

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XVII.—No. 15

SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1897.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

JESUS CHRIST IN SOUTH AFRICA.

JESUS CHRIST has figured in countless sermons. Myriads of preachers have supplemented the New Testament, and told their congregations precisely what he would say and do in given circumstances. Of course they have very largely differed from each other, but that only gives an additional beauty to their dogmatism.

Jesus Christ has also figured in a good many poems, notably in Milton's great epic, where the divine Father and Son carry on conversations which would hardly be creditable to a pair of distinguished human beings.

Suppose a writer were to put Shakespeare in an epic or dramatic poem. How could he possibly succeed? So long as the presence of the mighty bard were only indicated, everything might run smoothly; but when he is made to speak, what writer could furnish him with sentiments and language of adequate dignity and beauty? To make the effort would be to challenge a fatal comparison. Even the great Landor, in one of his three long masterpieces, only introduced Shakespeare as a youth of eighteen, when his genius was but callow. Landor himself, with all his resources of thought and expression, would never have dared to write imaginary words for the mouth of the author of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. And if the attempt would be absurd in the case of a finite and mortal genius, how inconceivably absurd must it be in the case of infinite and eternal wisdom! Whoever tries to make Omniscience talk must have a great conceit of his own powers, unless he has failed to realize the nature of his undertaking. To compare small things with great, it reminds us of the cheap novelettes, in which the supernally handsome hero, with intellect to match his beauty, generally opens his mouth to discourse like a jackass.

The absurdity is, if possible, still greater when deity is introduced in novels. Jesus as a man might be brought in, perhaps, without absolute disaster; but to bring him in as a god, and make him deliver a new revelation, is to court ruin and invite derision. Mrs. Lynn Lynton was clever enough to avoid all the difficulties of the case. She invented a new Jesus Christ by putting the same spirit and opinions into a young Cornishman, who tried to remove mountains by faith, and found they would not budge, and finally got kicked to death by a brutal and bigoted crowd, incited to violence by a clergyman. True, she called her book *The True History of Joshua Davidson*, which was sufficiently suggestive; but she did not revive Jesus Christ, and make him act and talk—she created his counterpart, and placed him in different conditions. Marie Corelli, however, has not Mrs. Linton's discretion, just as she has not Mrs. Linton's genius. She rushes in where her betters fear to tread. She brings Jesus Christ into her *Barabbas*, and takes him right through his trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. According to tradition, based perhaps on prophecy, the real Jesus Christ, if he ever existed, was not remarkable for comeliness. There was nothing about him to take the eye; although he is not said to have been quite as unattractive as Saint Paul, who was described as a little, lame, hook-nosed, bald-headed Jew. But an uncomely Jesus Christ does not suit a glowing lady like Miss Corelli, so she pictures him with the genius of a Plato, and the muscles of a Sandow; gloating over his "bare rounded arms," his "perfect beauty," his "mighty muscular force," the "wondrous curve" of his lips, and the "polished

alabaster" of his body, as he stood naked for his crucifixion.

None of this tawdry stuff appears in Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. She does not indulge in physical descriptions, and she makes Jesus Christ talk as a man. But in the background is his godhead, or at least his supernaturalism, and this is the chief defect of her book from the artistic point of view. The second great defect is, that her book is really a big political pamphlet against Mr. Cecil Rhodes. One-sided it must be, for the South African colossus, though rich and proud and not too scrupulous, can scarcely be the incarnate devil he is here represented. There must be—there is—another side to the picture; yet Jesus Christ is made the spokesman for Olive Schreiner's impeachment. This does not seem to us to be fair fighting. An attack upon a public man, especially in the hour of his trial, ought to be made soberly and directly, with chapter and verse for every count in the indictment. To cover him with contumely in a work of fiction is an easy triumph; from the nature of the case, too, the attack is unanswerable.

Olive Schreiner's book is, of course, well written. She has real genius, though it has largely deserted her on this occasion—for the book is a polemic. Her style is simple, vigorous, and direct. She suggests more than she says, which is always a fine characteristic. Her descriptive touches are most admirable, and some of her pathetic passages are full of truth and simplicity. They call the tears to one's eyes like the cry of a child in pain. But in some of her forensic passages—for such they are—she comes perilously near scolding.

Peter Halket is introduced to us in the first paragraph:—

"It was a dark night; a chill breath was coming from the east; not enough to disturb the blaze of Trooper Peter Halket's fire, yet enough to make it quiver. He sat alone beside it on the top of a koppie (a little hillock). All about was an impenetrable darkness; not a star was visible in the black curve over his head."

