

# The Free Thinker

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## THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS IN CRETE.

Two religions never lived at peace with each other, except under compulsion, and then never in amity. History is full of illustrations of this truth: During the period of the Roman Empire, before the days of Constantine, we know how Jews and Christians hated each other, and how peace between them had to be kept by the imperial authorities. It is also notorious how the Christians and Pagans hated each other. The latter persecuted the former, and then the former persecuted the latter. Centuries afterwards there was bitter animosity between the Christians and the Mohammedans, aggravated by each possessing an exclusive salvation and each regarding the other as "infidel." The Cross and the Crescent met on hundreds of battlefields, and in the end Christ went down before Mohammed. There is constant ill-feeling in India between Brahmans and Mohammedans, who are often restrained from murdering each other by the British Government. Coming nearer home, we find an unhealed feud between Great Britain and Ireland, the political and social elements of which are heightened by the difference between Protestant and Catholic. Religious fanaticism has been, and still is, one of the greatest curses of the world. "Turn your eyes," as Helvetius said, "to north or south, to east or west; on every side you see the consecrated knife of Religion raised against the breasts of women, of children, of old men, and the earth all smoking with the blood of victims."

Christians, in this age of secular civilization, too commonly assume that their religion is an exception to the rule of intolerance. It has, however, been guilty of more bloodshed and cruelty than any other faith; and it still displays its true character where it is not kept in check by other agencies.

Many publicists, pressmen, and politicians talk as though the Mohammedans of the Turkish Empire were all incarnate devils, and the Christians mere harmless lambs led to the sacrifice. This is ridiculously untrue. During the old wars between the Crescent and the Cross, the Mohammedans were chivalrous and humane in comparison with the Christians. Saladin shed not a single drop of unnecessary blood when he captured Jerusalem. When the Crusaders captured the same city, they indulged in a week's massacre. Seventy thousand Moslems were put to the sword. No respect was shown to age or sex. Women and children were butchered as well as men. The Holy City was turned into a Hell.

During the war of Greek Independence, in the early part of this century, the Christians were rather worse savages than the Mohammedans. Finlay, the historian, although a friend of the Greek cause, was obliged to admit this melancholy fact. Here are a few instances from his *History of the Greek Revolution*. At Mesolonghi—famous for its association with the name of Byron—as soon as the Greeks joined the Revolution they seized and imprisoned the resident Mussulmans.

"As usual, most of them were murdered in a short time. Only the families of the higher ranks were spared. The men were crowded together in one room, the women and children in another. But even this lasted for a brief period. The men who had been spared during the first massacres were afterwards deliberately put to death, and the women and children were dispersed as slaves in the families of the wealthier Greeks."

When the Greeks attacked and captured Vrachori, they

perpetrated the same atrocities. "The massacre," says Finlay, "commenced with the Jews. Men, women, and children were slain in cold blood, with circumstances of atrocious cruelty. The poorer Mussulmans next shared the same fate." Only a few of the wealthiest of the five hundred families in the town escaped. At Lekhonia the Greeks "put to death six hundred Mussulmans, murdering alike men, women, and children." The Turks capitulated at Navarin, but the terms of the surrender were infamously violated, and men, women, and children were again massacred.

"Women, wounded with musket-balls and sabre-cuts, rushed to the sea, seeking to escape, and were deliberately shot. Mothers robbed of their clothes, with infants in their arms, plunged into the water to conceal themselves from shame, and they were made a mark for inhuman riflemen. Greeks seized infants from their mothers' breasts, and dashed them against the rocks. Children, three and four years old, were hurled living into the sea and left to drown. When the massacre was ended, the dead bodies washed ashore, or piled on the beach, threatened to cause a pestilence."

The sack of Tripolitza was unexampled in atrocity, even in that bloody warfare. "Human beings," says Finlay, "can rarely have perpetrated so many deeds of cruelty on an equal number of their fellow creatures as were perpetrated by the conquerors on this occasion." Eight thousand Mussulmans were massacred. Women and children were frequently tortured before they were murdered. After the Greeks had been in possession of the city for forty-eight hours, and the passion of battle must have subsided, they deliberately collected together two thousand persons—some men, but principally women and children—led them out to a ravine in the nearest mountain, and murdered every soul. Scarcely one male child in the city was spared, and many young women and girls were carried off as slaves. Such were the tender mercies of those Christian soldiers, who had evidently studied the Bible too attentively.

General Gordon, a warm friend of the Greek cause, could not help confessing that, if a comparison were instituted between the Greeks and the Turkish generals, it would be impossible not to "give to the latter the palm of humanity."

Yes, the Turks have been cruel enough to Christians; but they have suffered equal, if not greater, cruelty at the hands of their enemies. Byron knew what he was doing in his description of the capture and sack of Ismail by the Russians, in *Don Juan*—

All that the mind would shrink from, of excesses;  
All that the body perpetrates, of bad;  
All that we read, hear, dream, of man's distresses;  
All that the Devil would do, if run stark mad;  
All that defiles the worst which pen expresses;  
All by which hell is peopled, or as sad  
As hell—mere mortals who their power abuse—  
Was here (as heretofore and since) let loose.

It is not surprising to read that, during the recent strife in Crete, both Turks and Greeks (or Cretans) have killed their prisoners. Religion will never make these people humane. They will only cease murdering when they are brought under civilized rules of warfare, which do not permit the killing of women and children, or of men except in actual battle.

Man for man, the Turk is probably as good a human being as the Greek. Excite the religious fanaticism of either side, and you turn a decent fellow into a devil.

Fancy portraits of Turkish fiends, and of Cretan or other Christian angels, are only fit for Sunday-schools. We had better eliminate the religious question from the problem, and from our sympathies. The Cretan question is primarily political. Greece would very much like to annex that fine island, the largest of the archipelago, containing nearly three thousand square miles and a population of more than a quarter of a million. The Cretans themselves are mostly Greeks by race, tradition, and faith, and they naturally desire union with Greece. They have risen in insurrection against the Sultan's despotism, which is cruel in temper and exacting in policy. Waiting for the slow movement of the European Powers on their behalf was too tedious for their patience, and they determined to make a bold attempt to secure their own freedom. It was inevitable that they should command the active sympathy of Greece. No one can be surprised at what has happened. Greece has cut the Gordian knot which the Great Powers were fumblingly trying to untie. Whatever else happens, it is most unlikely that Crete will revert to Turkey. The island may be guaranteed its autonomy, but that will only be the first step towards union with Greece. This at least is certain, that public opinion will not tolerate the spectacle of England helping to coerce Greece in the interest of Turkey. Our ships of war had better anchor in our own harbors. It is too ridiculous that the navies of the Great Powers, which could not save the life of one Armenian, should now be used to prop up the empire of the Great Assassin.

At the same time, we should not go into hysterics over "freedom," as though it sanctioned every folly and crime. Greece has done a brave thing in going to Crete, but she is calculating on the Great Powers holding Turkey in check. Now, if the Powers hold back Turkey, they are justified in putting pressure upon Greece. And one of the first things to be done is to stop the strife between Christian and Mohammedan in Crete. Unless this is done, the whole of the Mohammedan population there will be massacred.

G. W. FOOTE.

### THE PASSAGE IN PLINY.

THE ninety-seventh letter of the tenth book of the Epistles of Pliny the Younger, in which Pliny, as governor of Bithynia, asks the Emperor Trajan's advice as to how to deal with Christianity, has usually been allowed to pass as a genuine item of early Christian evidence.\* It gives its testimony only to what has been taught as almost indisputable facts of early Christian history, such as that the Christians were widely spread both in towns and villages; that, though they met at night, before dawn, they were an innocent people, who sang hymns to Christ as God, and bound themselves by solemn engagement to do no wrong; and that they were persecuted for the mere profession of the name of Christian. This is so much a pure embodiment of the general tradition of the Church that it is apt to be accepted without question.† Anyone, however, who, knowing how dubious is the character of other Christian evidence, and how large a part forgery has played therein, comes to examine the letter critically, may find abundant evidence that it must be regarded with suspicion, if not entirely rejected.

Note, first, that Pliny, the most learned man of his time, a lawyer by profession, who held a distinguished place in the Senate, knew nothing of any legislation against the Christians. Is it credible that the Christians had suffered atrocious persecutions at the hands of Nero and Domitian, without Pliny, who was Praetor under the latter, knowing of the proceedings against them? Yet he confesses himself ignorant alike of the subject-matter of inquiry and of punishment. Christianity, apparently, is scarce known at Rome, where Paul wrote to the Romans; but at the beginning of the second century is so spread in Bithynia that the temples were abandoned.‡ Yet Basil and Gregory

\* The passage is too long to give here. It may be found in Lardner's *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, Works, vol. vii., p. 22.

† Even Mr. Gould thinks it "is either genuine, or so temperate a forgery that we may readily accept it as a picture of the new sect in Asia Minor" (*Concise Hist. Rel.*, iii. 113).

‡ In Acts xvi. 7 we read that Paul and Timothy "assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not."

of Nyssa, dated in the third century, lament that the extensive diocese of Neo-Cæsarea, comprizing among other territories Bithynia, then contained only about seventeen Christians!

Pliny is represented as saying:—

"Nor have my hesitations been slight, as to whether any distinctions should be made between those tender in years and adults; whether pardon should be granted on repentance, or he who has once been a Christian should gain nothing by ceasing to be one; whether the very name unattended by crime should be punished, or only the crimes following on the profession."

Well might Monsieur E. Havet say, "*Il ne me semble pas que Pline ait dû penser et parler ainsi*" (*Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, iv. 425). This is not the language of the chief juriconsult in the empire, but an irony of a Christian, complaining that children were punished with adults, and for the mere profession of the name of Christian. Who can credit that Pliny, the most distinguished senator of his time, was so foolish as to ask if he had to punish tender children for their religion equally with adults? Such a question—and, further, to suggest that repentant, innocent persons might be punished for having held a certain name—would have been an insult to Trajan, who prided himself on his scrupulous justice. This is evidently not the language of the authorities, but of those who hold the certain name. Judge North would never say he punished Mr. Foote for being a Freethinker, though a Freethinker might possibly say so. Throughout the letter is not in character. The Christian lamb bleats in the skin of the Roman lion.

How does this judge, who is so careful to ask advice, act? He says:—

"Meantime I have taken this course with those brought before me as Christians. I have asked them if they were Christians. If they confessed, I asked them again and a third time, threatening punishments; if they persevered, I ordered them to be executed; for I did not doubt that, whatever their views, contumacy and inflexible obstinacy should be punished."

Such conduct is at variance with all we know of Roman law in general, and of the characters of Pliny and Trajan in particular. Roman law, in relation to religion, was simplicity itself. It tolerated every faith that would tolerate others. No single law directed against the profession of Christianity, or any other religion, is known. When the Bacchanalian followers of the *Bona Dea* were punished, it was because of secret nightly meetings at which immorality was known to prevail. Yet here the virtuous and humane Pliny is represented as threatening with death and sending off to execution all who were resolute in their profession of Christianity, though he tells us immediately afterwards that the profession only implied a high standard of morality. Then, when only the submissive remained, who could give him no trouble, this tyrant and fool thinks of writing this stupid letter to his prince, asking for guidance! *Credat Judæus Apella!*

After this atrocity and absurdity, Pliny tells how he pardoned those who worshipped the living emperor's image and reviled Christ. Again we find this eminent Roman in blank opposition to the genius of Roman law, which required no reviling of others' faiths. Christianity, claiming to be the one divine revelation, and regarding heathen worship as the work of devils, did demand that the heathen gods should be abjured. Its policy was exclusive; that of the Roman State inclusive. Hundreds of gods were worshipped under its sway. A Roman governor would no more have thought of ordering a provincial Christian to revile Christ than our Viceroy in India would demand a Brahmin to abjure Brahma, or a Moslem to revile Mohammed. Here, again, we have not a Pagan writing to a Pagan, but a Christian writing for Christians.

