

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE SORROWS OF SATAN.

THERE can be no surer sign of the decay of Christian theology than the introduction of its sacred or demonic personages into novels and romances. The writers of such works may affect the most maudlin religiosity, and make constant appeals to the pious sentimentality of their readers; but every man of sense knows that worship and dread are both inconsistent with familiarity. John Milton himself was irreligious, and not religious, when he brought God the Father and Jesus Christ upon the epic stage. No one really believes in Omnipotence when he tries to make it act, or in Omniscience when he tries to make it speak. For the moment, at any rate, he is asserting his own intellectual predominance; and the Gods of his professed faith are merely the puppets of his imaginative dexterity. Nor are his readers or spectators free from the same criticism. What he is actively, they are passively. On the Athenian stage the gods were first introduced by the tragic poets, who treated them with a certain awe and reverence; but in time the public grew accustomed to the representation of their deities upon the stage, the familiarity bred a kind of contempt, and finally the gods fell into the hands of the comic poets; and what this led to may be seen in the Dialogues of the Gods by the last of the Greeks—the keen, bright, and sceptical Lucian.

Those who understand Christianity are aware that one of its deities is the Devil. Without him the Trinity is unintelligible. For the Christian godhead, as James Thomson pointed out, is not a triangle, but a square; not a Trinity, but a Quaternion. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost form three sides, but they enclose nothing. They are like, the fingers of a hand without the thumb. There is no grasp without the thumb, and no enclosure without the fourth side of the square. Nor is the Christian godhead complete or effective without the Devil.

In some respects, indeed, the Devil is the most important person in the Christian theology. Christian Theism, like every other form of Theism, ultimately finds itself confronted by the problem of evil. It has no possible escape save in postulating the existence of Satan. This, of course, is not a final remedy; for the questions arise, Did God make the Devil, or the Devil make God, or are they co-equal and co-eternal? But a temporary remedy is quite good enough for the thoughtless multitude, and it serves the turn of the theological doctors. People will ask what the world rests on, and most of them are satisfied when they are told that it rests on the back of an elephant. Some more inquiring spirits go a step further, and ask what the elephant stands on; and they are satisfied when they are told that it stands on the back of a tortoise. The few who want to go further still are easily branded as blasphemers; the priests being able to face them at the head of the vast army of the interested, the thoughtless, the lazy, the timid, and all the mob who hate those with more brains than themselves.

The Christian Devil was first introduced upon the stage, in any serious sense of the words, by Kit Marlowe, the morning star of English dramatic literature. The hero of *Doctor Faustus* is not a vulgar sinner; he is afflicted—to use a fine expression of old Donne's—with the concupiscent of inaccessible knowledges; and the Mephistopheles is a being of intellectual as well as supernatural power. The play, in fact, won the admiration of Goethe, who said

it was "greatly planned." Following the legend, Faust sells his soul to the Devil, and goes to hell at the finish; but between the compact and the catastrophe there is ample room for the poet's genius to display itself. "The growing horrors of Faustus," says Charles Lamb, "are awfully marked by the hours and half-hours as they expire and bring him nearer and nearer to the enactment of his dire compact. It is, indeed, an agony and bloody sweat." And let it be observed, in corroboration of the argument in our first paragraph, that Kit Marlowe was not a Christian, and probably had no belief in a personal Devil. "Marlowe," says Lamb, "is said to have been tainted with atheistical positions, to have denied God and the Trinity. To such a genius the History of Faustus must have been delectable food: to wander in fields where curiosity is forbidden to go, to approach the dark gulf near enough to look in, to be busied in speculations which are the rottenest part of the core of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Barabas the Jew, and Faustus the Conjurer, are offsprings of a mind which at least delighted to dally with interdicted subjects. They both talk a language which a believer would have been tender of putting into the mouth of a character though but in fiction."

But the most magnificent Devil in literature is undoubtedly John Milton's. The great Puritan poet—if indeed Milton ever was a Puritan—brings Satan upon this earth, but not at first. He traces the fortunes of the mighty rebel, from the Paradise of Heaven to the Paradise of Eden, through all the horrors of Hell. There are many long flat passages in that grand epic, which becomes almost intolerable when the first and second persons of the Trinity are set talking, and God the Father (as Pope said) quibbles like a school divine. But the genius of Milton always dilates in the presence of Satan. He lavishes his noblest imagery and loftiest eloquence on the defeated, but undaunted, rival of Omnipotence. Who can forget the majestic figure of Satan as he rises on the shore from the fiery surge of hell, and summons his followers to a fresh campaign against their triumphant and implacable enemy?

He, above the rest

In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower; his form had not yet lost
All its original brightness: nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscured: as when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all the archangel: but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd; and care
Sat on his faded cheek; but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge.

Satan is the real hero of *Paradise Lost*. "His character," as Walter Bagshot says, "seems to grow with his position. He is far finer after his fall, in misery and suffering, with scarcely any resource except in himself, than he was originally in heaven." Shelley even contended that Milton overleapt his own purpose in this splendid creation. "The character of Satan," he said, "engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse." Shelley did not indicate that "something worse." Perhaps he had the feeling which Walter

Bagehot expresses—"Suppose that the author of evil in the universe were the most attractive being in it; suppose that the source of all sin were the origin of all interest to us!" And let it be noticed that, although there is no mercy for the fallen angels in the heart of God, Satan "melts" at sight of the "harmless innocence" of Adam and Eve. He pities them, though he is unpitied; and declares that policy in the war with heaven

compels me now
To do what else, though damn'd, I should abhor.

Goethe's Mephistopheles is not so grand a figure as Milton's Satan. He is more subtle, critical, and fantastic. He is the spirit of mocking scepticism affronting the somewhat inept creator of the best of all possible worlds. It is the Satan of the Book of Job, in the circumstances, and the mental and social atmosphere, of modern Europe. When the three archangels, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, have ended their sublime song in praise of Creation, the Devil comes forward and reminds the Lord and his flatterers that man at least is a failure. Things on earth are as bad as they can be, and the Devil is so moved to pity by man's misery that he has scarcely the heart to plague the wretched creature any longer.

Now, it occurred to Miss Marie Corelli, the pious and popular novelist, to present the world with a fresh incarnation of Satan; partly on the lines of Milton, and partly on the lines of Goethe—but not at all on the lines of the Bible; for the Bible Devil is both malignant and repulsive, entering the book as a talking serpent, and leaving it as a ten-horned and seven-headed dragon. Such a monster as this would never do for elegant fiction. No, the Devil, to take at all, must be attractive, and if possible a gentleman. Miss Corelli, therefore, endows him with the beauty of Satan, and as much as she can command of the intellect of Mephistopheles. The result is Prince Lucio Rimanez of the *Sorrows of Satan*; a work which has been before the public for some time, but which we notice now because it has just been dramatized for the London stage.

Miss Corelli's qualifications for writing a new Devil-drama are not exactly transcendent. Some time ago we criticised a novel of hers called *The Mighty Atom*, and we found her art about on a level with that of the school boy who draws a mystical figure on a slate, and writes beneath it, "This is a horse." Miss Corelli is a religious woman, and she hates Atheism, Secularism, Positivism, and every other species of Freethought. She also desires the public to share this hatred. Accordingly she fills a book with good and bad characters, all the good being Christians, and all the bad Freethinkers. This is her infantile way of opposing "Materialism." She forgets that another novel might be written, in which all the bad people are Christians and all the good people Atheists; and the one would be just as artistic and convincing as the other.

There was an Agnostic professor in *The Mighty Atom*, called Cadman Gore; that is a cad of a man, named after clotted blood. This representative Agnostic had bony shoulders, leathery hands and big knuckles, lantern jaws, and ferret eyes. He had also long ears, perhaps in consequence of turning them about in all directions to catch the discordant explanations of the various sects of Christianity. He was likewise a despicable coward, and such a hater of natural beauty that he always took the dusty high road for his "constitutionals."

This is Miss Corelli's way of warning people against the blight of Materialism. It reminds us of a death's head cut out of a turnip, with a candle inside, to frighten village idiots.

But it may be asked why we take the trouble to notice this lady's books. We reply that we have to do many unpleasant things in the pursuit of duty. Miss Corelli's books, and especially this one, *The Sorrows of Satan*, are praised by the religious press, and are the theme of laudatory sermons from many pulpits. We therefore propose to analyze this book and see, if possible, what are its real merits.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

At Christchurch, near Caerleon, Monmouthshire, may be found a tombstone engraved with the cursing Psalm. The tradition tells that a farmer, dying of a broken heart, ordered the bitterest verses to be engraved upon the stone, that they might become a curse to his enemy.

THE CHRIST FETISH.

SHREWD traders always seek to have their wares up to date, and change their stock according to public demand. It would never do to keep on their shelves exactly the same goods that suited the last generation. The holy men who are in the lucrative black business of showing other people the way to kingdom come, in similar fashion, have to modify their stock-in-trade to bring it up to date. Although their principal "line" is an alleged perfect revelation from an unchangeable God, they have by new interpretations considerably altered and modernized its teachings. A generation ago they were crying shame on Frederick Temple for contributing to *Essays and Reviews*. Now they acclaim him as Archbishop of Canterbury, and tell the solitary protester: "We are all Evolutionists now." They teach the children that God created Adam out of dust, and made woman from his rib; but to the initiated these things are an allegory. They may discover in time that God himself is an allegory. Opinions, which but a few generations ago would have been piously roasted out of their professors, are now adopted as perfectly in accord with a rightly interpreted revelation. They have long since found that days, even when defined as morning and evening, mean long periods; and, on the other hand, that everlasting does not mean lasting for ever. Satan has been superannuated, and hell refrigerated. It is found easy to reconcile religion and science when the alternative is loss of power and position. More and more the ministers of religion are giving up all that their forefathers considered the vital truths of religion. The tendency in all the churches is to subordinate all creeds to what is called the spirit of Christ. This cult of "a dead Jew," though not without its tender side, is in essence as much an idolatry as that ascribed to "the heathen in his blindness," who "bows down to wood and stone."

Even so enlightened a man as the Rev. Stopford Brooke, in his discourse at Essex Church, Notting-hill Gate, last Sunday, fell in with the prevailing Christolatry, and declared that he believed in Christianity, "not as expressed in creeds and dogmas, but in the words of Jesus Christ." Mr. Brooke knows as well as anyone that the most varied and discordant dogmas have been founded on the words of Jesus Christ, and that the detestable organization of the Jesuits purports not only to be named after him, but to be founded on his words. While much that is admirable may be found in the teachings of Jesus Christ, there is another aspect also which it is necessary to expose, since it is not dilated upon by religionists.

Modern men of God usually leave out of sight the diabolism of the Gospels, the many references to possession by devils, the story that Jesus, who is supposed to be God incarnate, was tempted by the devil, who took him to an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and offered them to him if he, the supreme and divine, would fall down and worship *him*, the infernal! The story, too, that this deity incarnate acceded to the petition of incarnate devils, at the cost of playing the devil with two thousand hapless swine, is not often mentioned now in pulpits among the words and works of Jesus; nor his cursing of the barren fig-tree when the time of figs was not yet (Mark xi. 13).

Christ is represented as the Savior of "whosoever will," although he himself is said to have declared himself not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. xv. 24). The Christ of the Gospels seems to have known nothing of this beautiful save-all creed. He is represented as saying, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 9). He declares that the Son quickeneth whom he will (John v. 21), and with equal arrogance proclaims that "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers" (John x. 8). He says that "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 14), and "Many are called, but few chosen" (Matt. xx. 16).

