversation. He is a man above nationality, so far as one can judge. On all topics of interest he is radical to the verge of reasonableness, and his thought is trammelled only by obstructive facts. Wherever he may go, he will not attract attention as a "stranger in these parts." The above are matters about which my curiosity began to be aroused when I learned he was coming to America. I was satisfied in advance as to his ability as a writer and speaker; it was how he would comport himself "in our midst" that I had yet to learn. Now, since making the necessary observations, I hasten to report that he is all right. Therefore, gentle reader, the recruit having passed the scrutiny of your subalterns, and been found to be well grounded in the principles of our order, he is presented for your acceptance as one of us. Give him the fraternal and glad hand.

—*Truthseeker*.

GEO. E. MACDONALD.

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPELS.

ST. LUKE'S PREFACE.

HAVING seen that the Acts of the Apostles are, as far as we have examined the narratives, a fictitious history, we come to the other work which has been attributed to the same writer—viz., the Third Gospel. That these two compilations emanated from the same hand is a fact which has, as Renan says, "never been seriously contested. The perfect resemblance of style and ideas furnishes on this point abundant demonstrations." Bearing this fact in mind, we will now examine this fraudulent compiler's Introduction to his Gospel. And, first, there is no reason why the traditional name of the writer should be rejected. There were hundreds of men, bearing the name of Lucas, or Lucanus, in the second century. It is, indeed, far more probable that the compiler bore one of these names than not; for if, when the Third Gospel first made its appearance, the writer had been unknown, there can be little doubt that the authorship would have been ascribed, as in the case of the uncanonical Gospels, to an apostle. I take, then, the name of the compiler to be Luke; but not, of course, the Luke mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians. It is to be noted in this connection that Christian writers from Irenæus downwards were in the habit of ascribing works which were written in the first half of the second century to persons named in the Pauline Epistles. Thus, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Clement were without the smallest authority attributed to the Hermas and Clement mentioned incidentally in Rom. xvi. 14 and Phil. iv. 3. Luke is but another example of this fraudulent practice.

Luke's Preface, according to the Revised Version (which is that used throughout these papers), reads as follows:—

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemeth good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed" (Luke i. 1-4).

In both our English versions the words "delivered them unto us" are placed after "even as they." The "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" refer to "they," and not to "us." The passage should read:—"even as they, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them unto us." The Revisers of the New Testament have remodelled scores of passages that were perfectly plain before, merely to render the language more elegant; but in this case, where the sense really required the reconstruction of one sentence, they have left this sentence unaltered. This has been done, or rather left undone, in order that the writer of the Third Gospel might be mistaken for an eye-witness of what he relates.

We will now see what information can be derived from this Preface.

1. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters," etc.

From these words we learn that Luke had seen and read several other Gospel narratives before writing his own, and it is clearly implied both that the writers of these Gospels were self-constituted historians, and that anyone who chose might write a Gospel.

2. "Concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us."

Our Revisers have without the slightest authority altered the reading of the Authorised Version—"which are most surely believed among us"—into "which have been fulfilled among us," and have given as an alternative reading in the margin, "which have been fully established among us." The first Revised reading is based on the assumption that in a large number of instances the events recorded in the life of Christ were a fulfilment of prophecy. An examination of the Old Testament passages, however, shows this inference to be baseless. Next, the marginal reading implies that there existed in Luke's time evidence of the truth of the Gospel narratives; but, until we know what this evidence was, we can only assume that "those matters" were, as stated in the A.V., merely "believed" to be true.

3. "even as they, who from the beginning were eye-

witnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them unto us."

Here Luke says plainly that "those matters" had been handed down from the time of the apostles to his own day. The words "the beginning" refer to the period when the apostles were said to have gone about propagating the gospel. The passage clearly indicates that Luke was looking back to a time long antecedent to his own. The word "us" refers, of course, to the whole body of Christians in Luke's day. If, as apologists tell us, the writer of the Third Gospel was a fellow-laborer of Paul, this evangelist, though he could not be called an eye-witness, would unquestionably have been a "minister of the word" in apostolic times—that is, in the period which he designates "the beginning." It is quite certain, however, from this portion of his Preface, that the writer of the Third Gospel was living in post-apostolic times, and long after all the "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" had passed away. He does not even claim to have seen or known any of the first promulgators of the Gospel, and plainly implies that they had all long been dead. He was not himself living "in the beginning"—in the times of the early preachers of the "good news"; of this fact there cannot be the shadow of a doubt. In short, if the writer of this Preface lived in the middle of the second century, and desired to say that the Gospel stories had been handed down to his time, he could scarcely say this plainer than in the words he has actually employed—"even as they, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them unto us."