There has been much controversy on the words, *carmenque Christi, quasi Deo*. A Pagan might write this, meaning that Christ was invoked even as some heathen god. But it has an orthodox air. The doctrine of Christ's divinity crept gradually into the Christian Church. It is doubtful if in Trajan's time Christ was regarded by believers as a God.

Then the enlightened and benevolent Pliny represents himself to his master and friend, the clement Prince Trajan, as putting to the torture "two maid-servants, who were called ministers"—"*duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur*," though Paul did not suffer women to teach or young women to be deaconesses. Only slaves were permitted to be put to the torture by Roman law; yet we are

to suppose that these slave girls were ministers of the Christian Church, and were singled out by Pliny for what the Holy Office called "the question." What was asked them? Pliny tells his master that he discovered nothing save a low and extravagant superstition, again purposelessly exhibiting his own inhumanity and folly.

M. Hochart, in his *Etudes au sujet de la persécution des Chrétiens sous Néron*, doubts if Pliny ever was governor of Bithynia. Why should the Emperor Trajan exile his friend from Rome to a remote province? But let us suppose this is all correct. How would a Roman governor report on a suspected sect, many of whom had been arrested, and who were so widely extended that the temples had become deserted? Surely he would have given a formal narrative of the facts, the articles of accusation, and deposition of witnesses. But, having done all he ought not to have done, and having left undone all he should have done, Pliny inquires what he ought to do, and we never hear of this most important sect again, either in his epistles or in his Panegyric on Trajan.

I regard the contents of the letter as decisive against its claims. Other evidence tends in the same direction. John, Earl of Orrery, in his preface to the tenth book of Pliny's Epistles, says: "This tenth book, my dear Lord Boyle, seems to require an introduction. You will find in it a very different style from the epistolary manner of writing which Pliny has hitherto pursued." Melmoth and others have noted the same. When the letters were first printed in 1502, the learned world was astonished at the tenth book. The most complete manuscripts then known contained only nine books, and no one suspected the existence of a tenth. Indeed, Sidonius Apollinaris, dated in the fifth century, left nine books of letters, in which he says that Pliny had fixed the same number for his own collection.

There are thus grave reasons for supposing the entire tenth book a fabrication. How came it that, when in Bithynia, Pliny never thought of writing to his friends or clients, but only to his prince—whom, by the way, he styles, in the mediæval way, *dominus* lord, a title unused by Roman princes? Jean Marie Cataneo, in publishing an edition of the letters in 1505, was constrained to defend the authenticity of the tenth book; and, in doing so, he says his first intention was not to include these letters, because they depended on a "single manuscript, very old, and which he no longer possessed." This was virtually a confession that he was supplying a demand, and could not submit to investigation.

Dr. Cave, in his life of St. Titus, tells us that "Pliny the Younger, returning from his province of Bithynia, landed in Crete, where the emperor had commanded him to erect a temple to Jupiter. When the temple was completed, St. Titus cursed it, and the building immediately tumbled to the ground. Pliny, astonished at the sight, applied with tears to St. Titus for his counsel and assistance. The saint ordered him to begin it in the name of the God of the Christians. He did so; and, having finished, was himself, together with his son, baptized." This story is more edifying, and, to my mind, about as true as that of Pliny being at once the persecutor and apologist of Christians in Bithynia.

J. M. WHEELER.

## SECULAR COMMENTS UPON CHRISTIAN TOPICS.

It is useful sometimes to notice the sayings and doings of our opponents, with a view of ascertaining how far their actual conduct accords with their professions. Christianity is put forth as being unique in its power for good, therefore it is interesting to inquire whether or not facts justify such a claim, and also if the general actions of Christian believers are calculated to enhance the happiness and welfare of the community.

There is no doubt, in my mind, that a careful study of the literature which is issued weekly in the interests of Christianity will show that there is a wide difference between the teachings of this religion and the sayings and doings of its professors. Without wishing to be the least unkind to Christians themselves, I cannot but regard their faith, as professed in this country, as being a gigantic system of hypocrisy, fraud, and delusion. Its clergy preach poverty and covet riches; they counsel peace, but do not protest against war and the extravagant and

increased expenditure now going on to maintain our army and navy. Nearly seventy millions sterling are to be spent during the present year for purposes of war, by people who call themselves followers of the "Prince of Peace." Was ever inconsistency more glaring? When the additional expenditure was recently proposed in the House of Commons, only twenty-three members protested against it, and in the House of Lords not one bishop raised his voice in condemnation of the heavy expenditure for the manufacturing of the instruments of battle. We are told that Christ proclaimed "peace and goodwill"; but what effect has the proclamation had? Let the present military competition that is going on in so-called Christian countries give the answer. What mockery it is to preach about love and the "brotherhood of man" when so much of the wealth of the nation is being squandered in gratifying the passion of hate, and in destroying that true brotherhood which should be a reality, and not, what it is under Christian rule, an appalling sham.

Of course, it will be urged that these enormous warlike preparations in Christian countries are necessary in self-defence. But the question arises, Why are they necessary? They are being carried on principally by those who call themselves the followers of him who is said to have been the harbinger of peace and goodwill. Despite all the boast of the beneficial and humanizing effects of the religion of Christ, the worst passions of human nature still predominate among its votaries. No better proof could be given of the utter failure of Christianity in one of its avowed missions than the present state of Europe. And yet the Churches, with few exceptions, are silent amid the clamor for war, which is always accompanied with horrible and brutal adjuncts. Thousands of innocent lives are sacrificed, countless homes are made desolate, widows are multiplied, children are left fatherless, and the nation is impoverished. Still archbishops and bishops go on receiving their £15,000 and £10,000 a year for preaching "Blessed are the peacemakers," "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," "And unto him that smiteth you on the one cheek offer also the other." Is not this the very quintessence of theological cant and hypocrisy? If such a condition of things obtained under a Secular régime, loud indeed would be the demand for a new order of administration. It is time truly that a new Redeemer arrived; not one who should declare, as Christ is said to have done, "I am come to send fire on the earth," "I came not to send peace, but a sword," but a Redeemer who shall herald a reign of love and true fellowship among all mankind, regardless of creed, clime, or nation.

Christians profess to have great faith in the recorded sayings of their Master; we therefore commend to them the following: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Luke vi. 41, 42). If Protestants in their attacks upon Roman Catholics observed the injunction here given, they would be more modest and less harsh in the treatment of their fellow Christians. In the *Rock* of February 12 an article appeared entitled "A Religious Reign of Terror," which referred to what is termed the "infamous" conduct of the Jesuits. These pious Christians are charged by other professed followers of Christ with acting in a "most outrageous manner," with committing theft, and with threatening the worst kinds of persecution for those who would not accept the Roman faith. We are told that "the old spirit of persecution is as violent as it was in the days of the Reformation," and that "there is nothing too base or too infamous that these men will not attempt—nothing, however false, from which they shrink. We see in these facts, proved beyond all question, that Romanism is just the same as ever—building itself up by falsehoods and persecution." Evidently the Christian writer of the above indictment is not too largely influenced by that "charity which thinketh no evil." The *Rock*, with all its piety, seems to be suffering from a constant state of alarm at the progress of heresy and Catholicism. Hence, alluding to the recent debate in the House of Commons upon Disestablishment and Disendowment, it says: "The result of this ill-timed motion will be to confirm the rulers in Church and State in their policy

of countenancing that disastrous heresy which is eating out the very heart of our Church and rendering her a house divided against herself." It is encouraging to Freethinkers to know that the supporters of the Church recognize the doom of their citadel of superstition; for, as was intimated in my article last week, upon the authority of Scripture, "a house divided against itself cannot stand." And the sooner it falls the better.

What the *Rock* says against the Jesuits may be quite true, and it is not my desire in any way to defend them; for wherever they have had the power they have proved themselves to be a curse to humanity. But it would be well for their accusers to first cast the beam out of their own eyes before accusing others. The adherents to the very faith which is so injudiciously expounded by the *Rock* have been guilty of similar acts, not only towards Freethinkers, but also towards members of the Christian fold. Have not Secularists been robbed by the Church of legacies left for Secular purposes? Have they not been persecuted and imprisoned simply because they could not honestly accept the teachings of the Church? And to-day we are condemned by Christian laws as an illegal body, and we are being deprived of our legitimate rights as citizens of what should be a free nation. Let the conductors of the *Rock* study Dr. Dick's *Philosophy of Religion*, Dr. Andrew White's *Warfare of Science*, Buckle's *History of Civilization*, and the Freethought works published by the Secular party, and they will see a most painful record of the crimes committed by the devotees of the "reformed faith" against freedom of thought and personal liberty. So long as Protestants are guilty of oppressing those who differ from them, they cannot consistently condemn the Catholics for doing the same thing. Persons who live in glass houses should be careful not to throw stones; for, if they do, it is not surprising that they are paid back in the same manner.

In the current number of the *Fortnightly Review* the lecture recently delivered by Max Müller to the students of Manchester College is reprinted. It contained a marked rebuke to Christians for their egotistical notion that they are always in the right, and that others must be in the wrong. Noticing a prayer of the Patagonians, wherein they supplicate help from their deity, Max Müller says: "It is easy to smile at their offering a poor meal to their God. It is easy for us to ask, How could they believe in a god who delights in sacrifices? But what should we say if the very Patagonians were to turn round and ask us, How can you believe that the Son of God sent unclean spirits into a herd of swine, so that about two thousand were choked in the sea? We know how shocked Huxley was by such a parable, for it can be no more; and would not the Patagonians be even more shocked and more perplexed at the meaning of it?" He also gives self-satisfied professors of Christianity a sensible lesson when referring to a form observed by the followers of Buddha. He says: "With regard to Buddhism, the custom of prayer-wheels is often pointed out as the worst degradation of religion. But I must confess I had little to say when a Japanese Buddhist, to whom I had pointed out the absurdity of such a custom, replied: 'These prayer-wheels are only meant to remind us of Buddha'; and when he added with a smile, 'Is it not better to use a wheel, even when it is moved by the wind or by water, than to employ, as you do in your college chapels, a human being whose chief object it seems to be to get through the service in the shortest time possible?' If Christians were really desirous of being consistent, they would seek to obey the injunction, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them' (Matthew vii. 12).

CHARLES WATTS.

### The Hebrew Bible.

Every archæologist knows that the square letter characters of the present Hebrew text were not invented by the Rabbis before the second century after Christ, or 1600 years posterior to the vague age when Ie H Oua H buried the lawgiver "in a valley in the land of Moab opposite to Beth-peor; but no man has known his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv. 6; Cahen's translation). The real question, however, pointed in logical shape, is this: The Hebrew Moses wrote the Hebrew Pentateuch. Did the Hebrew Moses write the Hebrew Pentateuch? If the Hebrew Moses wrote the Hebrew Pentateuch, where is the Hebrew Pentateuch the Hebrew Moses wrote?—G. R. Gliddon, "Types of Mankind."

## THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPELS.

### DEMONIACAL POSSESSION.

FOREMOST among the miracles ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels is the casting out of evil spirits or demons. If we believe the writers of those books, Palestine in the time of Christ was full of people who were tormented by invisible demons, and Jesus expelled these evil spirits daily. According to these writers, madness, epilepsy, blindness, deafness, dumbness, and other afflictions, were caused by demons who had taken up their abode in the human body; so that when these evil spirits were ejected the disease or infirmity disappeared. The following are examples of this remarkable fact:—

Mark v. 2-13.—"And.....there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.....and no man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; and no man had strength to tame him," etc.

This maniac is stated to have been cured by the command, "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man."

Matt. ix. 32, 33.—"And as he went forth, behold, there was brought to him a dumb man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spake."

Matt. xii. 22.—"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb; and he healed him, inasmuch that the dumb man spake and saw."

Luke xiii. 11-16.—"And behold a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up.....And he laid his hand upon her: and immediately she was made straight.....And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation.....the Lord answered him, and said.....Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

Mark ix. 17-26.—"And one of the multitude answered him, Master, I brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and whensoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away.....And oftentimes it hath cast him both into the fire and into the water," etc.

This case is easily recognized as one of epilepsy. After expelling the "demon" Jesus is stated to have said to the disciples, who were unable to cast him out: "This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer and fasting."

The question we have now to consider is simply, Are the accounts of demoniacal possession recorded in the Gospels true? In other words, Were the afflictions mentioned in the foregoing and other passages caused by demons, and did Jesus remove them as described? The answer in both cases is a decided negative. Insanity, epilepsy, blindness, deafness, and dumbness are not now caused by demoniacal possession, and we have no evidence that such was the case in the time of Christ. Hence, we are forced to the conclusion that Jesus did not heal the persons so afflicted, and that the Gospel stories are pure fables.

If we are asked to account for these stories, we can do so in one short sentence: Demoniacal possession was one of the beliefs of the age. It is not, then, surprising that Jesus was represented as healing by expelling the evil spirits. "The primitive Christians," to quote the words of Gibbon, "had their minds exercised by the habits of believing the most extraordinary events. They fancied that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by demons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and delivered from dangers, sickness, and sometimes even death, by the supplications of the Church." And it is to men whose intelligence and mental condition were of this deplorable character that we owe all the stories related of Christ.

As a matter of fact, from a century or two before Christ, to three or four centuries after, both Jews and Gentiles had a firm and settled belief in the existence of demons and in demoniacal possession. This belief was common to the peoples of Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and can be traced in the literature of those countries. It is found in the Talmud as well as in the Gospels, and was held by opponents of the Christian religion as well as by Christians. It is to be found, too, in the Apocryphal Gospels as well as in the canonical. Demoniacal possession is mentioned as an undoubted and well-known fact by the Jewish historian, Josephus; by the pagans, Celsus and Porphyry; and by

nearly all the early Christian writers. Those who care to read what the latter have to say upon the subject can turn to the following: Justin (*2 Apology*, 5; *Dialogue*, 105); the *Shepherd of Hermas* (fifth commandment); Tatian (*Address to Greeks*, xv., xvi., xviii., etc.); Athenagoras (*Embassy*, 24, 25); *Recognitions* (ii., 71, 72; iv. 15, etc.); Tertullian (*Apology*, 22); Origen (*Against Celsus*, viii. 31); Eusebius (*Evangelical Preparation*, v. 2); St. Augustine (*City of God*, viii. 23), and many other writers. Justin, Athenagoras, and Tertullian also tell of the origin of demons. I have here, however, only space for two short extracts.

Tertullian, who is an authority on demons, says (*Apol.*, 22):—

"The philosophers acknowledge there are demons..... The poets are all acquainted with demons, too; even the ignorant common people make frequent use of them in cursing..... We are instructed, moreover, by our *sacred books* how from certain angels, who fell of their own free-will, there sprang up a more wicked demon-brood," etc.

One of the "sacred books" referred to was the lying book of Enoch (50 B.C.), whose author took, or rather deduced, his theory of demons from Gen. vi. 1-4. Tertullian says of these demons:—

"Their great business is the ruin of mankind..... They inflict, accordingly, upon our bodies diseases and other grievous calamities..... Their marvellous subtleness and tenuity give them access to both parts of our nature. As spiritual, they can do great harm; for, invisible and intangible, we are not cognizant of their action save by its effects..... Every spirit is possessed of wings. This is a common property of both angels and demons. So they are everywhere in a trice; the whole world is as one place to them," etc.

The belief in demons and demoniacal possession among the Jews can be seen from Josephus (A.D. 75), who says (*Wars*, vii., vi. 3):—

"This root is only valuable on account of one virtue it hath, that if it only be brought to sick persons, it quickly drives away those called *demons*, which are no other than the spirits of the wicked, which enter into men that are alive," etc.

This belief naturally brought into existence a class of healers who professed to cure those possessed by expelling the demons. Among the Jews these exorcists were recognized as legitimate practitioners, and their power to eject the evil spirits was generally admitted. If the disease grew worse, or the fits were repeated, the excuse was ready—the demon had returned; it was a case for prayer and fasting. The general belief with regard to possession is correctly stated in the following passage (Matt. xii. 43-45), which is put in the mouth of Jesus:—

"The unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first."

A peculiar method of exorcism is given in the book of Tobit (viii. 2, 3); but later, in the time of Christ, the means more generally employed were incantations, amulets, and charms.

Josephus, speaking of King Solomon, says (*Antiq.* viii., ii. 5):—

"God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to man. He composed such incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return, and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal," etc.

That the Jews did both believe in demoniacal possession and exorcise the evil spirits in the time of Christ is unquestionable, and is not contested. The fact is also admitted in the Gospels. Thus, in Matt. xii. 27 Jesus is represented as saying to those who accused him of expelling demons by Satanic agency:—

"If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?"

The professional exorcists are also referred to in Acts xix. 13. The Gospel writers do not attempt to conceal

the fact. They simply represent Jesus and his Apostles as expelling the demons instantaneously, and more effectually, by the power of God, without following any of the customary methods. In so doing they related nothing that in their days was considered incredible. The accounts of demoniacal possession in the Gospels prove incontestably that the Gospel writers (or, if apologists like it better, Jesus himself) shared the common superstition of the times.

Science has shown beyond the possibility of doubt that the absurd beliefs, of even the best educated, in apostolic times respecting the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, thunder, lightning, rain, and all natural phenomena, were popular fallacies, born of ignorance and superstition. This fact is admitted; but its force can only be estimated when it is noted how supremely ridiculous and how far from the truth those beliefs actually were.

Science has also shown that insanity, epilepsy, blindness, deafness, and all kinds of diseases, are not caused by invisible demons. Such belief was the outcome of ignorance, especially of physiological facts, combined with a crude theory of the origin of evil. The creator of the universe being assumed to be a wise, just, and beneficent Being, it was necessary to account for the existence of diseases and afflictions; hence arose the theory of Satan and his innumerable army of demons.

Science has, further, shown conclusively that disease is due to various known causes, which proper remedies will, in the majority of cases, remove; that madness and all forms of insanity are simply disorders of the brain; that blindness, deafness, and dumbness are not caused by demons; that, in short, demoniacal possession was a popular delusion resulting from superstition—like witchcraft in later times. For this knowledge we are indebted to Science, not to Revelation.

To sum up, the stories of Jesus going about curing diseases and expelling demons are not supported by evidence of any kind, and are at the same time opposed to all known scientific facts. Rationalists have, then, but one course before them—to reject these stories as pious fabrications.

ABRACADABRA.

## A CONSOLATION.

ONCE upon a time a preacher  
Passage took upon a ship;  
This the first time on the water  
That he ever took a trip.

Cautious was he, and so timid,  
That he was quite ill at ease,  
When the vessel rolled and tumbled  
In the rough and briny seas.

Then he asked, "Where is the captain?"  
And approached him in distress.  
"Do you think there is great danger?"  
We'll reach port, sir, don't you guess?"

Then the captain took him forward,  
Close to where some sailors lay;  
They were talking, laughing, swearing  
In their rough and sailor way.

"If there truly were great danger,"  
Said the captain, "would they dare  
Thus profane the name of heaven?  
Only hear them, how they swear!"

Satisfied, he to his cabin,  
Thinking of the mighty deep;  
And, indeed, this timid rabbin  
Sought his couch and went to sleep.

After while the sea grew rougher;  
Then again he went to where  
On aforetime he had listened  
To the sailors curse and swear.

Reassured, returned the preacher;  
On his brow cold stood the sweat;  
Captain overheard him saying:  
"Thank the Lord, they're swearing yet!"

J. CHAPELLE CLARK.

The Church has always been willing to swap off treasures in heaven for cash down.—*Ingersoll*.

## ACID DROPS.

MR. MOODY has opened another crusade. This time it is against the nude in art. He calls upon his hearers to tear from their frames any picture of the nude they may have in their houses. He also demands the destruction of similar pictures in the public art galleries. He hopes to see a huge bonfire of such paintings in Fifth-avenue. We guess he'll hope in vain.

Moody's crusade against the nude in art ought to extend to orthodox pictures of the Crucifixion. When it comes to "decency," we don't see that a naked man is any more decent than a naked woman. Jesus Christ on the cross has nothing on but a narrow strip of linen about his middle. Is this the sort of thing to offer to the gaze of young girls? If the Yankee evangelist is honest, he will begin by the destruction of naked Christs.

For our part, if we had a choice, we would rather see a naked Venus than a naked Jew. Certainly we would rather look at the lovely statue of the Venus of Milo than at a statue of Moody, with his commonplace figure and accentuated abdomen. At the same time, we don't want to interfere with the hysterical Christians who prefer a badly dressed Moody to (say) a glorious nude Apollo. It is a matter of taste, and the safe rule in such matters is to live and let live.

How curious it is that these Evangelical Christians are so inflammable! Place them before the figure of a beautiful woman, and they groan under the stress of lascivious feelings. Nothing but the grace of God, and plenty of it, can save them from perdition.

Byron was once gazing at a beautiful statue in an Italian gallery. A lady behind him exclaimed, "How indecent!" "Madam," said Byron, "the indecency is in the observation."

Suppose poor Moody had been the first man instead of Adam. What an awful time he would have had until Eve learnt to sew fig leaves? Even then he would have been perpetually shocked until Jehovah made her a leather trousseau.

Noah's Ark was the nautical wonder of antiquity. Jehovah was its architect, and it took a hundred and twenty years in building. It is out of the running now, however; for the White Star Company are building a gigantic new steamer 704 feet long, and of 17,000 tonnage. Fancy poor old Captain Noah looking at this marine monster! His eyes would be three inches in diameter.

Dr. Dallinger, the "Christian scientist," has been delivering lectures at Belfast. These were scientific. He also preached a sermon. This was unscientific. According to Dr. Dallinger, it is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ walked upon the water, simply because scientific men do not assert that miracles are impossible. Well, now, it is also a fact that scientific men do not assert the impossibility of a planet, somewhere in infinite space, made of green cheese. Is it, therefore, reasonable to believe in the existence of a green-cheese planet? Dr. Dallinger's argument really amounts to this:—Whatever is conceivable we may reasonably believe to exist. We may, therefore, believe in centaurs, dragons, mermaids, satyrs, and witches. Such is the logic of a scientist when he preaches as a Christian!