Our modern divines have discovered that the declaration that "he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16) is an addition to the blessed Gospel; but they have not told us how many additions the Gospel contains, nor do they dwell upon such appeals to fear as the statement that the Son of Man shall send forth his angels to

gather his *elect* (Matt. xxiv. 31), and that there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. xxiv. 51). Nor do they allude to such offers of reward as "sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 28).

In his instructions to his disciples Christ tells how to act with regard to those who receive them not: "Shake off the dust from your feet," and "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matt. x. 15). This is rather the tone of a vindictive bigot than of a benign humanitarian, not to say divinity. So, in the warning, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33), we see little trace of the "all-loving friend of man"; while his declaration that he has come "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother" (Matt. x. 35), is so inhuman as to suggest that the saying was ascribed after the event had been fulfilled.

It is an ungracious task to point to flaws in a character revered by so many as a perfect ideal; but when so able and advanced a man as Mr. Stopford Brooke panders to the popular idol, it is necessary that Freethinkers should point out there is another side to his character as depicted in the Gospels, and that, in the light of common sense and humanity, the fetish of the Churches is not altogether flawless.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE LATEST DEFENCE OF THE BIBLE.

PROBABLY no book has had more extravagant claims urged upon its behalf than the Bible; and yet no work has been subject to so many changes in its contents, and to such a variety of interpretations being placed upon its teachings, as this alleged word of God. Moreover, the different modes of defending the book have been equally as manifold. At first it was looked upon as a sin to doubt that it was aught but "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"; then it was discovered that errors had crept into its pages "either from the negligence of some transcribers, or from others who added to or took away, as they saw fit, in making their corrections." It was then found that astronomy and geology demanded more space and time for the existence and development of various phenomena than the Bible permitted; and within the last decade what is termed the "Higher Criticism" has clearly demonstrated that its inerrancy can no longer be maintained.

The latest defence of this one supposed infallible record is to be seen in the utterances by prominent clergymen, of different denominations, which have been recently published in a book entitled *The Bible and the Child*, by F. W. Farrar, D.D., R. F. Horton, M.A., D.D., Arthur S. Peake, M.A., Walter F. Adeney, M.A., W. H. Fremantle, D.D., Washington Gladden, D.D., Frank C. Porter, Ph.D., and Lyman Abbott, D.D. The object of the writers of this volume is to show that the orthodox view of the Bible is utterly false, and that children should not be misled thereby. In fact, in the opinion of these prominent divines, children should be taught that Moses did not write the Pentateuch; that David only wrote a few of the Psalms; that the history of Creation given in Genesis is a beautiful fable; that the book of Deuteronomy was written hundreds of years after Moses was dead; that various books of the Old Testament formerly regarded as historical are merely legendary; that the Bible is not a book, but a literature containing poetry, history, drama, biography, and philosophy, and covers a period of thousands of years; that the parables ascribed to Christ are not to be regarded as actual facts; and that the parables and fables of the Old Testament should not be taught as truth. Thus, according to this latest defence of the Bible, all claims for its infallibility, its "divine inspiration" in the old Christian sense, and its genuineness of authorship, are given up; and those who desire to judge of its value must do so from the standpoint of reason. This is another striking instance of the decay of orthodoxy and of the advancement of Freethought.

The London *Chronicle* evidently takes this view for in its issue of January 12 of the present year, in noticing the book, *The Bible and the Child*, it says:—

"Nothing, perhaps, is more remarkable in the recent history of the religious thought than the surrender of

the orthodox position with regard to the inspiration of the Bible. The defenders of this venerable theological stronghold have been compelled to capitulate to the higher critics. At a time within the memory of men not yet past middle age is was rank heresy to doubt the scientific accuracy of the account of the origin of the world and man given in the book of Genesis. Leaders both in the Church and Nonconformity took a view of inspiration scarcely less absurd than that of Cardinal Bellarmine, who declared that the acceptance of the Copernican astronomy would involve the abandonment of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Bishop Wilberforce went so far as to declare that this doctrine depended upon the acceptance of the story of the fall of Adam. Canon Liddon believed in Noah's flood, and in the metamorphosis of Lot's wife. He had almost as much faith in the story of Jonah as the man who declared that if the Bible had stated that Jonah swallowed the whale he would have believed it. Dr. Pusey seemed to think that Christianity would have to be given up if the views now generally accepted about the book of Daniel were proved to be true. Keble believed that the universe was created in six days, and fossil remains were placed by God's own hand in the spots where geologists have found them. The attitude of these authorities towards this intelligent criticism of the Scriptures was as unreasonable as that of Danzius, who thought that true religion depended upon the belief in the divine origin of the Hebrew punctuation. Scarcely anybody of any authority as a theologian or a Biblical scholar now holds the views about inspiration which only a few years ago were so obstinately insisted upon. In fact, from scores of pulpits to-day we have eminent preachers insisting that the Bible is not infallible."

This is a corroboration of the attitude which was taken towards the Bible by Thomas Paine. But the press and the pulpit condemned and vilified the brave author of *The Age of Reason*; now, however, both pulpit and press adopt the very views expounded in that unanswerable work. Notwithstanding this fact, Christians ask, Where is the evidence of the progress of Secular principles?

While, of course, we hail with satisfaction the important concessions made to Freethought by these eminent professed Christians, we fail to recognize the logic and consistency of their position. They contend that the Bible contains the "word of God," and they admit that in many parts it is erroneous; but they omit to tell the children, to whom they appeal, how the "word of God" is to be distinguished from the word of man, and how the true is to be discerned from the false. Their effort is another priestly attempt to keep the rising generation in their power by dressing the old superstition in a more modern style. Further, the children are not informed how they are to understand the following portions of the Bible: Those obscene and indecent statements found in Genesis xxxviii. 16; Leviticus xv. 16, 17, 18, 24; 2 Samuel xi. 4, 5, xii. 24; Deuteronomy xxiii. 1; 2 Kings xviii. 27; and Ezekiel iv. 12; those cruel and revolting commands given in Exodus xxxii. 27; Numbers xxxi. 17, 18; Deuteronomy xx. 10-16; 1 Samuel 15, 2, and 3; Leviticus xxvi. 22; Jeremiah xiii. 14; those favoring the practice of cannibalism as recorded in Leviticus xxvi. 29; Jeremiah xix. 9 and Ezekiel v. 10; the narratives referring to the family institutions of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the treacherous and murdering proclivities of David; the cruel laws which governed slavery (Exodus xxii. 2-6); the barbarous method of training children (Proverbs x. 13; xix. 18; xxi. 15; xxiii. 14); Christ's teachings as to the neglect of mundane affairs, the duty of non-resistance of evil, the blessings of poverty, the torments of hell, the judgment day, and the possession of devils.

Now, all the above teachings and commands are found in the Bible, and many of them bear the direct sanction of God. Would it not have been better if the reverend authors of *The Bible and the Child* had dealt with these instead of passing them over in silence? It is such cruel, vulgar, and degrading teachings as these that appear so revolting to the humane and refined mind. The Rev. Dr. Horton, on pages 42-3 of his article, says: "Not only must the Bible itself be given, but it must be given with so clear and convincing an explanation of what the Bible actually is that children may escape the 'sunless gulfs of doubt' into which we and our forefathers were plunged." Then, in the name of common sense, why did not the reverend Doctor and his colleagues make an effort to furnish in their book a "clear and convincing explanation" of the objectionable parts we have referred to above? The answer is, Because no such explanation can be given, and therefore

these blots upon Bible literature are ignored, and the children are misled by a new but fallacious mode of defence, which is beyond their powers of comprehension.

Arthur S. Peake, M.A., Tutor in Biblical subjects, Primitive Methodist Theological Institute, Manchester, one of the writers of the same book, seems to doubt the necessity of any genuine explanation, for he writes: "As a rule, critical questions should be let alone in the pulpit. They may unsettle the faith of older Christians, who are unable to distinguish between form and substance; and, apart from this, the pulpit is meant for another purpose." Is not this what the Americans would term "a give away"? We should think that in this age of inquiry critical questions should be dealt with by those who profess to instruct the people. Intelligent persons are becoming more and more dissatisfied with simply believing; they require to know *why* they should believe, and this is just the information the clergy cannot give to satisfy the unprejudiced and inquiring mind. No doubt "the pulpit is meant for another purpose," which is, to induce the congregations to "open their mouths and shut their eyes," and accept whatever the preachers send them. This may help to perpetuate the delusions of Christianity, but it does not accord with the dignity and requirements of the mental aspirations of the latter part of the nineteenth century.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPELS.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL A FABRICATION.

It has been shown, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel differs so completely in language, teaching, and actions from the Jesus of the Synoptics that one or the other must be a creation of the imagination. It remains now to determine upon adequate grounds which of these two Jesuses must be rejected as fictitious.

We have already seen that many of the sayings of the Fourth Gospel Jesus appear upon the face of them to be of an artificial character, and that they certainly *look* like fabrications. Now, if we examine the language of the "First Epistle of John," and compare it with that of the Fourth Gospel, two facts stand revealed. The first is that the two books were undoubtedly composed by the same writer; upon this point there cannot be two opinions. The second—"Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in Ashkelon"—is that the writer of the Epistle has fraudulently placed his own words and ideas in the mouth of his blessed Lord.

In commenting upon John xxi. 24—"This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things and wrote these things, and *we* know that his witness is true"—I remarked that the apostle John would have no need to make such a statement, and that such an assertion could come only from a forger. This now turns out to be the case. The author of the "Epistle of John" has manufactured a Jesus of his own—a tin Jesus on wheels—whom, by means of a piece of string, he whisks from Galilee to Jerusalem, then back again into Galilee, then to Cana, then to Jerusalem again, then to a well in Samaria, and then back again to Galilee, while the Synoptists believe him to be at Capernaum or alone on a mountain. The pious forger has also made up all the discourses which he has placed in the mouth of his puppet out of his own head.

As to the identity of this impudent fabricator, nothing certain can be stated. We have seen that Papias (about A.D. 140) heard from his acquaintance, the presbyter John, that something of the nature of Gospels had been compiled by Matthew and Mark, while nothing is said of the other two—the inference being that he was unacquainted with the canonical Luke and John. Well, Eusebius, who had Papias's book in his hands, tells us that that worthy "Father" had quoted passages from the "First Epistle of John." This is the earliest notice we have of the existence of this Epistle. It would seem, then, that the writer of the Epistle was a contemporary of Papias—that is to say, probably the presbyter John himself—and that the Epistle had been given to the world before the Gospel.

At any rate, the forger—whoever he may have been—carefully abstained, both in the Epistle and the Gospel, from giving the name of the supposed writer. He simply

placed them in circulation as the writings of the Apostle John, and doubtless was able to give a plausible account both of their coming into his possession, and of their being unknown to the Christian world up to that time. John, the disciple (whom I have admitted as the writer of the Apocalypse), would have inserted his name boldly (see Rev. i. 1, 4, 9; xxii. 8). We know, too, from the language of the two books, that the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel were not written by the same hand, and, further, that the author of the Apocalypse displays no acquaintance with the events and sayings recorded in the Gospels. The non-apostolic authorship of the Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel is, therefore, practically certain.