In each of the Synoptical Gospels is a chapter containing a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the approaching end of the world, which chapter was copied by all three Synoptists from the same pre-existing document. Matthew and Mark have adhered pretty closely to their copies. Luke, however, has diverged somewhat from the stereotyped account, and takes the liberty of adding the following words, which are not to be found in the other two Gospels:—

"But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand.....for there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (xxi. 20, 23, 24).

These words, which Luke piously puts in the mouth of Jesus, evince an actual knowledge of the events that occurred after the taking of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. The writer had undoubtedly heard of the horrors attending the siege of the holy city, and knew that the Jews had soon afterwards been "led captive," and that they were from that time to his own day dispersed "into all the nations."

4. "It seemeth good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed."

The writer does not say in so many words that the other existing narratives were unreliable; but he undoubtedly implies that they were to some extent untrustworthy. The mere fact of his imposing upon himself the task of compiling a "history" which should be a perfectly reliable account of the sayings and doings of Christ proves that he considered all the existing Gospels to be either incomplete or inaccurate. It is also to be noticed that Luke does not ask credence for the matters recorded in his Gospel on the ground of being inspired by the Holy Ghost to write an account free from error, but to the fact of having investigated or "traced the course" of all the circumstances he relates. He lays no claim to inspiration whatever. It is scarcely necessary to say that if this writer had been inspired, as modern apologists assert, there would have been no necessity for his making investigations; such a proceeding would be superfluous. It is to these investigations, not to inspiration, that he appeals in proof of the trustworthiness of his narrative; it is upon this ground alone that he commends his Gospel to Theophilus.

Luke states that he had "traced the course of things accurately from the first." Now this, we can say without fear of refutation, he could not possibly do. We know from the Epistles ascribed to Paul—some of which even rationalistic critics admit to be genuine—that there were no written Gospels in that great Preacher's time, or within

thirty or forty years of the Crucifixion. We know also from Luke himself that he did not live in apostolic times. In this writer's day, then—which was long after the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews into all parts of the Roman empire—it would be simply impossible for him, or for any one else, to collect evidence concerning the sayings and doings of Christ before the Crucifixion (A.D. 30). No eye-witnesses, as we have seen, were alive in his day.

But Luke not only gives a record of events which are said to have occurred during Christ's public ministry, he relates in the first two chapters of his Gospel a number of circumstances of a private character that are alleged to have taken place prior to the birth of Jesus, more than thirty years before one of the apostles or eye-witnesses was chosen. How did he "trace the course" of these matters? He records, for instance, the precise words uttered by the angel Gabriel to the priest Zachariah in the temple, no other person being present (i. 13-20). He tells us the exact words spoken by the same angel to the Virgin Mary in that young lady's chamber, no one else being present (i. 28-37). He relates the words addressed by Elizabeth to her cousin Mary in a private conversation (i. 42-45), and also the words of a long ecstatic declamation uttered by Mary (i. 46-55). He records, again, the exact words of Zachariah in another outpouring of the spirit (i. 68-79), and tells us the precise words spoken immediately after the birth of Jesus by an angel to some shepherds (ii. 10-12), as well as the words sung by a "heavenly host" upon the same occasion (ii. 14). How did Luke "trace the course" of all these circumstances? To this question there can be but one answer: Luke could not, and did not, "trace the course" of anything. We have seen that he does not claim to have received his knowledge of these matters by inspiration; neither does he, like Paul, pretend to have received information by visions. He places the credibility of his "history" solely upon the fact that he had investigated all the circumstances he records; and this it was manifestly impossible for him to do. There cannot be a doubt, then, that he simply wrote what he considered an improved version of one of the pre-existing Gospels, selecting as his groundwork one which he deemed the best, adding any circumstances he considered credible from other documents, and altering and improving the diction where he deemed necessary. A copy of this revised Gospel he presented to his friend Theophilus, so that the latter, when in doubt as to the truth of any of the wonderful stories related of Christ in his time, might have a reliable narrative to refer to. If the circumstances were recorded there, Theophilus might rest assured of their truth; if not, he might with confidence reject them.

5. "Most excellent Theophilus."