The Rev. Thomas Van Ness, who is a prominent Unitarian minister, recently said in Boston, in criticism of the teachings of Moody, that his whole plan of salvation is wrong; that a man cannot be saved in ten minutes; that the idea that he can is pernicious; that mere blind emotion is not enough; that the head must be educated; that at revival meetings the heads of young women are often affected; that hysterics and even insanity sometimes result; and that he would not take anyone under twenty years of age to these meetings. This is substantially what has been said time and again by Freethinkers. And it is the truth.

The Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hexton, Ampthill, Beds, is probably the only priest who has told the truth about the Education Bill. He says: "We do not need this measure. The Church of England is a wealthy corporation; most of the landowners, most of the wealthy classes, are Churchmen—some by birth, some because they unhappily fancy that it raises them in the social scale; and, this being so, I emphatically declare that, if Churchmen desire to maintain their sectarian schools, they are quite rich enough to do so themselves, without trying to dip their hands into the breeches pockets of their dissenting fellow-citizens. This Bill is a needless sop to clerical greed."

Colonel Ingersoll's lecture at the Harlem Opera House was duly billed, but his lithograph posters were torn down

at the request of the Catholics, who went to the Opera House to attend a concert given by the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle. The Colonel takes the outrage good-humoredly. He knows it is no use being angry with Christian bigots. They can't help it—while they are Christians.

Dr. Lyman Abbott's ridicule of the story of Jonah and the Whale is still the theme of the New York press. The *Sun*, citing the endorsement of the story in Matthew xii. 40-41, says, if Dr. Abbott finds the story of Jonah and the Whale only laughable, he does not believe in the Bible; he rejects the supernatural; he is an infidel. Several of its correspondents say ditto. One, however, remarks: "You do not believe, any more than I do, that the writers of the Bible were infallible in all directions. They report that Christ said: 'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.' Are we to take that as absolutely true? Christ was crucified on Friday, lay in the grave over Saturday, and rose the next morning. Was that three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?" Another writer insidiously points out that if Christ was in the heart of the earth, as Jonah was in the whale's belly, then he was not really dead at all, and consequently there was no resurrection.

The *New York World* follows a picture of Dr. Abbott with a roll labelled "My Ideas on Whales," by another of "Kate Swan in the Whale's Skeleton." This young woman went to the New York Museum of Natural History, where they have a ninety-foot skeleton of a whale, to inquire if the whale could swallow Jonah, or if they could swallow the Jonah tale. Writing from the whale's belly, which she got into from the side, she says: "From the floor below, Professor Wuertman, one of the paleontologists connected with the Museum, is explaining to me just what would happen to any human thing that tried to follow Jonah's trail. Following his explanations, I can see in imagination a man hurled between the powerful jaws, and thrown against a barricade of many sheets of whalebone. As the jaws gaped to admit the human visitor, these great sheafs of bone, hung with heavy fringe of thinner bone, open out to form a thick sieve across the mouth. Through these must be strained whatever goes any further. What happened to Jonah if he met this strainer is easily conceived when it is understood that nothing bigger than very tiny fishes, so small that they form a thick porridge, is allowed to pass this strainer. It is relentless, and everything has to submit to it. Admitting that Jonah survived the straining process, he then ran his head into what seems an insurmountable obstacle to any further progression into the whale. One sceptic inquired in a very sarcastic tone: 'Do you think Jonah or anybody else went through that nine-inch hole up there?' I am not answering conundrums, but unless my senses are deceptive, nothing human that I have met, not even Major Mite, would make the passage of the esophagus of this ninety-foot whale. 'But even if it did, when the intruder arrived in the stomach, the gastric juice must have been set to work,' says the Professor. 'It has been proved that the effect of that juice on the flesh is to immediately start disintegration, and any live thing introduced into the stomach of a whale is practically and at once skinned.'" The young lady descended from the whale's belly with more confidence in Dr. Abbott than in Jonah.

Dr. Minot J. Savage denies that Dr. Lyman Abbott is an "infidel." He is one from the old point of view, but it is no longer necessary to believe in the infallibility of the Bible. It is not even necessary to believe in the deity of Christ. Dr. Savage forgot to say what it is necessary to believe in order to be a Christian. A little definiteness on this point would be very welcome.

Mr. William Everet Hicks, addressing the Philosophical Association at the Long Island Business College, Brooklyn, said that Mark Hanna, the boss of the Republican organization, lined up the clergy of the United States on the side of the plutocracy. Mr. Henry A. Powell, Registrar of Arrears, who took part in the discussion, denied that the clergy had any political influence whatever. Some years ago, he stated, the Brooklyn clergy were all opposed to a man up for office again. They held meetings against his election, and he won by a majority that surprised his own party.

An Armenian service at St. John, Westminster, was interrupted the other evening. The priest began reading out the Circular Letter of the Patriarch of Constantinople, inviting the Armenian people to remain faithful to the Sultan, and demanding their loyal prayers for his health and happiness. This was more than the congregation could stand. It was too much to ask them to pray for Abdul the Damned. So they took away the priest's manuscript, and made him finish the service without it.

The spiritual needs of Portsmouth have been exercising the minds of the clerics in the town, who have appealed "to the country at large" to help them support churches, mission halls, etc. The vicar of St. John's, Portsea, however, "respectfully, but positively," refuses to be a party to the scheme, inasmuch as it includes the support of churches where the confessional is practised and idolatry committed and taught.

Mr. Hermann Wettstein, in the *Boston Investigator*, offers the mejums of America \$100 for the privilege of testing a materialized spirit with three shots from a Winchester rifle. The mejums say this isn't fair, because it is well known that any intention to injure the spirits reacts upon the medium, and spirits are not likely to appear to be shot at.

*A Biography of Francis Schlatter*, "the Christ Healer," who attracted crowds in Colorado, has been published, from which it appears that he is an Alsatian shoemaker, who migrated to the States in 1891 to make his fortune. He is a Roman Catholic, and supposes himself influenced by his guardian angel.

The American Theosophists who came over here crusading are now on tour round the world. At Sydney they were interrogated concerning Mrs. Besant. They said that she had not half-a-dozen followers in America, that she had declared herself a Hindu, and that she was "entirely under the influence of a few Brahmins in India," so that she is looked upon by the natives as "a mere sectarian Hindu." The ardent apostles of universal brotherhood do not seem to be very harmonious.

Brother Moore, replying to a Christian who told a story of some "lewd women" who were struck by lightning, cites some "judgments" on the other side: "On January 1, in Memphis, Tenn., Sarah Stewart, aged thirty-five years, fell dead in the Baptist Church while shouting 'praise to God.' Same date—Banker Wilkins, of Selma, Alabama, prayed all night in his church, and then suicided by shooting himself. Same date—G. W. Allen, of Atlanta, Georgia, said, 'Prepare to meet your God,' and killed three people. On January 6, at Ottawa, Canada, one of the candles on an altar set fire to a church and nunnery, and burned to death seven nuns. On January 10, at Lebanon, Pa., John M. Gossler, bank cashier and Sunday-school teacher, suicided."

In a lecture in New York the secretary of the American Board of Missions frankly said: "It is impossible to Christianize the Mohammedans." That is the simple truth. A former resident in Syria, a minister, and now a professor in one of our colleges, told a writer in *Christian Work* some time ago that the number of adult Mussulmans converted to Christianity could be counted on the fingers of two hands, thumbs excluded. We have no reason to doubt the truth of the statement.

The Cretan difficulty is a religious one. Religion has much to answer for in the East. In the days of the Reformation the German Protestants burned in ten years about ten thousand women as witches, out of religious zeal. In the East the Christians and Mussulmans murder each other daily from the same holy cause. And yet we are asked to believe that religion has produced civilization. Look at Turkey, at Crete, as they are now, and recall the high civilization of the Greeks and Romans thousands of years back. Where is the progress? "Oh, Liberty! Oh, Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name?" Substitute Religion for Liberty, and is there not a hundred times more reason to ask the question?—*Sunday Telegraph*.

The Rev. P. James Lyons Young, of Pomeroy, Wash., recently fled from that town in order to escape bodily harm from the members of his enraged congregation, on being discovered by them to be "a wolf in sheep's clothing." He had, during the course of his not very long career, committed nearly all the ministerial offences in the catalogue.

The Harvestfontein Dutch Reformed Church has resolved "that the Rev. A. M. J. de Villiers has given himself to the practice of indecency, not only once, nor even a few times; but has lived for long years in this sin, and that with more than one person." They accordingly expel him, "with the earnest prayer that God may be merciful to him, and sanctify these punishments to the good of his immortal soul."

The Rev. John Knox, a famous Methodist preacher, ran a banking concern in Topeka, and, it is alleged, swindled the brethren right and left. He escaped punishment through a defect of the banking laws, but his brother ministers are after him.

Lionel William Price, of St. George's, Bristol, who was very religious and spent much time in studying the Bible, especially parts which most parents wish screened

from the notice of children, was found guilty of killing and mutilating his sister, aged ten; but the jury held that he was not responsible for his actions. He was ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure.

The Rev. Philip Ahier, vicar of Glaisdale, North Yorkshire, who many months ago was convicted of drunkenness and immorality, has at length been deprived of his benefice.

The Rector of Witchampton, Dorset, means to boss his parish. He has had placed in the church a notice to the effect that glass cases with artificial flowers will not in future be permitted on the graves in the churchyard. He deprecates this custom, which is fast becoming popular, because he considers that it "mars the primitive simplicity and beauty of God's Acre, and makes it like a Continental cemetery."

Mr. McNeill, head master of the Campbell College, Belfast, is being sued for libel by Mr. Andrew Boyd, one of the teachers. Mr. McNeill appears to have very peculiar notions of virtue. In his opinion, it is sinful to go to a theatre; and he actually objected to one of the teachers for reading Sheridan's play of "The Rivals." Good old Presbyteranism! What a sweet and lovely thing it is, to be sure!

The Rev. S. W. Thackeray, of the Curates' Union, says there are twice as many priests as benefices in the Church of England, and that in 1894 there were 1,300 curates who had served fifteen years and upwards. He says that, while the stipends of young and single curates have been going up, they have been steadily going down for married and middle-aged curates. It is, he alleges, the settled policy of incumbents to exclude men who are no longer young and single, and he points out that curates are excluded from all grants from the so-called Clergy Sustentation Fund.

The *Bradford Daily Argus* prints a paragraph about "Bob Ingersoll's" mischievous doctrine of suicide, in which it is stated that a clerk in the Colonel's employ has killed himself with prussic acid. One would think that suicide was very uncommon, and that Colonel Ingersoll's clerk was the only person who had taken his own life during the last twelve months; whereas hundreds of persons commit suicide every year, and among them are clergymen, as well as other members of Christian Churches. The *Observer* goes on to say that "Hattie Cooper, the Colonel's third cousin, and her mother Sarah, made their exit in a different fashion; they turned on the gas full in their bedroom, fell asleep, and never woke." This is untrue. Hattie Cooper suffered from suicidal melancholia. Her mother, however, would not send her to an asylum, but tended her herself, knowing the danger she incurred. One night the girl turned on the gas, and both were asphyxiated. It only remains to add that Mrs. Cooper did not share the Colonel's views on religion.

Dr. F. R. Lees, having made a feeble attempt to reply to Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* pamphlet, loses his temper in replying to critics in the *Watford Observer*. Dr. Lees will find that sneering at "Bradlaugh and Foote" as "shallow Popes" will not pass as an effective answer to the argument that the Bible does not really support the cause of temperance.