I will now place some passages from the Epistle of John in juxtaposition with some of the sayings ascribed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. A comparison of these will prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the words put in the mouth of Jesus contain both the ideas and forms of expression which characterize the writer of the Epistle, and that the language is unquestionably that of the writer himself:—

JESUS (*in Gospel*).

"Little children, yet a little while," etc. "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me... from henceforth ye know him" (xiii. 33; xiv. 6, 7).

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled" (xv. 11).

"If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before you" (xv. 18). "Marvel not at this," etc. (v. 28).

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (xv. 13).

"Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not; and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (xii. 35).

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit... If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you... If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (xv. 5, 7, 10).

"that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (xviii. 21).

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (xiii. 34).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (iii. 16).

"I am he that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (viii. 18).

"If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world," etc. (xv. 19).

"In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (xvi. 33).

"ye hear them not because ye are not of God" (viii. 47).

"Ye are of your father, the Devil... He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth," etc. (viii. 44).

JOHN (*in Epistle*).

"I have written unto you little children, because ye know the Father" (ii. 13).

"And these things we write that your joy may be fulfilled" (i. 4).

"Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you" (iii. 13).

"Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us" (iii. 16).

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another... But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth" (i. 7; ii. 11).

"And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him... and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments" (iii. 24, 22).

"If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father" (ii. 24).

"Again, a new commandment write I unto you... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (ii. 8; iv. 11).

"Herein was the love of God manifested towards us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (iv. 9).

"For the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son" (v. 9).

"They are of the world: therefore speak they as the world, and the world hateth them," etc. (iv. 5).

"For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world," etc. (v. 4).

"whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (iii. 10).

"He that doeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning... as Cain was of the Evil One, and slew his brother" (iii. 8, 12).

"If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him" (xiv. 23). "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected" (ii. 5).

The three Synoptists know nothing of such expressions as "walking in the light" and "walking in the darkness," of "knowing the Father" and "abiding in him" and "the Father in them"; of being "of the world" and "not of the world," and "not knowing whither" they were going, of "overcoming the world," of their "joy being fulfilled," of being "of God" and "not of God," of "the Father" bearing "witness" to Christ, and of the "new commandment" to "love one another."

If Jesus went about teaching in this manner, they certainly knew nothing of it; and yet one of them, Matthew, is said to have been an apostle and an ear-witness. In short, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the sayings which are ascribed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, and which unquestionably exhibit all the peculiarities of expression and the literary idiosyncrasy of the author of the Johannine Epistle, were fabricated by that pious writer himself, and were certainly never uttered by the Jesus who is portrayed in the Synoptical Gospels.

One of the points of difference between the Synoptical Jesus and his counterfeit brother is the use of the word "Verily." He of the Synoptics invariably says: "Verily, I say unto you." The tin Jesus, however, always says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." The forger of the Fourth Gospel evidently thought that a second "verily" would be of great assistance in getting his lies believed, and doubtless found it so. Who could suspect a falsehood when preceded by such solemn words as "Verily, verily, I say unto you"? Yet this two-fold asseveration is made no less than twenty-five times, and each time it is employed as the preface to a big, bouncing lie. ABRACADABRA.

SECULAR SERMON.

(Concluded from page 37.)

THE Acts of the Apostles tells us that, having safely reached the heavenly regions, Christ sat at the right hand of God, where, according to orthodox opinion, he still remains located, interceding with the stern justice of the Father on behalf of the sin-enslaved sons of men. No hint is given of any amusement or recreation in the regions above; no balls, no garden parties, no theatrical performances, no yachting on the glassy sea; nothing but the mournful monotony of the ceaseless song of "Moses and the Lamb," or the eternal twanging of golden harps, which doubtless are by this time hideously out of tune. A somewhat more tolerable heaven is that which is pictured to us in the following jovial lines, which, according to the learned but anonymous author of *Religion in the Light of Philosophy* (Williams and Norgate; 1882; p. 87), are placed on the tombstone of a Mecklenburg nobleman at Dobberan. This is how the translation runs:—

Away, Devil, away, far away from me;
I do not care a straw about thee;
I am a Mecklenburg nobleman;
What hast thou to do with my pot and can?
I drink with my Lord Jesus Christ;
Whilst thou, Devil, over and over must thirst.
I drink with him good, mild, old ale;
Whilst thou sitt'st tormented in the pit of hell.

Whether the noble Mecklenburger was inspired by the Spirit, holy or unholy, to address Beelzebub in this strain, we leave it to theologians and teetotalers to determine. All Bible readers must, however, know that Jesus, when on earth, was not averse to the cup that cheers, and occasionally inebriates, as witness the merry carousal at the wedding at Cana; and at the Last Supper he plainly indicated to his Apostles (Matthew xxvi. 29) that he fully intended to have a glass with them when they should meet him in his Father's kingdom. If Christ in heaven can be imagined drinking wine, why not "good, mild, old ale," or table beer? Perhaps the citizens of the new Jerusalem have adopted mild ale as the national beverage, true to the good old watchword of "Beer and Bible." Teetotalers may object that, what with the singing and the harping, the wine-bibbing and ale-drinking, heaven must be a sort of salvation free-and-easy, managed by the holy Trinity, as the sole caterers of celestial drinks and entertainments.

What's in a name? Such a heaven would certainly not be an enviable one, but it would be more desirable and less intolerable than the dreary eternity of psalm-grinding with which our melancholy orthodoxy threatens us hereafter as the penalty of piety here.

The New Testament leaves us cruelly in the dark as to what became of the body of Jesus Christ. His appearances after his resurrection have already been alluded to, and were so frequently of a ghostly or spiritualistic character as to awaken grave doubts whether he had definitely shuffled off his mortal coil. By way of solving these doubts the Church has miraculously become possessed of abundant relics of its Lord and Master. In 1247 Westminster Abbey was made additionally sacred by the real presence there of "a phial of crystal containing a small portion of the precious blood of Christ."* Certain monks also pretended to have "a tooth of our Lord," also "the navel, and other parts less decent, of the body of Christ."† A monk of St. Anthony declared‡ he had seen, at Jerusalem, "a bit of the finger of the Holy Ghost, as sound and entire as it had ever been.....one of the ribs of the *verbum caro factum* [the word made flesh]." The lying list of such relics might be indefinitely extended, but the above are fair samples of the pious frauds which holy mountebanks employed for promoting the glory of God and the gulling of superstitious man.

These impostures justly arouse the scoffs of all honest folk; yet why do we reserve our laughter and contempt for the vendors and defenders of those absurdities, while we approach with trembling steps the altar of the modern Catholic or Ritualist, who makes his God and eats him, or serves him out in little tit-bits to a throng of sacred cannibals, who, without laughter or loathing, plant their carnal teeth into the re-manufactured body of a dead Jew, and proceed to masticate and digest his million-times mangled remains? It is surely less improbable, and not nearly so absurd, that a few relics should come to us down the stream of the ages preserved by the piety of fanatical superstitionists, than that the body and blood of a Galilean enthusiast should, after eighteen centuries, be juggled into existence every day of the year in tens of thousands of churches in Christendom by the pious incantations of priests. Those Protestants, therefore, who rail at Catholics for their blind faith in the genuineness of relics expose themselves to counter accusations for pretending to eat, drink, and be religiously merry with the body and blood of a good young man who died centuries and centuries ago. Be the doctrine scriptural or superstitious, it cannot be gainsaid that a more eccentric individual never breathed the air of heaven than Jesus Christ. The night before his crucifixion he provided his Apostles with a cannibalistic banquet. The wine they drank flowed from his own veins, and the bread they ate was mystically sliced off his divine body. The Christian world abounds with miscellaneous odds and ends of what was once "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." And, notwithstanding the plenteousness of these fragments that remain of a defunct deity, and the continual daily feasting of true believers, the body of Jesus Christ is not apparently diminished either in bulk or weight. Its vitality is more remarkable than the fragmentary survival of those prestidigitous five loaves and two fishes on which our blessed Lord once so magically operated. Who will say the age of miracles is past when wonders like these never cease to flow, giving their solemn attestation to the fables and fictions of faith? One's gorge rises in contemplating these pious follies. It may be urged that these contributions to our knowledge of Christ are not true; but truth is not essential to systems of theology. It may at least be claimed that these apocryphal items are just as true as Gospel. We do not deny that absurdity disfigures the items, one and all; but the same ugly features are equally discernible in the canonical portraits of Jesus.

W. HEAFORD.

Against the God who forged despair and thunder
I, man, protest;
Who gave us love, and hid his poison under
Love's snow-white breast;
Who gave us life, and cleaves that life in sunder
When it seemeth him best. —G. Barlow.

* D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. i., p. 450.
† D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. ii., p. 422.
‡ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of Executive Meeting held at the Society's Offices, 377 Strand, W., on Thursday, January 7; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, S. Hartmann, A. B. Moss, J. Samson, F. Schaller, C. Watts, J. M. Wheeler, G. J. Warren, P. Sabine, M. Loafer, W. Leat, A. Taylor, S. Easton, C. Quinton, C. Harwood, and the Secretary.

The President, on taking his seat, welcomed the Executive, and reported the result of his official visit to the American Secular Congress, which had been pronounced to be the finest gathering the organization had ever had. Colonel Ingersoll also had promised to visit England as soon as his business arrangements would permit.

The minutes of the previous meeting were then read and confirmed, and the minutes of the meetings held during the President's absence were again read and commented upon. The matter of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund balance then arose out of the minutes. Mr. Forder was unable to be present, in consequence of ill-health. After discussion, and reference to the correspondence, it was moved by Mr. Watts and seconded by Mr. Cohen, "That the matter be now left for the President to deal with." Carried unanimously.

The monthly cash statement was read and adopted, and the financial position of the Society discussed. The President made a statement as to the subscriptions raised through the *Freethinker* for the American visit, Lecture Fund, and N.S.S. General Fund, and the amount available to the N.S.S. was about £22. This left the Society still indebted to the President for advances made on account of office and other expenses, which, it was hoped, would be cleared off by donations at the Annual Dinner. A letter was read from the Westminster Branch, as to which the Secretary was instructed to ask for further particulars. Mr. E. G. Taylor, of Manchester, placed his resignation before the Executive, which was accepted.

The sad death of Mr. S. P. Putnam, vice-president, was referred to, and the following resolution was moved by Mr. Moss and seconded by Mr. Wheeler: "That the Executive of the N.S.S. desires to record its deep sorrow at the sad and sudden death of Mr. S. P. Putnam, and to express its sympathy for the American Liberals in the great loss they have suffered." The Derby Branch also forwarded a vote of condolence with the deceased gentleman's bereaved friends. Several questions on Society matters were answered by the President, and a pleasant termination to the business was made by the President announcing that he already had promises amounting to several thousand pounds if his Incorporation Scheme could be carried through.

The meeting then adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

ACID DROPS.

"No Popery!" has ceased to be a fashionable cry in the Church of England. The Bishop of Chester even writes a loving letter on the Education Question to Cardinal Vaughan, addressing him as "Dear My Lord Cardinal." Both these gentlemen, being priests, are fighting for "Denominational rights"—that is, for the right of teaching their own dogmas in schools supported by public money; and if the present Tory government does not shell out the last farthing these gentlemen demand, it will be their duty, the Cardinal says, to "work for a political break-up."

In the course of his reply to "My Dear Lord" of Chester, Cardinal Vaughan remarks that "Christianity is a science to be taught as definitely as any other science which is taught to the young." "It has," he says, "definite dogmas, rules, principles, and practices which logically hold together and spring from a definite revelation, just as the human body is shown by anatomy to be composed of definite structural parts, and to depend for its life upon a human soul."