Who this Theophilus was nobody seems to know. This is indeed remarkable. There was a Theophilus who became Bishop of Antioch about A.D. 168; but his name is never considered in connection with the Introduction to the Third Gospel, probably on account of his living so late in the second century. Yet it is possible, and even probable, that this was the notability for whom Luke wrote his Gospel. The Theophilus named by Luke had been "instructed"—literally "catechized"—in the Christian faith, and was a person of some distinction. On these points, at the least, Theophilus the bishop answers to Luke's Theophilus. Again, Eusebius and Jerome tell us that Luke was a native of Antioch. There was doubtless, then, a tradition to this effect, and this also favors my suggestion. Theophilus was born a pagan, and owed his conversion to Christianity to the study of the Hebrew scriptures. He would, therefore, know less of the Christian writings than one who had been brought up in the Christian faith. Hence, being an educated man, he would require, soon after his conversion—which we may safely say was several years before he was made a bishop—a copy of a Gospel containing the events and circumstances in the life of Christ which were generally received as true by the Church at Antioch. Theophilus thought it a good plan to have a trustworthy written narrative, to which he could refer in case of doubt. He recommends his friend Autolycus to preserve and study carefully his own letters (in which he related a number of Biblical stories which he believed proved the truth of his new religion), so that Autolycus might have a "compendium and pledge of the truth." In accordance with this plan Luke, one of the presbyters who had a fair knowledge of Greek letters, set to work to compile for

the new and distinguished convert a Gospel warranted true in every particular.

I do not propose to go further into this theory here, as it would entail an examination of the contents of Marcion's Gospel (A.D. 140). I need only say that nearly all scholars agree either that Marcion's Gospel was a curtailment of the canonical Luke, or that Luke's Gospel was formed by additions to Marcion's Gospel. Dr. Sanday has written a learned article on the subject, and has proved to the satisfaction of himself and his brother apologists that Luke's Gospel existed before Marcion's. It would be easy, however, to show that his proof is of the usual apologetic kind, and really proves nothing.

ABRACADABRA.

YOU'LL BE AN ANGEL BY-AND-BYE.

(Tune: "Hush! little baby, don't you cry.")

SWALLOW the Bible—if you do,
You'll have a mansion in the sky.
Believe that all its yarns are true,
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Believe that every word therein
Was written by the Lord on high,
Stick to the Book through thick and thin,
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Chorus—If you're a Christian, when you die
You'll have a mansion in the sky;
A golden harp, the Scriptures say,
You will play, all the day;
God will a pair of wings supply;
Instead of walking you will fly.
In a white night-gown
And a golden crown
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!

Let superstition warp your mind,
To learn from nature do not try;
To scientific facts be blind,
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Have faith in meek and gentle "Josh,"
On all his promises rely;
If you believe his "clotted bosh,"
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Chorus—If you're a Christian, etc.

Go to a chapel or a church,
Say you're a sinner, groan and sigh;
Leave earthly duties in the lurch—
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Go, lead a life as black as mud,
And every moral law defy;
If you have washed in "Jesu's" blood,
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Chorus—If you're a Christian, etc.

Like sheep, continue to be shorn
By all the pilots of the sky;
They work for Christ, but will not scorn
To take your M. O. N. E. Y.
In gorgeous mansions let them dwell,
And like a lemon squeeze you dry,
And make your life on earth a hell—
You'll be an angel by-and-bye!
Chorus—If you're a Christian, etc.

ESS JAY BEE.

Obituary.

SIR BENJAMIN WARD RICHARDSON, who died on November 21, at the age of sixty-eight, was a true servant of humanity. He spent much of his life in popularizing sanitary science, and by his invention of the lethal chamber did much for the humane slaughter of animals. He was an advocate of total abstinence, and also of cremation.

The Prime Minister of Canada has attempted to settle the school difficulty in Manitoba by making all schools national and under uniform control. Secular work is to occupy the whole school day, except the last half hour, when representatives of any religious denomination will be allowed to come in and give religious teaching. This will be all very well if the children whose parents do not want religious instruction are at liberty to go home when the secular lessons are done.

BOOK CHAT.

MACMILLAN & Co. announce *Guesses at the Riddle of Existence*, by Professor Goldwin Smith. The titles of some of the papers after that which lends its name to the book are, "The Church and the Old Testament," "Is there Another Life?" "The Miraculous Element in Christianity," and "Morality and Theism." The first paper is an interesting discussion of a number of recent books, including Drummond's *Ascent of Man*, Kidd's *Social Evolution*, and Mr. Balfour's well-known work on *The Foundations of Religious Belief*.