A Canadian priest, named Prudhomme, came from Montreal to New York last week to see the sights of a great city. He met Miss Lucy Jones, at whose solicitation he purchased some liquid refreshment, and then retired with her to the rear yard of 125 West Twenty-Fifth-street. He afterwards complained to the police that the young woman had abstracted \$40 from his pocket, but he did not appear against her in court.—*New York "Truthseeker"*.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in America is constantly engaged in some silly enterprize. Temperance is an excellent thing, but Christian Temperance is a good thing spoiled; and when Christian women get hold of it they make it still worse. The Christian women are all for prohibition by law—that is to say, they haven't the least bit of belief in moral progress except through the policeman. They want to dragoon the men into the feminine ideal of virtue, the first condition of which is that you must be perfectly innocuous. It is a negative ideal, and it does not commend itself so strongly to the more active sex; so the Christian women clamor for legislation to hamper the wings of their fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers. They have just induced a member of the Senate to bring in an Anti-treating Bill, by which any man who stands a drink for a friend would be liable to a fine of five dollars, and for a second offence to a minimum of five days' imprisonment. The proposal is enough to shake all Olympus with laughter. Such is the female idea of improving society under the influence of the Christian religion!

Why don't these Christian women read their Bibles carefully—and honestly? If they did so, they would see that

Jesus Christ stood drinks on a large scale. At a certain marriage feast, where he was but a guest, he supplied a vast quantity of wine—at least seventy-five gallons, which won the highest approbation of the old toper who sat at the head of the table. No doubt this was only a selected instance. We daresay he repeated the performance on several occasions. On the whole, it would be well for these Christian women to read Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer*, which shows the utter absurdity of advocating teetotalism on scriptural grounds.

By the way, some curious statistics have been published by the Rev. D. Grenville Lewis, chaplain of Shepton Mallet Prison, in an article in the *Prisons' Service Review*. According to the inspector's annual report on the Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, the 658 convicts in that institution in one year were classified as follows:—Total Abstainers, 112; Moderate Drinkers, 346; Occasionally Intemperate, 194; Intemperate, 6. These figures are directly in conflict with the ordinary idea of the relation of drink to crime. Evidently the subject has to be examined from other points of view. Mr. Lewis points out that pickpockets, forgers, embezzlers, banknote engravers, etc., are not drunkards; if they were, they could not carry on their peculiar business. We daresay the vast majority of them are professed Christians.

The Law and Order League, of Union Hill, New Jersey, has started a crusade against Sunday sacred concerts. Of course, the clergy are to the front in this crusade. They can't afford to have opposition on the Lord's Day—that is *their* day. They want exclusive business on the blessed Sabbath.

The *Crescent* of February 10 has the following: "A young lady (formerly a Christian) accepted Islam at the Liverpool Mosque on Sunday evening last, and was received into the congregation of the Faithful. The reason why, for the present, we have refrained from publishing the names and addresses of the recent converts is, because some malicious person, presumably Christian, has recently adopted the disgraceful tactics of sending most objectionable and insulting letters and postcards to persons whose names have appeared in our columns. We will, however, publish a full list of these names and addresses in the Secretary's annual report."

In the interior of the State of Bahia, Brazil, which is almost a desert, and covered with immense virgin forests, a certain religious fanatic and empiric of the name of Conselheiro has for a number of years past gathered together some hundreds of miserable people, who follow him blindly, and under his leadership live a nomadic life. Vagabonds and also malefactors from the neighboring States have joined him, and constitute a dangerous element in respect of pillage and depredations. Conselheiro might be the founder of a new religion, but that the authorities are determined to suppress him.

According to a writer in *La Revue Blanche*, the fighting in the Philippines has arisen from the struggles for domination of the Roman Catholic clergy. The regular clergy are pitted against the secular, the Spanish clergy against the native. The last-named are extremely jealous of the supremacy of the great Spanish Orders. The people are with them, and they are well armed, having made judicious purchases of the second-hand Remingtons recently sold in Spain. The country is enslaved in the interest of the Spanish Church. As usual with fanatical fights, the butcheries are awful.

Spain's one chance lies in the confiscation of the immense possessions of the Church, which it has been hoarding together so long. Ordinary property soon gets dissipated, but the Church is a sponge which sucks up all and gives none out until a strong man comes to squeeze it.

The Wesleyan Rev. T. G. Selby says that Thomas Hardy impeaches Providence, arraigns the moral order of the universe, and libels human nature. "Things could turn out as Thomas Hardy represents only if the universe were under the direct sovereignty of the Devil." Probably the novelist, unlike the minister, does not keep a devil.

The Archbishop of York's proposal for a fund to establish a Sheffield bishopric has not excited any enthusiasm among well-to-do cutlers, and will probably collapse for lack of the £40,000 the Archbishop modestly requires.

We read that in Washington City, at a recent meeting of the Secular League at Typographical Temple, resolutions approving the recent international arbitration treaty between the United States and Great Britain were passed. They also passed a resolution protesting against the defamation of the character of Thomas Paine by T. De Witt (less)

Talmage. Talmage has said, "Thomas Paine never believed in God nor anything good." Talmage is incorrigible.

Mrs. Ella Castle, the San Francisco multi-millionaire, whose kleptomania got her into an English prison, and whose gold got her out again, was recently "operated upon at the Polyclinic hospital, Philadelphia, to restore her to her normal condition, and left the institute perfectly well," say the despatches. Thus does science go "creeping on from point to point." Now that it has been demonstrated that the thieving habit can be cured by the surgeon's knife—without applying it to the jugular—may it not also prove an antidote for lying, hypocrisy, avarice, and other ills? In the meantime, we will continue to put kleptomaniacal laborers and laundresses in the penitentiary.—*Iconoclast*.

The case of undertaker Jones, who was recently made a clergyman in Melbourne, and thus qualified to read the Burial Service over the firm's "stiffs," has raised a big commotion. In Victoria any man can become a legally-recognized parson if forty persons sign a petition that they want him appointed to attend to their spiritual wants. Then he is entitled to marry people (which doesn't matter much so long as the knot holds good), and to bury them (which doesn't matter at all, as the deceased takes no interest in the matter); also, the forty casual signatures qualify him to know all about Genesis, and the material perdition, and Jonah, and St. John at Patmos, and the mark of the Beast, and similar mysteries. In fact, it seems that forty people who know nothing at all can, by signing a piece of paper, fill a man, who knows next to nothing, with a comprehensive knowledge of everything. Jones, it is reported, has no tabernacle and no congregation, and some of the people who signed his bit of paper had the haziest idea what it was about, and the address of the alleged kirk seems to be a piece of waste ground infested with kerosenets and dogs, and Jones calls himself the Reformed Church of England—which is regarded as a very large order indeed. Genuine reverends, with the name blown in the bottle, rather appear to regard Jones and his kind as a burlesque and a carnal grabbing at the fees and perquisites. But then the average parson is also a good deal of a burlesque, and his monkey-shave makes it practically impossible to take him seriously.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

*Apropos* of the eternal question of the police-court Bible as source of infection, two copies of Holy Writ are in use in the Broken-hill court. Some official, having a due regard for the truth, has written inside the covers of one: "Germs Distributor," "Disease Disseminator," "Filth Collector," and "The Doctor's Delight"; and of the other: "Microbe Pad" and "Cancer Spreader."—*Sydney Bulletin*.

What are the outward and visible signs of civilization? There is a story of an Irish sailor, who was the only survivor from a wreck on, to him, an unknown coast. He made his way inland, and presently caught sight of a gallows in the distance. "Bedad," says he, "it's a civilized country, after all." A little further on he met a drunken man reeling along. "And begorra," said Pat, joyfully, "it's a Christian country, too!"

According to the *Birmingham Daily Mail*, the Board of Trade inquiry at Hull as to the stranding of the steam trawler *Euphrates*, which went ashore at Aldborough on January 8, disclosed the fact that "when the vessel struck five of the crew were down below saying their prayers." Our contemporary heads this news significantly, "The Inefficacy of Prayer."

Canon Gore has been lecturing at Sheffield on "The Theory of Evolution and the Doctrine of the Fall." The Canon gives up the first chapters of Genesis as literal history, while holding to the literal history of Jesus who came to destroy the works of the mythical Devil, and redeem man from the fall which never occurred. The process of amalgamating Christianity and Evolution involves a good deal of word-spinning.

According to *Freedom*, the Spanish papers are publishing shocking details of the torture of Anarchist prisoners in the fortress of Montjuich. The details are so infamous that we hope there is some exaggeration. It seems clear, however, that gross cruelty has been inflicted on these prisoners, and we trust that the Spanish Government will interfere immediately. Evil cannot be overcome by evil. This truth is at least as old as Buddha, and it should be recognized by Christians.

Some of the Bishops have hit upon a rare sensational idea—namely, to give addresses on "Social Purity" at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, at 11.30 p.m. Bishop Creighton, Bishop Barry, and the Bishop of Rochester are taking part in this effort. We don't recollect anything like it since "General" Booth promised to draw off the Piccadilly girls to the strawberry beds of Kent and Essex.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

*Sunday*, February 28, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, subject, "The Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund: with Remarks on Christian, Heathen, and Secular Hospitals, and on the Necessity of Public Control of such Institutions."

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 28, Glasgow. March 7, Athenæum Hall, London; 14, Athenæum Hall; 21 and 28, Camberwell. April 4, Sheffield; 10, 11 and 12, Stanley, Durham. 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.

A. J. H. points out that the Rev. Fletcher Williams, of Hackney, who wrote in the *Echo* on "Agnosticism," is in the Unitarian Church, and is not to be confounded with the Rev. Fleming Williams, who is a Board Congregationalist on good terms with his neighbors.

THE TOTAL FREETHINKER.—A few more texts for Dr. Lees may be found in Proverbs xxxi. 6-8; Isaiah xxv. 15, 27, 28; Zechariah ix. 15-17; Matthew xxxvi. 27; 1 Timothy v. 23. See *Bible and Beer*.

G. CROOKSON.—Marked papers are always welcome.

G. DIXON.—You forgot to enclose the report of Dr. Harrison's lecture. There was nothing in the envelope but your letter. No doubt it is time that you had a lecture at Blyth. A lecturer might stir up the whole Tyneside district if only Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme Fund were decently supported. It is impossible to fight without the sinews of war.

C. R. SEACH.—Mr. Foote is unable to send a "representative" to oppose your reply at Deptford to a lecture delivered by him in West London.

E. SMEDLEY.—We do not know that Mr. Holyoake intended the letter for publication.

HENRY PASH.—Your view is expressed ably and temperately, but we cannot accept it. We object to religious teaching altogether in schools supported out of rates or taxes. In some respects, of course, the Church is less orthodox than Dissent. We do not believe, however, that the average parson is much influenced by the writings of men like Canon Driver.

P. SMITH.—Thanks for cutting. See paragraph.

J. F. BIRKHEAD, 142 Ilkestone-road, Radford, Nottingham, will supply the *Freethinker* and all other Secular literature, and also display a contents sheet of this journal.

F. JONES.—Mr. Foote began lecturing at the age of twenty-three, but did not devote himself to the platform till two years later. He hopes to visit Stanley, with other northern places, during a lecture tour he is contemplating.

J. KEAST.—See paragraph. We should like to see more activity at Bristol.

J. T. BLANCHARD.—Too late, and long, for this week. In our next. Sorry to hear you are unwell.

A. STANLEY.—In our next.

J. SEDDON.—The announcement will be more useful next week, nearer the course of lectures.

S. HILL.—We do not recollect the text. You have probably made a mistake. Thanks for cutting. See paragraph.

C. HARPUR.—No room in this number. Next week.

MRS. HARWOOD.—Thanks for the copy of Hasting's lecture.