What text-book of anatomy can Cardinal Vaughan refer us to for this information? What anatomist teaches, as a part of his science, anything at all about a soul? Then, as to that "science" of "Christianity," would it be possible for Cardinal Vaughan and the Bishop of Chester to draw up a text-book of its "definite" teaching together? Would they even agree over ten lines of the preface?

The Confirmation of the new Bishop of London was marked by "a scene." "I, John Kensit, a baptized, confirmed, and communicant member of the Protestant Church of England," got up and read a long-winded protest. But the officials engaged in the ceremony took no notice; they went on with the business, and "I, John Kensit," was left protesting. When it was all over the new Bishop, Dr.

Creighton, passed by "I, John Kensit," and said with good humor, and perhaps a little sarcasm, "We shall get on all right." When a man is certain of £10,000 a year he can afford to smile at most things.

This "I, John Kensit," is a poor silly creature, and a rabid Orangeman. We might respect his "Protestantism" if we did not know that he has turned "an honest penny" by publishing the vilest slanders against Colonel Ingersoll, written by a disreputable, drunken American. This sort of "Protestantism" is doubly disgusting. It is just as bitter and persecuting as Catholicism, and ten times more unlovely.

If the statements put forward by the National Union of Teachers, 71 Russell-square, at their Conference on "The Neglect of Village Education," and in their pamphlet with that title, are approximately correct, it is high time the whole condition of village education was overhauled. The teachers are overworked, badly lodged, and considered as mere servants of the Church, having to play the organ and conduct Sunday-school. The schools are frequently draughty, damp, and insanitary, often without lavatories, and at a distance from water. At one of the worst places, where the old poorhouse has been turned into a Voluntary school, "a stately church rises hard by, and the manse is a mansion."

On the outskirts of a bishop's palace and park stands a village school. "Inside, a row of puny windows renders 'darkness visible.' Only two of them can be opened, and the air is stuffy; but it is chilled by the rain which percolates and streams down the walls inside. The desks are heavy, awkward, high, scored deep with traces of the idleness of many a generation of young cottagers. The master, helped by an unqualified assistant, teaches six classes, containing seventy scholars, in fourteen subjects. A voluntary rate supplies £11 a year to the school: it costs thirty shillings to collect."

Here is another case: "In sight of the vast stables of the Rectory, where a famous stud is kept, stands a microscopical building, with a mere scrap of playground, each preposterously small for the 50 scholars. The place is dark, low, close, and unhealthy. There is a shed of a class-room, in area the size of a large counterpane, where 20 infants stifle, in charge of an elder child. The sister teachers, dwelling in a kind of doll's house, obtain a salary of £70 in all. From the magnificent Rectory comes a contribution of £6; the Lord of the Manor, a Peer, gives nothing to the school. The scholars are neglected, the teachers suffer, but a School Board is fended off." The N.U.T. vouches for the truth of these particulars, and says: "No attempt at selection, of search for bad cases, or of avoidance of good cases, has been made. The schools were visited as they lay in the route of itineraries in various parts of the country."

St. Andrew's School, Great Grimsby, receives from public sources over £900, and from parents, in the school pence of the children, not far short of £100; while the sole income derived from private sources appears to be £10, and this a rent paid by the Sunday-school; yet the vicar of St. Andrew's takes it upon himself to capriciously dismiss a teacher, who has approving inspectors' reports, and has gained improved Government grants, because she has incurred his displeasure. Another teacher, her friend, was also dismissed because she became engaged to the curate, in opposition to the wishes of the vicar. A public indignation meeting emphatically supported the teacher, and demanded her reinstatement.

Our "overworked" bishops are being watched by the *London Star*, which prints the following notes of their movements, all taken from the pious *Guardian* during the past twelve months:—

"1 January, 1896.—The Bishop of Winchester has left England for a few weeks.

"8 January.—The Bishop of Ripon has intimated that he will be leaving home for a few weeks.

"5 February.—The Bishop of Peterborough will be out of England from February 15 to March 20.

"25 March.—The Archbishop of Canterbury has arranged to leave London to-morrow for the Continent, and will be away till the end of April.

"8 April.—The Archbishop of York is going abroad for about three weeks till the 25th instant.

"15 April.—The Bishop of Truro has gone to Rome for six weeks' holiday.

"23 December.—The Bishop of Hereford left England on Monday for a visit to Egypt, and he expects to be away from his diocese till the beginning of March.

"6 January, 1897.—The Bishop of Carlisle went South at the beginning of last week on his way to the Continent, and will be absent from his diocese for two months."

"Kappa," who writes "Salmagundi" in the *Newcastle News*, asks: "How is it that, taking nations as a whole, the most religious are the most blasphemous? The same seems

to apply to individuals. I meet no persons so free from the habit of blasphemous swearing as Agnostics and Atheists." Many religionists seem only to keep a god and devil in order to adorn their conversation.

The Rev. C. C. Lang, vicar of Portsea, in some recent "Addresses to Men," said that errors "undoubtedly existed in the Old Testament, more especially in the matter of dates, some of which were certainly not correct. Science, too, showed that the book contained a great deal which was not in accordance with recognized facts, while some of the statements were in direct disagreement with our notions of morality and right-doing; for instance, the treacherous murder of Sisera and the extermination of the foes of the Israelites." Mr. Lang did not explain why God let this be supposed a revelation of his will.

Mr. Lang further said: "The Scriptures contained many strange things, and things which ought not to be read by many people; but they must be judged by the end, and not by certain isolated portions. A Freethinker might turn to a certain verse and say, 'Is that the word of God?' and the answer might be that it was not, and that human mistakes and the human weaknesses which existed in those lines were responsible for its presence." The rev. gentleman should explain how he tells what is the word of God from what is not.

The *Family Herald* gives a frightfully long answer to a correspondent at Montreal on the question of Science and Christianity. Our sentimental contemporary treats the one as if it were analogous to the other. Science is all right, though conceptions of it change; and so is Christianity. This is the *Family Herald's* explanation. It forgets that Science, being man's knowledge of Nature systematized, must change with the progress of information; while Christianity, being a gift from heaven, is really incapable of change. The Bible is now what it was three hundred years ago. Men's minds have altered, not because of it, but in spite of it.

King Solomon, according to Charles C. Moore of the *Blue Grass Blade*, was "a durned old hybrid of skunk and Billy-goat." The wise king earns this description by his seraglio, which was probably exaggerated, and his erotic Song of Songs, which some other fellow wrote for him.

"Spero Meliora," writing in the *Echo*, says: "A. D. Bartlett, in writing the other day on the vile treatment of animals in the Canaries, said: 'I was astonished at the total indifference of the priests, of which there are a large number.' But is not this attitude of indifference their usual one on the animal question?"

Mr. J. Collinson sends us a cutting from the *Surrey Mirror*, in which what Frederic Harrison called the disgusting tomfoolery of hunting park stags is defended. The writer says: "(1) It is sanctioned by Holy Writ, for Nimrod and others are spoken of as 'mighty hunters before the Lord.' It cannot be doubted that they hunted stags, as well as other animals. (2) It is in accordance with the wise provision of a beneficent Creator, who has given scent to the hound and fleetness to the deer—qualities which would go unexercised if our modern sentimentalists had their way." Was there ever any absurdity or atrocity for which God and his book could not be cited?

The devout Jap lady carries about with her a lot of prayers printed on small squares of fine rice paper, and, when any trouble comes, she piously swallows one of them. The Mohammedan, in times of great anxiety, writes a short petition on a board with charcoal, washes it off, and drinks the water. And the European views them both with contempt, as heathens who do not understand the rudiments of religion, because they take their prayers in while he sends his out.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The good old *English Churchman* is troubled by there having been dramatic entertainments in aid of St. Peter's and St. Andrew's Churches, Bedford. It says: "One of the saddest sights we ever witnessed was recently that of a clergyman in charge of a score of young people—probably the elder children belonging to a school—awaiting the opening of the doors of a provincial theatre. The responsibility thus accepted by 'ministers of Christ' is appalling to contemplate."

The Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to some peasants at Tilly-sur-Seulles. Canon Brettes, who is president of the French Spookical Society, which has been investigating the case, has come to the conclusion that the apparition was not of divine, but diabolic, origin. When Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, it is hard to tell 't'other from which. Canon Brettes' opinion has not been favorably received by the Psychicals, and he has been succeeded in his presidency by Dr. Tyson.

Theosophy is now endowed, Lady Malcolm, of Portalloch, having left her estate "for the study of the Raja Yoga." The students of the Raja Yoga are nearly all in India, and they study it by seeing how long they can fix their eyes on the point of the nose without winking. We wonder which of them will come in for the estate, or if a chair will be endowed at Edinburgh University to instruct chelas how to attain Mahatmahood *via* the Raja Yoga.

A little while ago a Mr. Hardy, who, when Mr. Wheeler over fifteen years ago had a shop in Edinburgh for the sale of Freethought literature, used often to visit there, left a sum of money for the purpose of establishing a depot for Freethought literature. Some of our friends in that city might inquire who are the trustees, and what steps are being taken to carry out the testator's wishes.

The *English Mechanic* is good enough to tell the world that Charles Bradlaugh believed in clairvoyance. It does this on the authority of Mr. Herbert Burrows. What a pity it is that Theosophists try to use Bradlaugh now he is dead. They could not use him when he was living. He expressed the utmost contempt for their delusions.

Percy Sinnett, the Theosophic chela of Madame Blavatsky, has had a new revelation, not this time plagiarized from Professor Kiddle, but original to himself. It is that a large portion of the present human family in their previous incarnation lived on the planet Mars. If Mr. Sinnett had himself told us that he came from the moon, we should have found it comparatively easy of belief. We fear he got moonstruck when out in India.

We read in the papers the other day that a Chicago gentleman, whose name we forget, was trying to get up a society of men and boys pledged to "show courtesy" to ladies in the street cars. This courtesy was to take the form of standing up and letting the ladies sit down while there were seats enough to go round. What was to happen after that was not decided. Yet the question is often a serious one in a great American city, where, at certain times in the day, the street cars are crowded with men and women beyond the limits of common decency. It seems to us that the first thing to do is to stop this overcrowding. Then, if a few ladies extra should enter the car, either through the wet or some other accident, it would be easy enough for a few of the more able-bodied men to give them seats. But it is really absurd to expect a poor weak devil of a man, who has perhaps been on his feet all day, to vacate his seat in favor of a strapping girl who has occupied a chair nearly all the time since she got out of bed.

Now comes the other side of this men and women business. A woman expects a man—*any* man, a Hercules or a midget—to get up in a car and give her his seat. But how does she reciprocate his attention when she goes to theatre? She wears a hat which seems specially designed to prevent everybody behind her from seeing the stage; and if a man tries to dodge that acreage of headgear, he generally finds another hat leaning over towards the first one, while the wearers exchange opinions. Most men would rather be crucified than ask a lady to take off her hat. The men who charged the Russian guns at Balaclava would turn white at the idea of having to put such a request to a human being in petticoats. Only another woman is equal to such an undertaking. A lady with her own small hat off has been known to ask another lady to remove her mastodon arrangement, and to ask in tones of such freezing, and indeed cutting, politeness that the request was irresistible without a row or a scrimmage.