* * *

The new volume of the *Biographies of Eminent Persons*, reprinted from the *Times*, includes the names of A. W. Kinglake, Charles Bradlaugh, Jules Grevy, J. R. Lowell, C. S. Parnell, Sir G. B. Airy, Cardinal Manning, Spurgeon, Walt Whitman, O. G. Whittier, E. Renan, Lord Bramwell, and Lord Tennyson.

* * *

The articles on "The Origin and Nature of Secularism" which Mr. George Jacob Holyoake contributed to this journal in the beginning of the year are now published in neat volume form by Watts & Co., 17 Johnson's-court, E.C. The book is well printed and handsomely got up. It has a good index, and is altogether just such a volume as admirers of Mr. Holyoake will like to possess themselves, and also to present to inquiring friends.

* * *

Messrs. Watts & Co. issue a cheap shilling edition of *Bible and Evolution*, and also of *Christianity and Evolution*, by Mr. A. B. Moss. These pronounced Freethought works have been received by the Camberwell, Nunhead, Rotherhithe, and Birmingham free libraries.

* * *

The Christian's Looking-glass, by Henry Smith, is another shilling brochure issued by Watts & Co. By showing what Christ's doctrines actually are, it may suggest the difficulty of finding a true Christian.

* * *

Fruit, Nuts, and Vegetables: Their Uses as Food and Medicine, by Albert Broadbent, secretary of the Vegetarian Society (Manchester: 9 Peter-street), is an excellent pennyworth; sixteen pages of information, well printed, and with a brown-paper cover. The sub-editor, in noticing this little pamphlet, takes occasion to give his testimony to the value of fruit and nuts as food. The heaviest day's work he has done for years was done easily without other food than almonds and rasins.

* * *

Lord Acton, the first Roman Catholic Professor of History at Cambridge, is giving there a course of lectures on "The French Revolution." His lordship has a high reputation for the thoroughness of his learning and his impartiality. We hope his lectures, which give a splendid opportunity for displaying both, will be submitted to the criticism of the outside world.

* * *

The American Publishers' Corporation have issued a new volume by Ambrose Bierce, entitled *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*. Mr. Bierce is the author of the blasphemous volumes, *Nuggets and Dust* and *The Fiend's Delight*, published with the pseudonym of "Dod Grile."

* * *

No. 22 of the brown-paper-covered publications of the Humanitarian League is on *The Sweating System*, by Maurice Adams (W. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street; 2d.). Mr. Adams shows that all the evils exposed before the House of Lords Committee in 1890 are still rife. He proposes more efficient inspection and eight hours' labor in all departments under the Government. The pamphlet is full of facts demanding the attention of all interested in social reform.

* * *

The latest volumes of *The Animal Life Readers*, edited by Edith Carrington and Ernest Bell, are also issued under the auspices of the Humanitarian League (George Bell and Sons; 1s.). They are adapted to children of the seventh standard, but are suited to people of all ages. We have read them with much interest. First there is the story of *Poor Blossom*, in which a horse is supposed to narrate his experiences from the foal stage, till he becomes a night cab-horse ready for the knackers' yard. The moral of the story, which is told with much humor and knowledge of life, is enforced, too, by many anecdotes of horses, illustrated by the veteran Harrison Weir. Miss Edith Carrington's account of the ancestry of animals, entitled *Ages Ago*, is a companion volume telling of the extinct animals that have passed away, and leading up to a protest against their needless extermination at present. Miss Carrington has some excellent observations on the social impulse and morals in wild animals. We should like to see the entire series of *Animal Life Readers* introduced into the public schools.

CORRESPONDENCE.