Trooper Peter Halket, whose second name was Simon—not Simon Peter, but Peter Simon—has lost his way, and has lit a fire to keep himself warm, and to scare off wild animals. Brooding over the fire, he thinks of the niggers he has shot, the black women he has been free with, and the wealth he hopes to amass, like Rhodes, Barnato, Beit, and the rest of them; also of his dear, good mother, a washerwoman in England. Presently he hears the step of naked feet, and gets ready to shoot; but it was lucky he did not, for the visitor was Jesus Christ, though Peter does not know it at first. Peter takes a liking to his companion, who sits with him by the fire, and unbosoms himself like a roystering, ambitious, covetous trooper, hating all niggers, though fond of black girls as cheap and not troublesome. Peter says that money rules there, and if God Almighty came along, and hadn't half-a-million shares, they wouldn't think much of him. The whites were going to have all the land, and make the niggers work for them. Presently the stranger asks: "Who gave you your land?" Peter says the Chartered Company. "And who gave it to them?" Peter says England. "Who gave the land to the men and women of England?" "Why, the Devil!" says Peter; "they said it was theirs, and of course it was." The stranger asks who gave the living people of the land to the men and women of England, and Peter replies by asking what is the use of the land without them. He calls the niggers rebels. "What is a rebel?" asks the stranger. "My Gawd!" says Peter, "you

must have lived out of the world if you don't know what a rebel is." The niggers didn't want the Chartered Company to have them; they are rebels because they are fighting against us, says Peter. The stranger asks whether the Armenians are rebels. Peter says No; the Turks had no business to conquer them; besides, they are Christians; further, if we don't help them, the Russians will. "What is a Christian?" asks the stranger.

"A Christian" (says Peter) is a man who believes in Heaven and Hell, and God and the Bible, and in Jesus Christ, that he'll save him from going to Hell, and if he believes he'll be saved, he will be saved."

A good, orthodox definition of Christianity, but enough to make the stranger sick.

Peter Halket's visitor informs him that he belongs to the strongest company on earth, including Buddhists, Mohammedans, Confucians, Freethinkers, Atheists, Christians, and Jews. Then he describes some of them. One is an old black woman of eighty, who gives her corn to a young black woman and her child, and dies of exhaustion herself in the cave where she is hiding from the whites, who have killed or dispersed her tribe. Another is a drinking, swearing employer, whose men always found him a good friend. Another is an honest preacher, who is shunned by his congregation for preaching against the Jameson raid and the ill-treatment of the natives. Another is a woman, who lived long, long ago, when people were cannibals. She would not eat man's flesh, and they killed her; but her martyrdom put a new thought into the heads of certain of her fellows, and they also refused man's flesh, until at last cannibalism died.

Gradually the stranger reveals himself, and leaves Peter Halket a changed man. Peter soon perishes, however, in trying to save the life of a poor nigger. It was a noble act, and his captain shot him for it. His body is buried by two friends, a Colonial and a young Englishman, an educated young fellow who has come to Africa to escape consumption. These two, who know what has occurred, are together in the dark in their tent.

"Do you believe in a God?" said the Englishman, suddenly.

"The Colonial started: 'Of course I do!'"

"I used to," said the Englishman; "I do not believe in your God; but I believe in something greater than I could understand, which moved in this earth, as your soul moves in your body. And I thought this worked in such wise, that the law of cause and effect, which holds in the physical world, held also in the moral: so that the thing we call justice ruled. I do not believe it any more. There is no God in Mashonaland."

"Oh, don't say that!" cried the Colonial, much distressed. "Are you going off your head, like poor Halket?"

"No; but there is no God," said the Englishman."

From a practical, not a metaphysical standpoint, this seems to us a most reasonable conclusion. We should like to know whether this part of the book is included in the praise so lavishly bestowed upon it by a long array of Church and Dissenting ministers. We should also like to know whether it is really the deliberate judgment of Olive Schreiner herself. This is a point upon which she should enlighten the public. It is vastly more important than a dispute over Mr. Cecil Rhodes and the Chartered Company. The acknowledgment that there is no God watching over this planet—however it may be in others—would cause a tremendous revolution in human affairs, compared with which the raid on the Transvaal and all its consequences sink into comparative insignificance.

God or no God, it is clear that Olive Schreiner believes that Jesus Christ is almost a minus quantity in South Africa, and we wish she would ask herself the reason. Perhaps she would find that Christianity is, and always was and always will be, an impossible creed. There is nothing practical about it. Its transcendental sentimentalities are mouthed on Sunday, but they have no influence on Monday morning. To shoot at the stars is to hit nothing, and a religion which teaches impossible virtues only promotes laxity among its devotees. Under Stoicism, said Emerson, every man was a Stoic; but in all Christendom where is the Christian? A pertinent question which has never been answered. If the Gospels be true, Jesus Christ himself did not, or could not, practise his own teaching.

G. W. FOOTE.

DR. GOLDWIN SMITH'S VIEWS.