Now, it appears that the Chicago woman who goes to theatre is just as incorrigible as her sisters in other cities. In fact, she has made herself such a nuisance that the public authorities have had to abate it. The City Council has passed an ordinance, and the Mayor has approved it, fining women who wear their hats in theatres three dollars each. But, after all, will the ordinance work? Suppose the ladies say, "All right! we'll wear our hats, and you men can pay the fine!" Where the deuce will the men be then? You can't let a woman go to prison for three dollars. No, no; the French method is the better one. Let the ladies leave their hats in charge of the proper attendant, or be refused admission to the auditorium. That is the only efficacious plan. But oh dear, oh dear! what complications were involved in that first bit of business in the world, when the Devil induced the first woman to buy apples!

The *Academy* has been asking a number of famous or notorious persons, "What are the two books which most pleased and interested you in 1896?" Mr. Herbert Spencer says he has no time now for reading general literature. The Rev. Dr. Horton replies, in true preacher style, that Mary Beaumont's *Joan Seaton* "is the only novel of the year which left me better than it found me." But, as the *Daily*

News says, this is somewhat equivocal—"Does it mean that the novels of the year have been very bad and unimproving, or that Dr. Horton was so very good to start with as to be almost unimprovable?" Miss Marie Corelli has two supporters—Mr. Cinquevalli, the conjurer, and Mrs. Sara Lane, of the Britannia Theatre; which is amusingly significant.

There is a strong passage in the new Murray edition of Gibbon's *Memoirs*, respecting the saintly William Law's passionate denunciation of stage plays as absolutely sinful. "Hell-fire and eternal damnation," says Gibbon, "are darted from every page of the book; and it is, indeed, somewhat whimsical that the Fanatics who most vehemently inculcate the love of God should be those who despoil him of every amiable attribute."

A Melbourne religionist, named Buntine, died leaving a big pile to the Salvation Army. His will was disputed, and set aside on the ground that he was insane. The evidence given of his insanity was simply that he professed to be in the habit of meeting the Devil. In the year 29, or thereabouts, Jesus Christ not only met the Devil, but was carried by him to the pinnacle of a temple and to a mountain, where he saw all the kingdoms of the world. This proves that Jesus Christ must have been God. In the year 1896 the Devil appears to Mr. Buntine, and an Australian judge decides that it is proof of insanity. This shows that times alter, and strange things become much more credible when they happen a long way off and a good while ago.

Alfred Winniffrith, a curate, and Rosa Hern, a barmaid, pleaded guilty at the Central Criminal Court to having committed wilful perjury in a divorce suit in which they had appeared, the woman as respondent, and the man as co-respondent. Mr. Justice Hawkins said that the case was peculiarly a bad one, and reflected the greatest possible discredit upon Winniffrith, who had brought the woman into all her trouble. He was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor, and Mrs. Hern to six months' hard labor.

Frederick W. H. Haime, a schoolmaster in holy orders, has been fined twenty shillings for picking up a bracelet in a room and pawing it.

The Rev. A. A. Hatch, formerly rector of Wantage, Berks, but now a Catholic priest, passing as the Rev. R. P. Durnford, has been sentenced to nine months' hard labour for forging a cheque with intent to defraud.

Mr. John Watson, of Wakefield, expired very suddenly at the West-parade Wesleyan Chapel last Sunday. Soon after the service commenced he was seen to faint and fall in his pew. On being removed into the vestibule he died almost immediately.

At Rubislaw Parish Church, Aberdeen, John Sim, a retired banker, suddenly expired. Shortly after the service commenced he was taken ill, and, on being carried into the vestry, expired. Another serious case occurred in St. Paul's Episcopal Church. John Henderson (65), granite merchant, was seized with apoplexy, and removed home. Believers in Providence may draw their own moral.

Mr. W. D. Rolley, who often has a timely letter in the *Echo*, points out that the Rev. Henry Rowley, M.A., who is a secretary to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, recently received a communication from one Alfred de Mayo, asking for money. The rev. gentleman prosecuted, and the unsuccessful applicant got eighteen months' instead. Mr. Rowley's action may be justified, but it is hardly in accordance with the gospel which he is paid to propagate: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew v. 42).

At King's Lynn Workhouse Board, on the application of a fisherman for relief, the vicar said: "I understand, Mr. Chairman, that they earn good money in the summer time." Chairman: "Yes, sir, they do, and they spend it; and as soon as the weather is bad, or fish scarce, they come down here for the ratepayers' money. They have not any thought at all. It seems as if it was a matter of 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' with every one of them." A Free-thinking member of the Board remarked: "You must not be surprised at that, Mr. Chairman." Mr. Chairman: "Why not?" "Why, look at the great amount of money there is spent every year in paying parsons to teach it to them." Chairman, parson, and Church members flushed or grinned, but were dumb.

Blackpool is a happy hunting-ground for Spiritist "mejums," and we are not surprised that the Rev. J. S. Balmer considers them as poaching on his preserves. It is curious, however, that he should seek to confute them by preaching on Saul's *séance* with the witch of Endor. Mr. Balmer draws subtle distinctions. He believes that "Samuel's

ghost did come up" [was it *down*, then?], but the woman didn't bring him up. Her witchery was nothing—it was all the power of God; and he concluded his sermon by remarking that spiritualism "was a whirligig of mental delusion; and it was leaving God for the witch of Endor." Mr. Balmer endorsed Carlyle's saying about "thirty millions, mostly fools"; but what wonder, when they are taught to reverence as divine such stories as that of the witch of Endor.

Swiss guards are an inheritance from early times of mercenaries. They were a source of danger to the French and other monarchies that employed them. The Pope, who keeps up so many "survivals," still has "Swiss Guards." They consist of about a hundred picked young Catholics from Switzerland. They watch over the entrances to the Vatican, and are armed with Remingtons, with a carved bayonet, and also carry a halberd. There is little doubt they would surrender before a picket of the regular Italian army.

The January number of the *British Temperance Advocate* pitches into the Rev. Harry Jones for views on the Temperance question, which, it says, only end in "playing into the hands of Mr. Foote, the Atheist, who circulates his million of tracts to show (by the tippler's logic and Mr. Jones' assumptions) that the Bible sustains a practice that in all ages has filled the world with its greatest miseries."

The *Methodist Times* says of its Church, "We are apparently stationary." It finds consolation in that "in other Churches, and in other localities, the state of things is so unsatisfactory." It reports the Rev. T. G. Selby as having said at the London Wesleyan Methodist Council that, "if they searched Methodism from Dan to Beersheba, he did not believe they would find a single congregation deserving of being termed intellectual." This out of the mouth of one of their own people deserves to be recorded.

The Bishop of Truro is a worthy successor of St. Paul. He told a congregation of men, in the Cathedral, that a man could worship as no woman, as no other created being, could worship. Man was the special person to worship God, and proved his manliness by worshipping God. The duty of woman was to attend to the domestic cares and the home. Women were secondary and subordinate to God's use of man. To go higher, the Holy Spirit was always spoken of as "He."

The *Catholic News* (January 9) gives the information that "The devotion of St. Anthony's Bread is now firmly established in these countries, and is the occasion of blessings untold to thousands of generous givers and devout distributors who participate in the work. Those who want to gain favors, spiritual or temporal, ask St. Anthony's prayers for their intentions, and make, at the same time, an offering of bread to the poor for the glory of God and in honor of St. Anthony." A long list of subscriptions follows, some subscribers stating their intentions plainly, as in the following: "I send 1s., and ask, through the intercession of St. Anthony, the conversion of a brother from drink, and that he may go to his duties. If granted, will send more." The last clause, we suppose, is calculated to put St. Anthony on his "mettle."

Dr. Dallinger has been contending that Christ's miracles only showed he knew more of nature's laws than other people; that is to say, they were not miracles at all, but only such extraordinary events as producing a photograph in the time of King Solomon. Well, Christ should come and do the same things over again in the presence of men of science, who could testify to his superior knowledge of nature's laws.

They are now doing a large business in Booksellers' Row with automatic drinks, supplied by putting a penny in the slot. Some time since a correspondent drew out a scheme for increasing the livings of our poor underpaid bishops, by forming a syndicate to have the holy sacrament on tap and baptismal fountains in the public streets, whence holy water could be squirted, warmed in winter and iced in summer. This suggestion, like that of a phonograph for prayers, was lost on our belated bishops.

Although Mr. Passmore Edwards generously offered £10,000 towards building public libraries in Islington, the electors of this evangelical parish rejected the adoption of the Libraries' Act by a majority of 3,000, lest they might have to pay a penny in the pound for their maintenance. We are an enlightened and unselfish people.

Mr. Grant Allen, in one of his essays, calls attention to the curious fact that the belladonna, or deadly nightshade, is an extremely rare British species, found only in the immediate neighborhood of old castles and monastic buildings. Belladonna, of course, is a deadly poison, and was much used in the half-magical, half-criminal sorceries of the Middle Ages.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 24, Brunswick Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow; at 11.30, "His Majesty the Devil"; 2.30, "The Women's Bible"; 6.30, "Colonel Ingersoll and American Freethought."

Monday, January 25, Dunoon; *Tuesday*, January 26, Paisley; *Wednesday*, January 27, Greenock; *Thursday*, January 28, Motherwell.

January 31, Liverpool.

February 7, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 24, Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road, London; 31, Athenæum, London. February 7, Athenæum, London; 14, Leicester; 21, Liverpool; 23, Paisley; 24, Greenock; 25, Motherwell; 26, Dunoon; 28, Glasgow.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

E. H.—The yarn about a man swallowed by a whale originated as a satire in a French paper. We do not wonder at its being taken literally by the *Christian Herald* and believers in the Jonah story.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—W. Heath, 2s. 6d.; A. J. Larkin, 2s. 6d.

N.S.S. GENERAL FUND.—A. B. Moss, 5s.; A. J. Marriott, 3s.; G. Whittingham, 1s.

PRESIDENT'S FUND.—Per Miss Vance:—E. Self, 2s.

LECTURE FUND.—Per Miss Vance: G. Britton, 2s. 6d.

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

JOSEPH TAYLOR, secretary, Staleybridge Branch, has removed from the address given in the *Secular Almanack* to 49 Lord-street. Mr. Taylor is glad to hear that Colonel Ingersoll has promised to visit England.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—Daniel Baker, £4.

L. WOODS.—Professor Huxley was an Agnostic. He coined the term himself to express his own attitude. His position was that man does not know, and cannot know, anything about the subjects on which theologians dogmatise, and in thinking of which so many weak heads go mad.

W. S. CLOGG.—Glad to hear of Mr. H. P. Ward's successful lecture in Victoria Park, though this is not the season for open-air meetings, unless the lecturer has the constitution of a horse. We are not aware of the address of any newsagent who supplies the *Freethinker* at Leytonstone. Perhaps one of our readers can supply the information.

TELEHM.—Pleased to hear that Freethought is spreading in Wales. We hope to meet, some day, the two young men in your locality who were on the roll for local preachers, but have come out publicly against the Bible. If you form a Branch of the National Secular Society, communicate with the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at the Society's office, 377 Strand, London, W.C. It is difficult to advise you without an intimate knowledge of local circumstances. Perhaps you could secure a visit from Mr. Cohen when he comes your way in March.

B. T. EDWARDS.—Thanks. Canon Scott-Holland is no fool. He is one of the "new party" in the Church, who want to maintain it by posing as democrats and bamboozling the people in a fresh fashion.

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to observe that Freethought is gleaming upon the Camberwell Vestry.