STATE CONTROL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Hierocles,” under “Inspect the Nunneries,” presumes every Englishman, not an Anarchist, will maintain the right of society, as a whole, over every one of its members—the right of the legislature to control every institution and every person within its territorial jurisdiction. I don't think so. Because, just assume the “legislature” made up of persons with the peculiar idea that Atheism or Secularism must be suppressed (and many do think so), then some Englishmen would not maintain the proposition of “Hierocles.” How can one object to others wearing cap and bells so long as they leave us to enjoy life in our own way, and without harm to others? Surely “Hierocles” has got Social Democratic fever, and will next propose the compulsory wearing of a red tie as a social duty—of course under the proper control of the State. However, it is somewhat alarming now to seek peace in Government regulation and inspection, as we ourselves have barely emerged from the bush. But perhaps this our friend has forgotten. What does he mean? The State to recognize the remarkable institution of the Inquisition by giving it legal status? Are we not getting enough of it? Mrs. Chant and the Chadbands encore Nay! nay! 'Tis so nice to be under legal control and regulation, especially of those with the remarkable bias for “kicking the Atheist out of the House of Commons,” denying the Atheist control of his own, and the rest of it. By all means let us have some more of it, but do, please, wait till the parsons with power are capable of controlling themselves, and then—perhaps we shan't want so much of it. HENRY A. HOPKINS.

PROFANE JOKES.

JOHNNIE CHAFFIE—“Grandma, will we all know each other in heaven?” Grandma—“Yes, my child, we shall know each other there.” “But grandma, we can make believe we are out when some of them call, can't we?”

Salvation Lass—“*War Cry! War Cry!*” Irishman (who thinks she has addressed him)—“Who's the war bechune?” Salvation Lass—“It's the same old war—between God and the Devil.” Irishman—“Ah! go on wid yez; I'll not interfere.”

The Clergyman—“I had no idea profanity was so prevalent till I began to ride a wheel.” His Wife—“Do you hear much of it in the road?” The Clergyman—“Why, nearly every one I run into swears frightfully!”—*Puck*.

Salvation Lass (whose lad is on top of 'bus)—“You'll get my fare above?” Conductor (unsaved)—“Very sorry, miss, but I can't wait till I get there.”

A recently-deceased prelate of the English Church once sustained a severe shock at a funeral he deigned to officiate at. While awaiting the opening proceedings he was surprised and grieved at the undertaker approaching him and whispering into the Episcopal ear: “The corpse's brother would like a word with you.” This is hardly so thrilling as the experience of a clergyman during the singing of a special hymn at a funeral. “Sweet hymn, sir, isn't it?” said a bystander; “the corpse wrote it.”

A clergyman in an Eastern town warned his hearers lately “not to walk in a slippery path, lest they be sucked, maelstrom-like, into its meshes.” This metaphor suggests that of another clergyman who prayed that the word might be as a nail driven in a sure place, sending its roots downward and its branches upward.

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- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (6) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

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, A. B. Moss, "What do Christians Believe Now?"
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (86 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.15, T. Thurlow, "Who Gains Most from Improved Means of Production?" 7.15, Touzeau Parris, "Christianity a Fraud." December 1, at 8.30, Social party.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, S. E. Easton, "Where will you Spend Eternity?"
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, "The Satan of the New Testament."
PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "The Life of Lafayette."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road: 11.15, Sunday-school; 7, W. R. Washington Sullivan, Dogmatism and Rationalism.
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "John Wesley and Religious Experience."
WESTMINSTER BRANCH N.S.S. (42 Vincent-street): 8, General meeting of members.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30, R. P. Edwards will lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 3, Mr. Ward will lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): J. M. Robertson—11, "Gladstone on Butler"; 3, "Socialism and Secularism"; 7, "The Tory Religion as Preached by Mr. Balfour."
BRISTOL BRANCH (St. James's Hall): 7, A Social.
DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, A Social.
EDINBURGH (Labour Hall, 50 South Bridge): O. Cohen—11.30, "Individual Liberty v. State Interference"; 2.30, "The Case Against Christianity"; 6.30, "Foreign Missions."
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion class; 6.30, W. Gilmour, "Recent American Poetry."
HULL (Oobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Musical evening.
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "The True History of the Apostle Paul."
LEEDS (Liberty Hall, Victoria-road): 3, Mr. Fryer, "Spiritualism: A Delusion and a Fraud." After, important committee meeting.
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): J. Read, "Without God."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. Roberts, "Final Causes."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Dr. Allinson—11, "Food and Feeding"; 3, "Divinity and Disease"; 7, "Health: How to be Obtained and Kept." Tea at 5.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E—November 29, Edinburgh. December 1 and 2, debate at Liverpool; 5, 6, and 7, Ox Hill; 9, Todmorden; 10 and 11, Blackburn; 13, Birmingham; 16, 17, and 18, Derby; 20, Leicester; 27, Camberwell.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—November 29, Athenæum, London. December 6, Bristol; 13, Liverpool.

POSITIVISM.

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

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