W. D. ROLLY.—It ought to have been inserted. Shall appear.

F. B.—Thanks. May be useful. Hope to fill a corner with it.

W. G. CHRISTIE, Hull, in reference to the Rev. Cortlandt Myers' statement, that "the lips of God" censure the spending of wealth on pleasure, points to Ecclesiastes iv. 4-10, and adds: "If these verses do not enjoin us to benefit by the good things of this life while we have the chance, I should like to know what does."

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: W. Gregory, 5s.; Daniel Baker, £2 2s.; G. Willock, 4s.; H. A. Lupton, 10s.; Manchester Branch, £2 4s., collected at Mr. Foote's Lecture.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Herts Leader—Watford Observer—New York World—Cassadagan—New York Journal—Lindsey Star—Chat—Northern Gossip—Johannesburg Star—Echo—Two Worlds—Newcastle Daily Journal—Torch of Reason—Liberty—Opon Court—Progressive Thinker—Iconoclast—Reading Observer—Froidonker—Der Arme Teufel—Bolton Sunbeam—New York Public Opinion—Southern Times—Morpeth Herald—Brooklyn Eagle—Liberator—Crescent—Isle of Man Times—East London Observer—Sheffield and Rotherham Independent.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### SPECIAL.

#### THE LECTURE SCHEME.

It is nearly six months since I made any special appeal on behalf of my Lecture Scheme, though the work has been going on under it all the time—not as energetically and extensively, however, as I could wish. Several courses of week-night lectures have been delivered in south-west Scotland. Mr. Watts is delivering another course of lectures there this week. Mr. Cohen gave nearly twenty free lectures, in various parts of the country, during my absence in America. He has just handed me a list of thirteen lectures delivered under my Scheme since Christmas—at Carlton, Blackburn, Ox Hill, South Shields, Chester-le-Street, Felling, and several places in Scotland. He is also giving some lectures under the Scheme in the West of England and in South Wales. I have also arranged with Mr. H. Snell to deliver some Freethought lectures in the North of England during his tour under the auspices of an economical Trust which is managed by the Fabian Society. Mr. Heaford and Mr. Moss have also done some work under the Scheme, but they are too much engaged in London for many country engagements.

In every case I have paid the lecturers for their services, and paid them reasonably.

During last summer I secured Mr. Cohen's services for the open-air lecturing in London, paying him a living wage from May to September inclusive; and I am desirous to do the same this year.

It is no use saying that I am "running" this Scheme myself. I am doing so because no one else is prepared to face the task. The Glasgow Conference negated a motion for taking it out of my hands. Of course I shall be happy to lay down the burden whenever others are prepared to carry it. Meanwhile, I shall not be deterred by grumblers who criticize everything and help nothing.

If the work is to go on, however, I must have the means. I cannot make bricks without straw and also without mortar. For some time I have been taxing my own slender resources sooner than let the work drop. I cannot do this any longer. I therefore appeal to all who wish to see this work continued, at least until the next Conference. Let them send me their subscriptions forthwith. Those who can give a pound or more should give it promptly. Those who can only give a shilling should give that cheerfully. Every penny I receive will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

The result of this appeal will be a test of whether I should continue to operate the scheme. If I must drop it, I must; only I shall then say that I have done my duty, while others have failed in theirs. G. W. FOOTE.

### SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE'S lecture on "The Crescent and the Cross in Crete" drew a large audience to the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Prior to the lecture he gave a reading of Byron's "Isles of Greece," which was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (February 28). His subject will be "The Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund: with Remarks on Christian, Heathen, and Secular Hospitals, and on the Necessity of Public Control of such Institutions."

Mr. Foote's debate with the Rev. W. T. Lee at Bristol has had to be postponed. Mr. Treasure made the mistake of not getting the posters done by a local printer, which is always the best plan. He sent his order to Bradford—he says to the *Truthseeker* Company—and never got it executed. Of course it is very annoying. Mr. Foote and Mr. Lee will arrange for the debate to take place at an early date.

The Birmingham Branch wished to have a dinner in honor

of Mr. Daniel Baker on his birthday early in March. Mr. Foote was requested to attend the gathering, and he promised to do so. Unfortunately, however, the dinner was to be postponed in consequence of Mr. Baker's indisposition. We hope our old friend will soon be well enough to foregather with his admirers.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times last Sunday in Liverpool. He had a very hearty reception. The audience in the morning was rather small, not over a hundred being present; but in the afternoon there was a much better gathering, and in the evening the hall was full. Friends were present from the surrounding districts. Some discussion followed the afternoon and evening lectures.

Mr. Watts is lecturing this week in the district of Glasgow under Mr. Foote's scheme, and to-day, Sunday, February 28, he speaks three times in Glasgow. Next week Mr. Watts will give our readers an account of his week's "mission" in Scotland.

The *New York Journal* says: "Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll lectured at the Harlem Opera House last night before the largest audience that has been known in that place of entertainment since its opening night. Every box and seat was occupied, the aisles were crowded in the rear, and hundreds of people were turned away." When the clergy inform their audiences that the influence of Ingersoll is waning, it is evident that the wish is father to the thought, and that the thought is foreign to the fact.

This is how the Colonel referred to Dr. Abbott's recent utterance on Jonah: "Did you hear of the awful utterances of the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott the other day? How he actually had the courage and honesty to admit that for Jonah to live and thrive in the belly of a fish for three days and nights and emerge in excellent health was absurd? That shows that the pulpit is slowly but surely growing a bit honest in its dealings with the people. But, lo, the following Sunday this honest preacher was execrated from pretty nearly half the pulpits in the country."

"But my hope for the pulpit was somewhat rudely shattered," said the speaker a little later, "when I read that Dr. Abbott had declared that he still believed in miracles; presumably that he still believed that Lazarus was risen from the dead; that Elijah rose to heaven in a chariot of fire, when his own good sense would tell him that, if Elijah's companion had come back to town bearing Elijah's overcoat and Elijah's watch, the Grand Jury, after listening to the chariot story, would very promptly indict this companion. So long as Dr. Abbott, for the sake of orthodoxy or the opinions of his fellow clergymen, consents to believe in these 'miracles,' I cannot altogether welcome him to the folds of honest thinkers, but I think that he made a stride with Jonah."

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured to a large and appreciative audience in the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday evening. The chair was taken by Mr. Sydney Gimson, who has just recovered from an illness.

A crowded audience gathered in the Secular Hall, New Brompton, on Sunday last, to hear Mr. H. P. Ward's lecture, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform." Mr. Ward received frequent applause, and he has made an excellent impression upon a New Brompton audience.

Since the admission of women to the London examinations in 1882 more than fifty have taken degrees, and many have won gold medals for proficiency in obstetrics, anatomy, and materia medica.

A circular of a "Speling Leeg" has been sent us. Its objects are declared to be "The reformashon ov English Speling for scool purposes, tu pres upon the Educashon Department the introducshon ov a Rashonal sistem ov speling, tu urj the Pres and privet personz tu adopt modifi-cashonz graduaily. Discushon or promoshon ov skeemz, with new leterz, tu be deferd until Educashon Department desidez tu act, and public sentiment iz in more jeneral simpaty thairwith."

The *New York World* chronicles with satisfaction the fact that 11,000 people visited the Battery Aquarium on a recent Sunday. The *World* says that "every collection of books for the public use ought to be accessible on Sunday. It is the only day of leisure for the vast majority of the people. The city and private benevolence should unite in increasing and multiplying the means of innocent recreation and education on the first day of the week."

The Bolton Branch of the National Secular Society has caused to be printed in the local press the speech of Mr. J. Shufflebotham, of the Bolton School Board, in answer to Father O'Brien on "Voluntary Schools." Beyond being of

much local interest, Mr. Shufflebotham's address has many good points on the general subject of education.

Mr. Cohen's lectures at Bristol on Sunday were most successful from one point of view; they gave the greatest satisfaction. Unfortunately, the audiences were not as large as they should have been. We hope the projected debate between Messrs. Foote and Lee will stir up the local Freethinkers to renewed activity.

The Newcastle Branch holds a monthly members' meeting this afternoon (Feb. 28) in Northumberland Hall. All members should try to attend, and those in arrear should pay up their subscriptions. The committee desire to arrange for some energetic local propaganda.

Mr. Forder will lecture again, for the first time since his illness in October, at Camberwell Hall on Sunday evening. He will review the new book, *The Bible and the Child*.

Arrangements are now being made for the Annual Children's Party in London. The place and date will soon be announced. Meanwhile we venture to make a fresh appeal for subscriptions, which should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, honorary treasurer, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. There ought not to be much begging for such an object. The children look forward to this gathering, and their elders should meet the expenses with more than readiness—with positive pleasure.

Mr. E. C. Reichwald, corresponding secretary of the American Secular Union, writing to Mr. Foote on Feb. 9 from Chicago, says: "We have a healthy organization in Chicago now. Since the Congress we have enrolled many new members. Many Chicago friends are making inquiries about you since you left. You are held in high esteem here, and should you ever come this way again you would receive a rousing reception."

The *Torch of Reason* is one of our most welcome exchanges. It is the propagandist organ of the Secular Churches in Oregon. We learn from it that the Secular movement is progressing out there in the far West. A Liberal University is already started in connection with it. We wish this enterprise all success, and hope the West and East of America will keep up a brisk rivalry in Secular organization.

Mr. Balfour has done one good thing. He has conferred a Civil List pension of £200 a year on Dr. W. A. Hunter, late member for Aberdeen, whose health has completely broken down. Dr. Hunter is a man of very great capacity and a most advanced thinker. Mr. Bradlaugh held him in the highest admiration and esteem.

Newcastle-on-Tyne Secularists, and other friends of Sunday reform, have held a crowded meeting of ratepayers at Heaton to protest against the condition stipulated by Alderman Stephenson, who has offered to provide a Free Library if it is only closed on Sundays. A resolution was carried against this stipulation by a large majority. We understand that five councillors have promised to oppose this Sunday-closing scheme, and a lively time is expected at the next Corporation meeting.

The Wood Green Branch held its annual meeting on the 7th inst. The secretary elected is Mr. W. Porter, 24 West Beach-road, Wood Green, N. A strong working committee was appointed, and the Branch is full of hope for the ensuing year.

The National Secular Society's manifesto on the Government Education Bill, which appears in this week's *Freethinker*, is also printed as a leaflet for general distribution. Copies can be obtained by applying to Miss Vance, at the Society's office, 377 Strand, London, W.C. The manifesto is being sent to all the leading newspapers in England.

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

## THE GOVERNMENT EDUCATION BILL.

## MANIFESTO BY THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

THE proposal of the present Government to give a further sum of £616,000 annually to the so-called "Voluntary" schools, besides exempting them from rates and taxes, while doing nothing for necessitous Board schools, demands on the part of the National Secular Society a renewed assertion of its principles.

We hold that the State should have absolutely nothing to do with the teaching of religion. Secular instruction, upon which all are agreed, should alone be given in schools supported by public money, whether derived from municipal rates or from imperial taxation. The resources of the entire community, comprising a vast variety of forms of opinion, cannot justly be used for sectarian purposes.

An endowment of religion in the public schools is really an endowment of the Churches, and chiefly of the Church of England, which has already the command of national revenues amounting to several millions a year. State aid to Catholic schools is State aid to the Catholic Church. State aid to Wesleyan schools is State aid to the Wesleyan Church. Subsidies to denominational schools are indeed the worst form of State patronage of religion. By this means the children are taken advantage of in their mental helplessness, and the nation's schools become the recruiting-ground of churches and chapels.