G. CRUDDAS.—Delighted to hear of the continued fine meetings at Stanley.

POLYGLOT.—There is nothing new, as you appear to imagine, in the argument that there must be a permanent soul because the matter of the body is perpetually changing. So is human society perpetually changing; but it changes slowly by the death of some and the birth of others, just as the body changes by the displacement of some atoms and the introduction of others. Nevertheless, human society preserves its organic continuity, and so does the human body. Where is the mystery, pray?

APOSTATE.—(1) The *Englishman*, of which you send us a page dated June 26, 1875, was conducted by Dr. Kenealy, who had been the leading counsel for the defence of the Tichborne claimant. Mr. Bradlaugh opposed Kenealy when he posed as a champion of the people and sought a seat in Parliament. Mr. Bradlaugh was also a well-known friend of the Irish cause. This will explain the references. (2) Write to Mr. Forder for a portrait of Ingersoll. Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts had good photographs taken in America, but the photographer suddenly went out of business before executing their order for a large number of copies.

T. J. HEAD says that the S.P.C.K. is not the only orthodox botcher of good books. This correspondent sends us the preface of the *Students' Gibbon*, published by John Murray. The editor is Dr. William Smith, who has the impudence to say that he has "omitted entirely" Gibbon's famous fifteenth chapter on the rise and spread of Christianity, and also "suppressed" his "sarcasms and invectives" against the Christian religion. There is no intimation in the advertisement that the book has been tampered with in this way.

H. A. HOPKINS.—What you say is just what Ruskin said at the time, but it does not convince us. It is all very well to say that one of Ruskin's letters would only cost the working man two pots of beer; but that proceeds on the assumption that price doesn't matter at all so long as it is expressed in terms of drink, and that the working man has no literature to buy but those particular letters. It has yet to be proved that the people will not buy Ruskin at a price within their means. It is ridiculous and caddish to put up the price, and then sneer at them for not buying.

J. CHERRY.—Such letters in the local press do great good to the movement. We do not wonder that no one ventures to reply to you. It is easy to beg for Christian Missions, but hard to defend them against criticism.

Mrs. MCGREGOR.—Thanks for the paper; also for your letter.

W. COOK points out that Professor Sayce, in his *Contemporary Review* article, does mention Professor Hilprecht's view that the founding of the Temple of Bel, and the first settlements in Ilip-pur, may be dated "somewhere between 6,000 and 7,000 B.C., possibly even earlier."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Referee—Liberty—Newcastle Daily News—Blackpool Observer—Open Court—Boston Investigator—South London Press—Liberator—Echo—Johannesburg Star—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Torch of Reason—Crescent—Yorkshire Post—Daylight—Zoophilist—Islamic World—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—New York Public Opinion—Sydney Bulletin—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

IN spite of the inclement weather, the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, was filled on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Sorrows of Satan," *apropos* of Marie Corelli's novel. This evening (January 24) the platform will be occupied by Mr. Charles Watts, who has not lectured in London for several months, and should therefore have a specially good audience.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (January 24) for the Glasgow Branch, which, we are happy to hear, is more rather than less successful in consequence of recent troubles. On the following four week-nights Mr. Foote delivers free lectures at Dunoon, Paisley, Greenock, and Motherwell. This is under the Lecture Scheme, the fund of which is, unfortunately, exhausted.

During Mr. Foote's absence in America a considerable number of meetings were held under the Lecture Scheme by Mr. Cohen. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Watts, as well as Mr. Foote, are booked for further lectures under the Scheme on the Clydeside. It is to be hoped that some wealthy Freethinker will send the N.S.S. President a substantial cheque for this work.

Mr. Charles Watts had a most hearty reception last Sunday at Manchester, where he lectured three times to good audiences, the morning one being above the average. Friends were present from Oldham, Failsworth, Ashton, Hyde, and other places. A brief discussion took place after the evening lecture.

The *Sheffield Independent* gave a fair and very favorable notice of Mr. Watts's recent lectures in that town.

Mr. H. Snell has been appointed lecturer to the Hutchinson Trustees, and will start lecturing on "Economics" in the Cleveland district of South Durham and North Yorkshire early in February. He will have his Sundays free, and is anxious to introduce his lantern lecture on Mr. Bradlaugh to all northern towns within easy distance. His address is care of the Fabian Society, 276 Strand, W.C.

"We have evidence," says the *New York Truthseeker*,

"that the letters which Mr. G. W. Foote has written for his paper, the *Freethinker*, and which the *Truthseeker* reproduces, are perused with great interest by our readers."

The *Boston Investigator* concedes with a correspondent who was unable to hear Messrs. Foote and Watts in the Paine Memorial Hall. "It would be worth while," it says, "for any man to make a journey of twenty-five miles to hear two such eloquent champions of the truth. We hope their return to America is only a matter of a few months."

Nya Sanningar, our Swedish Freethought contemporary, gives a portrait and biographical sketch of the late S. P. Putnam. We wish it all success in the new year.

Writing from Colonel Ingersoll's house, on January 4, Mrs. Farrell (Mrs. Ingersoll's sister) says to Mr. Watts: "I can now send you better news. He [the Colonel] is at last improving, and every day we notice a decided change for the better. He has seen a few friends for the first time this week, and his physician promises that next week he may see everyone, and possibly go to business." "Pray give our best regards," the lady adds, "to Mr. Foote. We all liked him exceedingly."

Mr. Cohen reports excellent meetings at Stanley. On Monday, January 25, he speaks in the Labor Hall, 53 Booth-street East, C. on M., Manchester, on "An Atheist's View of the Social Problem."

The *Islamic World* opens with an account of "Christian Atrocities" in the Philippine Islands and South Africa, by Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam, who asks if Mr. Gladstone and Canon McColl have no voice to protest against Christian atrocities.

We postpone for another week the correspondence on the question whether the National Secular Society should or should not have a President. We have received only four letters in all, only one of which is against the presidency, and that is from a member who has recently joined and confesses to a lack of practical information. We don't want to publish a one-sided correspondence—if we may so express it—and, therefore, we wait another week.

The East London Branch of the N.S.S. held its annual meeting on January 10. Mr. G. J. Warren was reappointed as secretary and treasurer, and Mr. Loafer as delegate to the Executive. It was arranged to start open-air propaganda at Mile-end Waste and Salmon-lane on the first Sunday morning in April.

The writer of "Our Handbook" in the *Referee* says: "The other week I described myself as a depressed optimist, and a correspondent puts to me and my class what he thinks 'a poser,' and I agree with him that it is: 'Why did the controlling Power of the universe allow man to remain stationary, a mere animal, from the earliest dawn of the Paleolithic period down to the comparatively recent date when the Egyptian, or some slightly earlier, civilization arose?' 'You know,' pursues my terrible correspondent, 'that many Paleontologists hold that man existed in the Tertiary period, perhaps a million years ago; but I will be satisfied with the moderate statement which puts the age of the race at 100,000 years. For 70,000 or 80,000 years, then, man remained practically stationary, and in a condition of development not much higher than the ape. Why was this? Well, frankly, I don't know. But I recognize that my correspondent is very much in earnest in this matter, and that he is gifted with a most inquiring mind, for he continues: 'Is it likely that a controlling Power would have permitted such a huge waste of time, so to speak? I can only advise my correspondent to address the Authority most concerned. My withers are unwrung.' Mr. Nisbet seems a good deal like the pious Theist who thanked God he was not responsible for God's doings."

The *Academy* (January 16), noticing *Evil and Evolution*, says of his majesty the Devil: "As a personality he has been slain by ridicule. His appearances, for example, to St. Dunstan and to Martin Luther were not calculated to increase the respect felt for him; and in the miracle plays of the Middle Ages it was the fashion to present him as a malignant buffoon who was driven off the stage with hisses and laughter. Until the author of *Evil and Evolution* took up his pen it is to be feared that the Devil survived only as a popular expletive."

The *Open Court*, of Chicago, has completed its tenth year, and begins its eleventh volume as "A Monthly Magazine devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea." Besides the Salutatory of the editor, expounding the purpose of the *Open Court*, there is an extremely significant controversy on Buddhism and Christianity between the Right Rev. Shaku Soyen, delegate of Japan to the Chicago

Parliament of Religions, the Rev. Dr. John Henry Barrows, Chairman of the Parliament, and the Rev. F. F. Ellinwood, a prominent Presbyterian clergyman of New York—a literary symposium realizing the idea of a Parliament of Religions extension. A powerful sermon on "Trade and Usury," by Martin Luther, shows that there were "rings" and "corners" in his day, which he vigorously denounced. Professor Cornill advocates "Science and Theology," and there are a number of "Notes and Book Reviews."

Mr. Zangwill says that at church, while the music and chanting appeal strongly to his senses, he is pained by the dogma or untruth contained in the words of the music. "Why," he asks, "cannot something be sung that we all feel convinced is true? For instance, 'The square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.'"

CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS, AND THE BIBLE.

THERE is not such a difference, after all, between the Popish and the Protestant quacks. The former, when it suits their purpose, permit you to read the Bible, but forbid you to understand it except in their sense. The Protestants have their comments, creeds, articles, confessions, etc., which equally forbid you to understand the Bible except as they dictate. In other words, both sets of quacks declare the Bible to be divine, to be their guide and salvation; but they never trust it out without detectives to watch and spy upon its actions, and never permit it to speak but as they dictate. Let an honest and learned man give the true, natural sense to the words of the Bible, and both sets of quacks at once forget their mental animosity to fall upon the honest interpreter. Lawyers and judges treat Acts of Parliament badly enough, but that is nothing to the treatment the Bible receives from the holy expounders. It is not the book itself that rules any of them, but the exposition of it which they set up as infallible—an exposition always made or adopted merely to serve their own ends.

In one respect the Protestants are immensely worse than the Papists, for the latter do not push the Bible, but the former do. They send it everywhere—at the expense of poor people in Protestant lands, who are basely cheated by the Bible traders for trade purposes. Poor people are robbed of their pence and shillings in order to get printed, at sweating prices, a dirty, lying book, full of wickedness and immorality! And the wretches boast of their wickedness. There are few things connected with this century more disgraceful than the B. and F. Bible Society and kindred institutions. The poor of Great Britain and other lands have been robbed of many millions to circulate a book that cannot be translated, cannot be explained, except to the confusion of the sects, one and all. And this is done under pretence of circulating a book that they pretend is the word of God—as infernal a lie as ever was uttered; and the chief sinners in the affair are well aware of that. If God is almighty, as those quacks say, and if he owns this bad book (which he certainly never did), he could and would put it into the hands of all men, in a form they could all fully understand, in less than an hour.

To circulate the disgusting rubbish of the Bible is a crime against all that is true and decent. The world is bad enough without the Bible; it can but grow worse and worse under its leadership and tuition. If our newspapers were anything better than unscrupulous and tyrannical organs, they would give no countenance whatsoever to priestly, parsonic, and Bible meetings—except to expose and ridicule them. But our newspapers are as unscrupulous as the clergy, and as tyrannical as inquisitors. Reformers will need to wage war against them before truth and justice can prevail; and the struggle will be a terrible one.

—*Liberator*.

J. SYMES.

We stand upon the foundation reared by the generations that have gone before, and we can but dimly realize the painful and prolonged efforts which it has cost humanity to struggle up to the point—no very exalted one, after all—which we have reached. Our gratitude is due to the nameless and forgotten toilers, whose patient thought and active exertions have largely made us what we are.—*J. G. Frazer, "The Golden Bough."*

FREETHOUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY DISCOURSES WISELY AND INTERESTINGLY UPON THE PRESENT CONDITION AND THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE CAUSE IN ENGLAND—VALUABLE HINTS FOR AMERICAN SECULARISTS—THE NECESSITY FOR UNION UPON A SINGLE ISSUE.

JUST before Mr. George W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society of Great Britain, departed from these shores, he was approached by a representative of the *Truthseeker* in the guise of an interviewer, when the following questions were put and answered:—

"What is the present condition, and what the future prospects, of Freethought in England as compared with America?"

"Freethought is spreading widely, and penetrating deeply in England. It is 'in the air' everywhere. I believe we have more Freethought articles in our leading magazines than you have in America. On the other hand, our daily journals boycott the Freethought movement very vigorously. Mr. Watts and I have had fair, and sometimes generous, press notices in America, such as Mr. Putnam did not obtain in our country. Against that, again, must be placed the facts that Charles Bradlaugh sat in our House of Commons and enjoyed the universal respect of his fellow legislators, that John Morley has occupied a high position in the Government, and that Professor Huxley was a member of the Privy Council. On the whole, I fancy that England and America are keeping pace with each other. In one country there is more liberality in one direction, and in the other country in another. I hope we shall continue this rivalry. I want England and America to pace each other in all that is good and useful. I long for a better understanding between the two nations. It would be a magnificent security for the peace and progress of the world."

"What about Freethought organization in England?"

"There is only one serious Freethought organization in England—the National Secular Society. It was established by the late Charles Bradlaugh, with the co-operation of Mr. Watts. Bradlaugh resigned its presidency nearly seven years ago. He nominated me as his successor in the office, and I have held it ever since, having been unanimously re-elected at every annual congress. Our Society is a more definite organization than your Secular Union. It has branches in all the principal towns, and several in the metropolis. We have a regular propaganda all over the country, and the whole force of our party can be wielded quickly and easily in emergencies. You appear to have no sort of regular Freethought propaganda in New York, not even a Sunday-night lecture. We have several halls open in London every Sunday during the winter, and in the summer we have a great many open-air meetings in the parks and other public places. In one respect, however, we are at a very serious disadvantage under the old Blasphemy Laws, which indirectly prevent us from holding property or receiving bequests. I am promoting a scheme for circumventing these laws, at least to a considerable extent. I hope to carry it into effect soon after my return to England. If it succeeds, we shall gain command of pecuniary resources, and not only will our propaganda be extended and improved, but we shall be able to maintain institutions in which the converts to Freethought will be held together by all the secular and social agencies that are now the greatest strength of the Churches. At present we make plenty of converts, but in a short time they frequently enter into political or social movements, in which case they are not lost to progress, though they are to our party; or, being 'saved' themselves, and not having any missionary spirit, they just attend to the business and pleasures of life, and fall into the ranks of the great army of 'indifferentists.'"

"Is there general union and harmony among Freethinkers?"

"Yes, there is general union among the Secularists in our country. One organization has existed for thirty years, and no attempt to form another has ever had much success. There are always eddies and backwash, but the great body sweeps on in unison, and the eddies and backwash get absorbed in time."

"To what extent are Freethinkers divided on political or economic issues?"

"Our great primary bond is Freethought—that is, practically, opposition to the Christian superstition, and to its political and social power and influence. We agree on secular education, on absolute freedom of opinion, on the entire separation of Church and State, on anti-Sabbatarianism, and on the abolition of 'religious' marriage. On other questions we are divided as Christians are, though not exactly to the same extent, for most of us are Radicals. Some of us are Individualists, and some are Socialists. On all such questions we must agree to differ. Our organization must not be used for sectional purposes. Its object is to promote Freethought, and all its necessary implications, and that object will always be supreme while I am President. Any change in this respect would compel me to resume my right of individual action."

"Are English women as prominent in the movement as in America, and do they attend Freethought meetings?"

"Yes, I think our women are as prominent as yours in the movement. Our paid secretary is a woman, and we have had several lady lecturers, though we are suffering from a lack of them at present. We have women on most of our branch committees, and a gratifying number of bonnets light up our meetings."

"Does English Freethought enjoy better financial backing than American?"

"I am not able to say whether our movement in England is better backed than yours in America. I fancy it is, but I cannot speak with certainty. I have not studied your financial history."

"Can you offer any suggestions for the improvement of our organization?"

"You ask me to give any suggestions about the improvement of your organization. This is a delicate matter. I do not want to make mistakes—or enemies. Your territory is vast, and your difficulties are great. What answers in a compact country like England might not answer here. But there are certain essentials to all successful organization; for instance, common intellectual agreement, definiteness of aim, regularity of general method, with quick and strong initiative in crises, and a certain amount of wise discipline. The power of a multitude is nothing unless it can be wielded. If every man marches as he pleases, an army never arrives anywhere. It is like Micawber's horse, all action and no go. I venture, though with much diffidence, to suggest that you want a strong central executive, and a president with reasonable authority. He should be a speaker for certain, a writer also, if possible, and a man of some business capacity. You have a safeguard against 'despotism'—the bugbear of the small, the jealous, the suspicious, and the crazy—in the principle of election."

"What is the prospect of Ingersoll visiting England?"

"Colonel Ingersoll has promised to come over to England as soon as possible. All the Ingersoll family appear to be pleased at the idea of visiting the old country. I hope they will all come over. They are a most delightful circle, and I hope they will not part company on that occasion. It will be a very great pleasure to Mr. Watts and myself to bid them 'Welcome to England.'"

"Do you think of anything to add to what you have said in answer to the questions already asked?"

"I only desire to add one thing. Keep your Freethought organization, as an organization, free from all other questions. To add, in this respect, is to take away. The more planks you have in your program, the fewer people can stand on it; for what a man objects to is as important (to him) as what he agrees with. Politicians know this well. They go in for a simple issue. Let us imitate them where they are wise. This does not interfere with individual freedom. Those who have special views of their own, in politics or in sociology, should advocate them on their own responsibility, or through organizations formed to promote such objects. One thing at a time is the policy of wisdom and success."

—*Truthseeker*.

One of the most curious of actual epitaphs is to be found on a tombstone at Burlington, Massachusetts. It runs:—

Here lies the body of Mary Ann Lowder,
She burst while drinking a soidlitz powder.
Called from this world to her heavenly rest,
She should have waited till it effervesced.

THE GOD-ALMIGHTY FAMILY OF FOUR.

SOMEWHERE in the Milky Way,
Far beyond the orb of day,
Live three members of a gay old fam-i-lee;
T'other member, "number four,"
In the good old days of yore,
Was from heaven's radiant shore compelled to flee.
Jahveh's "number one," you know,
He's the boss of all the show,
But his character is low, the truth to tell;
I'm blaspheming, I'm afraid,
But I call a spade a spade,
And submit that Jahveh's played the very hell!

Chorus—Oh Jerusalem, Jehovah's one of the
fam-i-lee,
Oh Jerusalem! he's what you'd
picture a fiend to be;
They call him the "Most High," I
really don't know why,
For I'll be cursed if he isn't the
worst
Of the Godly fam-i-lee!

"Number two" is Christ the Son,
Who, although a smaller gun
Than his parent, "number one," is not so bad;
All the fault in Christ I see
Is that he's an m-u-g,
For he died upon a "tree" to please his dad!
By such conduct I'm perplexed,
Dwelling on it makes me vexed,
So I'll pass on to the next in Jahveh's group.
"Number three," though but a ghost,
Fills a most important post;
All who've scoffed he'll seize and roast, at one fell swoop.

Chorus—Oh, Jerusalem! Jehovah's first of
the fam-i-lee;
Oh, Jerusalem! the Son and the
Ghost are two and three.
No doubt the Trin-i-tie the state-
ment would deny;
But there's one more, for "Number
four"
Is one of the fam-i-lee!

"Number four" is good "Old Nick,"
Of the family he's the pick,
When in Heaven he was sick of Jahveh's acts;
So to war he had to go,
'Tis the Bible tells us so,
And its narratives, you know, of course are facts!
Tory views Jehovah belled,
"Nick" the Radical rebelled,
But was overpowered, and felled, and cast away.
Since he left those realms behind
He has profited mankind;
Planted knowledge in their mind, I'm glad to say.

Chorus—Oh, Jerusalem! they are a curious
fam-i-lee;
Oh, Jerusalem! a funnier lot you
ne'er did see.
A shady three, say I, are those in
the "gall-e-rie";
I must admit that the one in the
"pit"
Is the best of the fam-i-lee!

ESS JAY BEE.

How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
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The ideas of justice on which our laws rest are opposed to those of the Bible; they are opposed, on the one hand, to the law of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, burning for burning"; and, on the other, to the reactionary principle of giving one's cheek to the smiter and one's clothes to the thief.—*M. D. Conway.*

QUINTUS SERTORIUS.

(*Vide* PLUTARCH.)

It is not surprising that, owing to the innate stupidity of the masses, the rulers of nations should resort to trickery and fraud in order to maintain their supremacy and prestige. It is distressing to find a Roman hero, Quintus Sertorius, a man of great virtue and superior attainments, resorting to ignoble artifices, of which priests of ancient and modern times have been guilty; for one cannot propagate a religion without committing frauds of the basest kind. Sertorius received a white hind from a Spanish peasant, which became so tame that it followed him everywhere. He spread the news that it was a gift of the goddess Diana, who, by this means, communicated hidden things to him. The people of Spain and his soldiers readily believed this tale. For instance, when one of his captains had won a victory, he would hide the messenger who brought the welcome intelligence, and keep the news to himself. He then adorned the hind with garlands and flowers, telling the people to offer a sacrifice to the gods, because in a short time they would receive tidings of great joy. Of course these tidings, when published, filled his dupes with admiration for the great Roman, whom they looked upon as a mouthpiece of the gods, like the jugglers Aaron and Moses. Strange to say, Sertorius rendered himself guilty of cozenage or trickery (*actio stellionatus*), which was a criminal offence according to the Roman law. A similar law is still in force in France, known as "*abus de confiance*." Now, this grand old law ought to be enforced against the clergy in our day. First, they would have to *prove* a god and their connection with him; next show their credentials, on the strength of which they hold their appointments of celestial ambassadors or agents. No such proofs can be produced, and if tried by the Roman law, these gentlemen, clad in the livery of obscurantism, would be criminally convicted of deceiving their fellow men by a kind of confidence-trick. A reference to that mysterious personage, the Holy Ghost, would not mend matters, but only cover them with ridicule, for nobody can have the faintest idea of what this Ghost—called the Comforter—is, whether a he, she, or it. When presented with a good living, the parson turns his eyes heavenwards, and says he has received "a call"! No better than a cat-call. The high priests of Rome were dressed in a robe of purple ("*trabea*"). The Augurs wore a yellow toga with purple stripes ("*Deux augures n'ont jamais pu se regarder sans rire!*").* The Roman cardinals are attired in purple robes. The priests, or smaller fry, wear a white surplice ("*super pellis*"). Protestant parsons are dressed in black. It denotes their "*triste métier*." The people are easily imposed upon, even by the rabble who wear "General" Booth's red shirts, à la Garibaldi. If the Romans had not believed blindly, like our plebs, they would have called upon thelictors, ordering them to untie the fasces and thrash the priest down the "*via sacra*."