It is idle to talk about the protection afforded by the Conscience Clause. Nonconformists declare it to be a delusion and a snare when they are compelled, as they are in so many of the rural districts, to send their children to Church schools. Singling out little children as objects of suspicion, mistrust, and contumely, is a scandalous method of protecting the religious susceptibilities of their parents.

School teachers are not the proper persons to teach religion. Religious communities should teach it in their own way and at their own expense, or the duty should devolve upon parents in their homes. Only a portion of five days in the week is claimed for secular education; plenty of time remains, therefore, in which to instruct the children in the religion affected by their parents or guardians. At present the brightest hour of every one of the five days is consumed in religious teaching. This is not the plan pursued by the leading States of Europe or by the majority of our kinsmen in the Colonies, and its continuance in England will only tend to handicap us in the race of civilization.

Unfortunately the opposition to the educational policy of the present Government is weakened by the recreancy of the Nonconformists to the great principle of religious equality. While they support religious teaching in Board schools they have no logical ground for resisting its extension in "Voluntary" schools. If the State is to assist religion at all, the question of how it is to do so is only one of ways and means. It is not a question of principle, but a question of policy, and the wish of the Churches is rightfully predominant.

In the struggle of the great religious parties for ascendancy, our voice may be as futile as a cry in the wilderness. Still we raise it in the interest of sound principle and of the ultimate welfare of this nation. We call especially upon the working classes to oppose the most insidious form of priestcraft. The anxiety of the Churches is not for the real education of the children of the people, but for their being trained as future members of religious denominations. The interest of the Churches in this matter is purely professional; and this fact should be patent to English workmen, as it is to the workmen in the leading nations of the continent of Europe.

By Order of the Executive.

G. W. FOOTE (*President*).

## Rather Racey.

A city missionary saw—  
For so the story's told—  
A jockey holding in his "paw"  
A Bible—Version, Old.

"What seekest thou," the good man cried,  
"In virtue's only fount?"  
"I seek," the horsey one replied,  
"The Sermon on the Mount!"

J. M.

## SECULAR EDUCATION AND CRIME.

BISHOP MOORHOUSE, of Manchester, is perpetually declaring that Secular Education in Victoria has been a terrible stimulus to crime, and his Colonial experience induces many people to regard him as an authority. He is freely cited as such in the education controversy in this country. We have pleasure, therefore, in reproducing the following letter from the *Daily News* of Friday, February 19. The writer is Mr. Arthur Clayden, the historian. Freethinkers should keep this letter by them for use in future discussions:—

"In the forthcoming struggle over the public school question the most arduous task will be dealing with misrepresentations. A few months ago one of our leading clergymen, Canon Sanderson, in seeking to deepen the impending gloom consequent on the 'Godless Board schools,' gave us some appalling pictures from Colonial experience. The public school system of Victoria, he said, was producing wholesale demoralization, and in support of this he quoted figures from an address of the Bishop of Manchester, who for nine years had been Bishop of Melbourne. He also quoted the Bishop as saying that during those years 'the Government had been doing all it could to teach both parents and children practically that religious instruction was a subject that might be neglected.'

"My fifteen years' experience of New Zealand, where the same system of purely secular instruction in the State schools is in operation, was so diametrically opposed to this Victorian experience that I was induced to write to one of the leading newspapers of Melbourne, the *Age*, for definite information on the subject. The editor has courteously forwarded three copies of the *Age*, in which Dr. Moorhouse's pessimist deliverances are ably dealt with. From those articles it is quite clear that the statements quoted by Canon Sanderson are of the same value as those with which the clerical opponents of Board schools are making us so familiar here in the Mother Country.

"The fatal error of the clerics is in attributing to education what has about as much to do with it as the movement of the stars has with the state of the market. It is a mare's nest pure and simple. Exactly what those of us who are most opposed to religious teaching in Board schools have always urged has taken place in these colonies—the various Churches have been stimulated to ever-increasing earnestness in the discharge of their obligations, so that, to give the words of the *Age* leader writer, 'When the State confined the operations of its servants to secular instruction only, the religious bodies were put upon their mettle, and the Sunday school system received a well-marked impetus. According to the denomination returns for 1891, there were in the Colony (Victoria) 143,571 Sunday-school pupils, taught by 17,983 teachers; and when it is remembered that the methods of teaching have improved with the growth of the Sunday schools, pious people need not have any fear that the Colony is about to be precipitated into an abyss of Atheism and criminality by the operation of the secular system of education in the State schools.'

"As the population of Victoria is only about one-thirteenth that of the United Kingdom, the Sunday school figures given above are equal to 4,307,130 Sunday-school pupils and 537,930 teachers in the old home. It is somewhat awkward for Dr. Moorhouse's argument that, whereas in New South Wales a certain modicum of religious instruction is given in the State schools, the statistics of crime are considerably higher than in Victoria. In 1889 the arrests and summonses per 1,000 of the population in Victoria were, for offences against the person, 3.63, and for offences against property 4.68; and in New South Wales they were 7.58 and 7.11 respectively, or nearly double.

"In West Australia the figures were still higher, being 8.80 and 12.17 respectively, or nearly two and a half times higher than Bishop Moorhouse's terrible Victoria, the religious instruction notwithstanding. As if to thrice slay the slain, the Victorian leader writer quotes statistics to show that the attempt to connect crime with any system of education is utterly fallacious. In New South Wales, where both the Anglican and Romish Churches have a stronghold of the public education, out of a total of 38,568 persons arrested for offences of various kinds in 1890, 14,595 were adherents of the Church of England, and 17,131 Roman Catholics, or a total of 31,726, leaving only 6,842 to be apportioned among all the other sects, who do not specially promote religious education in the ordinary day schools.

"I close my letter with the temperate note of caution of the *Age* writer, who urges the Bishops to ask themselves the question, 'Whether it is safe to assume crime to be the product of any particular form of national education?'

"Young man," said the evangelist, "do you ever give any thought to your future?" "You bet I do, replied the young man, "and it's all right. The girl I'm going to marry has a million."

## DAGONET'S GHOST STORY.

OF course, the whole discussion as to ghosts is utterly and supremely ridiculous. To accept the possibility of dead people coming out of the grave, getting rid of their shrouds and putting on everyday clothes for the purpose of promenading other people's residences, is to reduce the theory of a future existence to a vulgar "galanty" show. If a ghost can walk, there is no reason it should not talk; and if a ghost could talk, the grand secret would have been given away long ago.

All these spooks and apparitions, if they are not imaginary, are optical illusions: Pepper's famous Ghost Illusion accidentally reproduced in private life. Many years ago I lived in a house that had a haunted apartment, which we called the Blue Room. It was in the Adelaide-road, and the garden ran down to the mouth of the railway tunnel which goes under Primrose Hill. As children we always crept past that room in fear and trembling after nightfall, because we had heard from the servants and others whispers of weird things that had happened in it.

The first person to see our apparition was an aunt of mine who had come to stay with us for a week. Sleeping in the Blue Room, she awoke suddenly in the night, and, starting up in bed, saw a dim white figure advancing towards her. It came nearer and nearer, and she heard an unearthly creaking which she concluded was ghostly groaning. She fell back in the bed and hid her head under the clothes. When she looked up again the apparition had vanished.

She was so terrified that next morning she left us and went home. Nothing could induce her to pass another night in the haunted Blue Room. A few weeks afterwards some friends from Leeds, a gentleman and his wife, came; and, the Blue Room being our guest chamber, they were put into it. The next morning at breakfast Mr. M—— looked very white and ill. Asked what was the matter, he stated that just as the clock was striking four he awoke, and, hearing a strange noise, sat up in bed. To his horror, he saw a white figure coming slowly towards him. He roused his wife, and she saw it too. But just as they were going to seize the bell-rope the apparition uttered a deep groan and disappeared. That morning the Leeds lady and her husband quitted our inhospitable roof for ever.

It now became necessary for the apparition of the Blue Room to be taken seriously. Among our friends was a gentleman popularly supposed to have nerves of iron. He also did not believe in ghosts. He offered to sleep in the room and investigate the phenomena of its ghostly visitor. He retired to rest beaming with confidence. The ghost would not get the best of him. At a few minutes past four in the morning the house was disturbed by wild shrieks from the Blue Room. When my alarmed relatives reached the haunted apartment they found the man with the iron nerves sitting up in bed jabbering incoherently in his terror and his night robe. Brandy was administered, and then he was assisted to dress. He went down into the library and finished the rest of the night in an easy chair, insisting that my father should sit up with him to keep him company. The apparition had appeared to him exactly as it had appeared to all the others. He described it as draped in white, and he swore that it moved towards him until it was quite close, groaned and retreated, and then disappeared.

Then my mother, who was a very brave woman, and absolutely refused to believe in ghosts at any price, sat down and thought the thing out, and made up her mind that she would see the matter through. So she arranged that two members of the household should remain up all night and sit outside the door with lighted candles ready to rush in the moment she called out. At 4.15 they were hastily summoned to enter the haunted chamber. My mother had been awakened by a groaning sound, and, starting up in bed, had seen the white draped figure. She had instantly called for the Investigation Committee with the lighted candles. The moment they entered with lights the situation was made clear.

Along one side of the room stood a long old-fashioned mahogany wardrobe, with a big centre door fitted with looking-glass. This door, evidently not quite secure in its fastening, had swung outwards on its groaning hinges, and the person starting up in bed was reflected in white night attire in the glass. As the door swung slowly forward the reflection, of course, came nearer. When the door reached a certain point it swung slowly back again and closed itself with a click.

The cause of the swinging of this door, and the cause of its always swinging about the same time, was this. At four o'clock one of the great North-Western expresses came with a roar and a rattle on its way to Euston out of the tunnel, which was at the bottom of our garden. The rattle of the train caused the house to shake slightly, and the shake just loosened the catch of the wardrobe door, and caused it to swing forward in this ghostly manner, and then to swing back again. The apparition of the Blue Room had been in each instance the alarmed occupant's own reflection in the swinging plate-glass wardrobe door.

## BOOK CHAT.

*The True Life of Sir Richard Burton*, by his niece, should recall attention to the *Kasidah* of Hájî Abdú-el-Yezdí, in which Burton most fully revealed his opinions. The work has only been obtainable at a very high price in England, but has been now issued in America at a dollar, and can be obtained from T. B. Mosher, Portland, Maine, who issues the American edition of *The City of Dreadful Night*, Fitzgerald's and McCarthy's versions of *The Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, and other choice works.

The edition used is that published by Quaritch in 1880. The work had been written twenty-seven years before, when Burton was fresh from his Mecca pilgrimage. It had been privately printed, and only the tardy success of Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam* led to its publication. The *Kasidah* is literally "A Lay of the Higher Law," and in it, under the thin disguise of an Arabian philosopher, Burton gives utterance to his own deepest thoughts on life and religion. For the former he believes self-cultivation to be its sufficient object, and he dismisses entirely all the dogmas of the latter. His lesson is one of humility.

What know'st thou, man, of Life? and, yet, forever 'twixt the womb, the grave,  
Thou pratest of the Coming Life; of Heaven and Hell thou fain must rave.  
The world is old, and thou art young; the world is large, and thou art small;  
Cease, atom of a moment's span, to hold thyself an All-in-all!