A French trader, whom I met in West Africa, was in the habit of saying, when anyone told him a cock-and-bull story: "*Je crois en Dieu, mais je ne crois pas cela.*"† Referring to the Bible, I asked him whether he believed in it. He made the same answer. I thought it my duty to remind him that gentlemen in black, who have made the book a special study, and speak authoritatively on the subject, declare it to be a divine revelation—"the *liber librorum*"—and that anyone impugning its genuineness, and their *bonâ fides*, is on the high road to perdition. Still the same answer. It proves that even the masses (*plebs*) have lost faith in the clergy. The age of priestly authority is gone; that is the reason why we have no more *autos da fe* and cruel religious persecutions. If parsons were still all-powerful, the fires would be re-lit, and all who honestly differ from them would be racked and burnt. There was a time when people dared not question the dicta of the clergy, and were taught to look up to them as oracles. *Nous (libre-penseurs) avons changé tout cela.* It reminds one of Molière's "Mock Doctor," who addresses ignoramus Gêronte with the words: "Hippocrates says that we should put on our hats." Gêronte—"Hippocrates says that?" Doctor—"Yes." Gêronte—"In which chapter, if you please?" Doctor—"In his chapter on—hats." It is the same with the clergy. They tell their flocks to do so and so, and to believe so and so, and refer to the Bible God as their authority. The Bible God is an unknown quantity. The people are no longer to be gulled, and want proof positive before they believe holy fables. CHARLES KROLL LAPORTE.

Why worship the dead when you do not know the living?
Why talk of spirits when you do not understand men?
—*Confucius.*

* *Cato mirari se aibat, quod non rideret haruspex haruspicum quum ridisset.*

† "I believe in God, but I do not believe that."

BOOK CHAT.

DR. MARTIN, in his *Cycle of Cathay*, shows that Chinese statesmen are as much humbugs in the matter of religion as our own. He says: "Many a Mandarin's belief in superstition is merely official. Wensiang is a man without illusions, 'a protagonist of progress,' a stickler for the science of the West. Prince Kung has no superstitions. Yet both have gravely conducted the most grossly fetishistic rites. They did not believe, any more than the reader does, that drought was caused by a victory of the tiger-god of the wind over the dragon-god of the clouds. Yet, in the people's sight, they sacrificed a tiger to the dragon's avatar (snake or lizard), in the sacred pond—a tiger's skeleton, because it was cheaper (and more easily handled) than the live beast. Li Hung Chang, our late illustrious visitor, performed the same farce, with a countenance as solemn as a bishop's."

The hypocrisy of the Buddhist monks is a favorite subject of caricature in Chinese prints. "My child," says the nurse in a popular satire, "don't go near the cat." "Why?" "She has become religious; I have seen her shutting her eyes and saying her prayers."

The *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, answering a correspondent, says: "Baron Holbach's name is familiar to all readers of the history of philosophy. He was one of the Freethinking philosophes who flourished in Paris during the period immediately preceding the first French Revolution, his contemporaries and friends being Diderot, Condorcet, Rousseau, Buffon, etc. In belief he leant to Atheistic Materialism, or Naturalism. His principal work, the *Systeme de la Nature*, was published in 1770, and so far as it is based on scientific facts, as then known, is, of course, out of date at the present day. He tries to prove that there is nothing above nature, that God is an invention of priests, and that self-interest is the ruling motive of men. Though well argued in some parts, the work as a whole is unsatisfactory. As a man Holbach was enlightened, good-hearted, and benevolent, many of the Jesuits, who were his sworn foes, receiving from him succor and protection in their day of trouble." We hardly think there is any other volume of philosophy over a century old of which it could not also be said "the work, as a whole, is unsatisfactory." Holbach was a long way ahead of his time.

The *Queensland People's Newspaper*, noticing parson Fitchett's *Deeds that Won the Empire*, says: "That a clergyman who professes to follow the Prince of Peace should glorify war and its inhuman brutalities only shows that those who profess to be the friends of God are frequently the enemies of man."

Another attempt to restore the real, veritable, and only genuine historical Jesus is made by M. J. Strada, a French philosopher, who writes a big book, entitled *Jésus et l'ère de la Science, la véritable histoire de Jésus*. Like so many others, M. Strada fancies he can get at the veritable history of Jesus by discarding the palpable legends, falsities, and exaggerations which have gathered round the name. In our judgment, history cannot be reconstructed in this fashion. The materials are too scanty. What you have, after a critical sifting of the legends, is not what actually was, but what to a present century mind it appears possible may have been. None the less, M. Strada is a thinker, whose work is calculated to stimulate thought in others. It is to be followed by another volume on *The Religion of Science*.

The *Academy* (January 16) says of *The True Life of Captain Burton* that "Miss Stisted has written a better Life of Burton than that by his devoted wife." It, however, complains of her jibes at Catholicism, not seeing that she is reproducing the expressions of Burton himself.

Messrs. Longmans and Co. will publish this month a new work, in two volumes, by Right Hon. Professor F. F. Max Müller. The title is, *Contributions to the Science of Mythology*, and it is intended to fill the gap between his science of language and the science of religion. The work of his life, which he had planned and traced out long ago, is thus carried through and finished.

Mr. Herbert Spencer is still able to undertake some literary work each day, although sometimes the amount accomplished is relatively small. He is now engaged on the task of recasting his principal work on Sociology, and for this purpose is interesting himself in some of the biological theories of recent years. Mr. Spencer is attacking this enterprise with wonderful enthusiasm.

Mr. Buxton Forman will shortly publish a work entitled *The Books of William Morris: An Essay in Bibliography*, somewhat on the plan of his volume called *The Shelley Library*.

THE HUXLEY MEMORIAL.

GOOD progress is being made with the Huxley Memorial. The full-sized model for the statue, on which Mr. Onslow Ford, R.A., is engaged, is well advanced, and will shortly be completed; and the trustees of the British Museum of Natural History at South Kensington have accepted the offer of the statue itself, which will be executed in marble, and ultimately placed in the Central Hall of that Institution, near the statue of Darwin. The design for the Royal College of Science Medal has been obtained by prize competition among persons resident in Great Britain and Ireland, and the selection has fallen upon the design of Mr. L. Bowcher, who has produced a highly successful work of art, and is now engaged upon the dies.

The amount promised and received for the Huxley Memorial is now about £2,900, over £600 having been subscribed since progress was last reported in the public press. Subscription has been largely promoted by local institutions and scientific societies in various parts of the world. Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, Adelaide, Sydney, New Zealand, and Calcutta have been conspicuous by their aid; British Guiana, Cairo, the East Indies, and Mauritius have contributed; and welcome support has been received from the United States of America, from France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Italy, Portugal, Russia, and Servia, from Mexico and Peru, and from Arabia and Japan.

Further aid to the Huxley Memorial Fund is expected from other centres both at home and abroad. The nature of any additional memorial yet to be decided upon must largely depend, we are informed, upon the amount still to be subscribed. In consideration of the world-wide support which the Memorial has received, it is hoped that it may be possible to secure a form of Memorial in which persons of all nationalities shall participate. We are asked to state that donations may be sent to the Treasurer, Sir J. Lubbock, or the Bankers, Messrs. Robarts, Lubbock, and Co. (15 Lombard-street, E.C.), or to the Hon. Secretary, Professor G. B. Howes (Royal College of Science, South Kensington, S.W.).

—Daily News.

PROFANE JOKES.

A COUNTRY rector complained to a well-known dignitary of the Church that he had received only £5 for preaching a sermon at Oxford. "Five pounds!" ejaculated the dignitary. "Why, I would not have preached that sermon for fifty."

After a discussion of shipwreck which followed a lesson three or four weeks previously on the well-known story of Jonah and the whale, the teacher asked: "Suppose a big storm arose at sea, and it looked as though you were going to be drowned, what would you do?" "I would throw a man overboard for the whale to swallow," was the reply.

Sunday-school Teacher (after telling the story of David)—"And all this happened over three thousand years ago." Little Clara—"Oh, my; what a memory you have got!"

It had been a trying day in the nursery, and nurse had had occasion several times to call for assistance in the management of what that day had proved a very unruly little miss. The child seemed conscious of her fall from grace, and it was with a very sober face that she came to ask forgiveness. After repeating the time-honored, "Now I lay me down to sleep," she continued, as was her wont, "An' now, Dod, please bess mamma an' papa, an' make me a dood dirl—" Here she paused, and, with the seriousness which convulsed the other members of the family and completely won her mother's forgiveness, she added, "An' if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!" It is to be hoped *le bon Dieu* took it as good-humoredly as her parents, and was encouraged to another almighty effort.

"You might put on thar," said the bereaved husband to the rural sculptor, "that she died peaceful, an' that we wouldn't call her back." "Anything else?" "She never spoke a cross word in her life." "All right." "Bein' deaf an' dumb an' of a quiet an' retirin' natur'." "Is that all?" "Well, you might throw in a little scripur'. Jest say, 'Her children rise up an' call her Betsy!'"

The Rev. Whangdoodle Baxter recently addressed his flock: "We has a collection to make dis mo'ning, and fo' de sake of yo' reputation, which ever of you stole Mr. Jones's turkeys don't put anything on de plate." One who was there says: "Every blessed niggah in de church came down wid de rocks."

Theology—the Church—opposed science until public opinion forced it to desist.

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, C. Watts, "Sin and Secular Salvation."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, R. Forder, "Odds and Ends of Freethought." January 30, at 8.15, Dramatic Entertainment by the Class.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Stanley Jones, "Buddhism and Christianity."
NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Athenæum, Camden-road, N.W.: 7, Mrs. Gilliland Husband, "Why Should I Join an Ethical Society?"
NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SUNDAY SCHOOL, Leighton Hall, Kentish Town: 11, Lesson by F. J. Gould. Children invited.
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road: 11, Sunday-school; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Cardinal Manning."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Hypocrisy."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): R. Rosetti—11.30, "Is the Bible the Word of God?"; 3.30, "Christianity: Past, Present, and Future."

COUNTRY.

BRISTOL BRANCH (Shepherd's Hall): 7, L. Dornbusch, A.K.C., "Christian Missions to the Jews."
CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, A. Westcott, "What has Vivisection Done for Humanity?"
DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, A reading. Also final arrangements for Cohen and Wise debate.
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote—11.30, "His Majesty the Devil"; 2.30, "The Women's Bible"; 6.30, "Colonel Ingersoll and American Freethought."
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A lecture.
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, J. Hammond, "Christian Apologetics."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen—11, "Population and the Social Question"; 3, "How to Civilize Sunday"; 6.30, "Religion and Science."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): R. Law, F.G.S.—3, "Evidences of Volcanic Eruptions and Earthquake Action in Great Britain"; 7, "Some Buried Forests of Bye-gone Times." Tea at 5. Members' and Friends' dance on Wednesday evenings at 8.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting. 7.30, Lantern lecture, "Greece."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—January 24, Manchester; 33, Booth-street East, C-on-Medlock, Manchester; 27 and 28, Debate at Derby with Mr. G. Wise; 31, Edinburgh.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—February 21, Leicester. March 7, New Brompton.

POSITIVISM.

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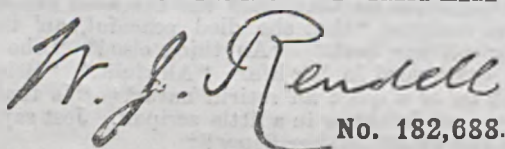
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