His teaching is summed up in the lines:—

Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from none but self expect applause—  
He noblest lives and noblest dies who makes and keeps his self-made laws;  
All other life is living death, a world where none but phantoms dwell,  
A breath, a wind, a sound, a voice, a tinkling of the camel-bell.

The volume is very neatly got up, printed on Van Gelder paper, and is bound in flexible Japan vellum. Altogether it does great credit to the taste of Mr. Mosher, who stands prominent among those who have sought to introduce the American public to the very best of select literature. Admirers of Burton will not fail to secure the volume among their choicest treasures.

The late Arsène Houssaye, the French critic, had this quotation from Pythagoras, "Hold thy peace, or say something which is better than silence," inscribed over the door of his house. It may be remarked, by the way, that Houssaye wrote more than eighty volumes of prose and poetry. Carlyle, also voluminous, was fond of expatiating on the virtue of silence. On this subject he would talk down all comers.

Students of Thoreau will be interested to hear that Messrs. Houghton and Mifflin, of Boston, have just published a new edition of *Cape Cod*, with marginal illustrations from colored sketches done on the spot by Amelia M. Watson. Another interesting memorial is being compiled by Mr. A. W. Hosmer, of Concord, in the form of an illustrated copy of Mr. H. S. Salt's *Life of Thoreau* (Walter Scott), interleaved with over a hundred photographs of persons and places associated with Thoreau's name, autograph letters, and paintings of favorite flowers. It is a striking testimony to the growing influence of the "Rural Humbug" of forty years back.

The Labor Press, Manchester, will shortly issue a volume of essays entitled *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, which will contain contributions to the Socialistic thought of the day by various writers, including Dr. Alfred R. Wallace, Henry S. Salt, William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, Tom Mann, Edward Carpenter, Grant Allen, and others. The topics dealt with will cover a large field—the Land Question, Trade Unions, Co-operation, Parliamentary Action, Art, Literature, Education, etc. The book is being edited by Mr. Edward Carpenter.

The purport of *A Plea for the Unborn*, by Henry Smith (Watts & Co.; 1s.), is explained on the title-page. It is "an argument that children could, and therefore should, be born with a sound mind in a sound body, and that man may become perfect by means of selection and stirpiculture." To become perfect is a large order, and Mr. Grant Allen much questions if any committee could regulate "falling in love" to produce such good results as when it is done by instinct. Yet the plea for some regulation is not without force. It would certainly be disastrous for man to breed his animals chiefly from the worst specimens. What is practicable is to form an enlightened public opinion, and Dr. Smith's book is a valuable contribution on a most important

subject. It is nicely got up, with plenty of margin for those who care to annotate the text.

\* \* \*

The Rev. H. D. Rawnsley, who is ever ready with his sonnets, has had one addressed to himself as under:—

Hail, universal sonneteer of Time!  
 "A sonnet is a moment's monument,"  
 So rare Rossetti wrote. Thou, more intent,  
 Canst write one every moment. Perched sublime,  
 Thou swoonest hungering on each virtue, crime,  
 War, peace, storm, calm—what'er the last event—  
 A poet's death—Armenia's life-blood spent—  
 All, all is quarry for thy revenging rhyme.

Rawnsley, methinks that if the Day of Doom  
 Should whelm this world in sudden fiery gloom,  
 And hurl the ruined firmament upon it—  
 Thou, by the lightning's momentary glare,  
 Wouldst seize thy common-place book, then and there,  
 To write the all-inevitable sonnet.

\* \* \*

The *East London Observer*, February 20, noticing *Foot-steps of the Past*, says: "This book fulfils a distinct want. Too often the results of modern research in folk-lore and superstition are hidden away from the student with moderate time and moderate means at his disposal, in bulky and costly volumes that demand much study. Mr. Wheeler has brought together in the present volume a *résumé* of the latest theories and facts which go to make the Agnostic position. In chapters which treat of Animism, Fetishism, Totemism, Religious Dances, Nature Festivals, etc., he traces the growth of religious systems, and, by means of quotations drawn from a large number of authors, endeavors to show that Christianity is but a development of older worships. Among the most interesting chapters in the book are those that treat of the Nature Festivals, Lent, Easter, May Day, and Christmas. On the whole, Mr. Wheeler is fair and unprejudiced, and we can cordially recommend the book to those who desire to become better acquainted with Agnostic teaching, whether as friends or foes. Indeed, next to Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, we do not know of a volume more marked for its able generalization of historical and natural facts, and its skilful introduction of illustration."

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE PREVENTION OF PREMATURE BURIAL BY MECHANICAL CONTRIVANCES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The reality of the danger of premature burial may be partly gauged and comprehended by the constantly recurring narrow escapes of persons resuscitated (after being properly medically certified as dead), which are reported from every civilized country, including our own; also by the records of such cases in medical journals and in treatises on Forensic Medicine, but, perhaps, most of all by the remarkable bibliography of works dealing with the subject to be found in a volume entitled *Premature Burial, and How it may be Prevented*, recently published by Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein, the titles of which alone occupy twenty-five closely-printed pages in small type. Another proof of this is the number of ingenious contrivances invented by benevolent mechanics for enabling persons buried in a state of trance to communicate with the outer world. One of the latest of these is that devised by Count Karnicé, a Russian philanthropist, in the shape of a coffin provided with a tube, the lower end of which is placed a little above the chest of the presumed corpse, while the upper end rises above the surface of the ground. The slightest respiration leads to the loud peal of an electric bell, arranged at the top of the tube; while, at the same moment, a small flag is shot out for the purpose of indicating to anyone who may be on the watch the precise grave at which the phenomenon has occurred. Simultaneously, air and light penetrate into the coffin, the tenant of which can converse, without the least effort or difficulty, with the persons who have hastened to his rescue. An effort is being made to induce the Municipal Council of Paris to order the adoption of this mechanical safeguard against live burial. In England, until quite recently, there has been no security whatever, owing to our lax laws and customs. An Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial has, however, just been organized to meet this urgent need, the Society undertaking to see that burial or cremation of its members is not permitted until dissolution is unequivocally established.

I shall be pleased to send printed particulars to any of the readers of the *Freethinker* on receipt of a stamped, addressed envelope.

JAMES R. WILLIAMSON.

42 Stibington-street, London, N.W.

### SHOULD THE N. S. S. HAVE A PRESIDENT?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am pleased you have opened your valuable and interesting columns to the discussion of the above question. I reply thereto, and say by all means and emphatically Yes! Of what size and influence would have been the N. S. S. to-day if there had been no President in years past? It would in all probability, as a society, have vanished ere this into thin air. If we look back on the past achievements of the human race, or examine the details and successes of any one body, in whatever sphere, the most formidable and the mightiest have been that of the banded few who possessed the all-essential leader. And so with the N. S. S. If we are to accomplish anything worthy the name for the cause of liberty and progress, we must have at the helm a man and a leader, and, as Colonel Ingersoll said of Courtlandt Palmer, a man possessed of a free and independent mind, one who gives and asks reasons, who demands freedom and gives what he demands, and who refuses to be slave or master. We are not all born to be leaders, but we can show our earnestness and sincerity as true Secularists for the cause of Freethought by rallying round the N. S. S. President, and rendering that support which will cement and make the ties of friendship more strong to fight down the scourge of superstition, and be a host to be reckoned with.

R. UFFERN.

SIR,—That there must be a "head" of every organization I think experience abundantly proves, even in the most even-running concerns. How much more so does an organization like the N. S. S., which is often beset with "difficult situations," requiring a competent intellect and swift action, which can only be available by having a President. Any organization of members, having selected their President, place him in a position in which, as an individual, he has greater facilities to benefit the cause than "a body of men"; and, after selecting their President for his ability and merit (for good or evil), they are committed to his ruling for the *time agreed*, and should loyally submit to the action of their selection, more especially so as any alteration could be made yearly, if so desired.

T. FISHER.

### ABRACADABRA'S CRITICISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Permit me to thank Abracadabra for his clear and candid examination of so many of the so-called evidences of the New Testament in favor of different dogmas of the various Christian sects, and particularly for his suggestive application of the doctrine of probabilities to various suspicious similarities between the writings of one so-called apostle and others. I think Abracadabra may find further excellent use for the application of the said doctrine in the course of his continued contributions to your worthy paper.

It is quite certain that, were mankind sufficiently logical to base its beliefs on their probability—their prove-ability—it would no longer believe in gods, devils, heaven, hell, angels, spirits, miracles, the evidences for the existence of any or all of these being such that no man of sense would deem it sufficient to justify him in even taking the question of their existence into serious consideration. Indeed, no direct evidence in favor of the belief in any of these figments of man's dreams exists at all. As Jasper Petulengro asked George Borrow, "How do you know anything about the soul? Have you ever seen a soul, brother!" so we are entitled to ask like questions concerning all the gods, demons, etc., of "theology." George Borrow, agent though he was—*pour rire?*—for the S. P. C. K., was obliged to answer "No" to Jasper's question. So to our similar questions regarding alleged Christian gods, devils, hells, heavens, and the motley brood of supernatural underlings, the answer is: "No man hath seen these alleged beings, or knows anything more about them than about their predecessors of Olympus, or Hekatompylos, of Walhalla, or Benares." We know absolutely nothing whatever about "them," nor have we ever known, nor are we likely to know. If they stand for anything, they stand for human traits variously personified, deified, or diabolified—mere abstractions, the creatures of man and not his creators, and among the least creditable of his creations. The man who first learned to light a fire was a far greater man than he who first created a God.

PAGAN.

A little girl who had been religiously brought up was staying with some Freethought friends, and when put to bed wished to say her prayers as usual. Her hostess could not help her, so she said: "Please, Dod, 'scuse me; I've forgot my prayer, and I'm staying with friends who don't know any; Amen!" When she saw her Freethinking friend doing something on Sunday, she wished to help, and said: "I don't mind going to hell if you go."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund."  
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): February 27, at 8, Election of Committee. February 28, at 7.15, A. B. Moss, "The Evolution of Man." March 1, at 8.30, Adjourned annual general meeting.  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, R. Forder, "The Bible and the Child."  
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, F. J. Gould, "A Popular Story among the Early Christians."  
NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Athenæum, Camden-road, N.W.: 7, J. A. Hobson, M.A., "The Root of Economic Injustice."  
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: 11.15, Sunday-school; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "John Ruskin."  
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Shelley."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.  
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 8—weather permitting—H. P. Ward, "What Shall we Do with the Criminal?"

### COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, A Sketch will be given entitled "The Gamester."  
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): C. Watts.  
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A lecture.  
LEEDS (Compton's Hotel, Briggate): 7, Mr. Chadwick, "Secularism and Socialism."  
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, J. Roberts, "The Pioneers of Evolution."  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. Stanley, "A Ramble in Wales and Ascent of Snowdon." Lantern views.  
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street): 3, Members' meeting—important.  
PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): C. Cohen.  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Musical and other Recitals. Members' and friends' dance every Wednesday evening at 8.  
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.45, W. Cook, "Branch Federation."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—February 28, Plymouth. March 7, Cardiff; 15 to 21, Manchester; 28, Bradford.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—February 28, Bradlaugh Club. March 7, New Brompton. April 4, m., Hyde Park; a., Harrow-road; e., Hammersmith.

## POSITIVISM.

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

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

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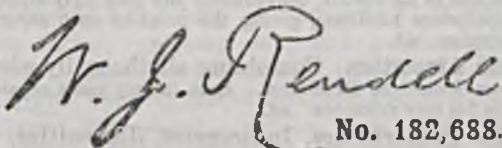
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