PROFESSOR GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L., LL.D., occupies the anomalous but not altogether unique position of a Freethinker who is afraid of Freethought. He long since accepted Darwinism, which he first happily called the Ascent of Man, though timorous that it would affect the foundations of society. He rejects the Old Testament, and writes of it as the millstone round the neck of Christianity, oblivious of the fact that Christianity is historically based on Judaism, and that the New Testament is founded on the Old, to which it constantly appeals. He is now seeking to eliminate "the miraculous element in Christianity," unaware that it will then closely resemble the Irishman's "footless stocking without a leg." Nay, he evidently thinks that the residuum, when the supernatural is evaporated, if infinitesimal, will be infinitely precious. It will be precious little, at all events. Dr. Smith is dissatisfied with the evidence, as he has every reason to be. He remarks:—

"In the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul says that the risen Christ had appeared to him. He says simply 'appeared.' He gives no particulars, nor anything which can enable us to judge whether the apparition was certainly real, or whether it may have been the product of ecstatic imagination, like the apparition seen by Colonel Gardiner, or those which made Coleridge say that he did not believe in ghosts because he had seen too many of them. Three detailed accounts of the vision are given in the Acts, but not one of them can be traced to St. Paul, though two of them are put into his mouth; and they are at variance with each other, one (Acts ix. 7) saying that St. Paul's fellow-travellers heard the voice, but saw no man; another (Acts xxii. 9) saying that they saw the light, but did not hear the voice; while the utterances of the voice itself differ widely in the three passages (compare Acts ix. 4, 7, with Acts xxii. 7, 8, and more especially with Acts xxvi. 14, 19), though it would seem that the words ought to have made an indelible impression; not to mention that 'it is hard for thee to kick against the goad' is a strange phrase to be used by a voice from heaven."

Dr. Smith notices also that when Paul says that Christ appeared unto Cephas, then to the twelve, etc., he does not cite their authority, nor say that he took any measures to sift their evidence. Dr. Smith might have added that Paul placed Christ's appearance to the apostles on the same level with the appearance to himself as "one born out of due time" (1 Cor. xv. 8).

The alleged testimony of Peter is no whit more satisfactory:—

"In the first Epistle of St. Peter there are allusions (i. 3 and iii. 18) to the resurrection of Christ. But they are connected with an allusion to his preaching 'unto the spirits in prison, which aforesaid were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing'; a tradition which implies belief in the Noachic legend, while its character seems to militate against the authenticity of the Epistle as the work of a companion of Christ, since actual contact with reality usually sets bounds to imagination. In the second Epistle of Peter there is an allusion to the Transfiguration. But the authenticity of the second Epistle of St. Peter is strongly impugned and feebly defended.

"The testimony comprised in the above passages is, apparently, the sum-total of the ocular evidence producible for the miraculous part of Christianity. Besides this, there is nothing but tradition of unknown origin, recorded by unknown writers at a date uncertain, and, for aught that we can tell, many years after the events. The four Gospels are anonymous. Two of them, the second and third, are not even ascribed to eye-witnesses; while the preface to the third distinctly implies that it is not the work of an eye-witness, but of one of a number of compilers. The first Gospel, if Matthew were really its author, would be the work of an eye-witness. But it seems to be certainly attested that, if Matthew wrote a Gospel at all, it was in Hebrew, whereas the first Gospel is in Greek, and is pronounced to be not even a translation from the Hebrew. In the fourth Gospel there is an attestation; but it is anonymous and suspicious, serving rather to shake than to confirm our belief in its apostolic authorship; for why should not the writer himself have given his name, instead of leaving the authenticity to be attested by an unknown hand?"

The curious thing is that, although Professor Goldwin

Smith knows how entirely unsatisfactory are the Christian evidences, he yet clings in some sort to the Christian name.

So, in his latest, *Guesses at the Riddle of Existence*, although quite dissatisfied with the defences of orthodoxy by Drummond, Kidd, and Balfour, and although his conclusions are all in the direction of Agnosticism—indeed, he says, "Agnosticism is right if it is a counsel of honesty, but ought not to be heard if it is a counsel of despair"—he yet regards Atheism, which is another name for the same thing, with an evident shudder. His argument, nevertheless, tends towards Atheism, as witness the following:—

"No one who reads and thinks freely can doubt that the cosmogonical and historical foundations of traditional belief have been sapped by science and criticism.....

"Ominous symptoms already appear. Almost all the Churches have trouble with heterodoxy, and are trying the clergymen for heresy. Quite as significant seems the growing tendency of the pulpit to concern itself less with religious dogma, and more with the estate of man in his present world. It is needless to say what voices of unbelief outside the Churches are heard, and how high are the intellectual quarters from which they come.

"Dogmatic religion may be said to have received a fatal wound three centuries ago, when the Ptolemaic system was succeeded by the Copernican, and the real relation of the earth to the universe was disclosed. Dogmatic religion is geocentric. It assumes that our earth is the centre of the universe, the primary object of divine care, and the grand theatre of divine administration.

"The effect of the blow dealt by Copernicus was long suspended, but it is fully felt now that the kingdom of science is come, and the bearings of scientific discovery are generally known. When daylight gives place to starlight we are transported from the earth to the universe, and to the thoughts which the contemplation of the universe begets. 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?' is the question that then rises in our minds. Is it possible that so much importance as the creeds imply can attach to this tiny planet and to the little drama of humanity? We might be half inclined to think that man has taken himself too seriously, and that in the humorous part of our nature, overlooked by philosophy, is to be found the key to his mystery.

"The old argument from design is now met with the answer that we have nothing with which to compare this world, and therefore cannot tell whether it was possible for it to be other than it is. Mingled with the signs of order, science discloses apparent signs of disorder, miscarriage, failure, wreck, and waste. Our satellite, so far as we can see, is either a miscarriage or a wreck. Natural selection by a struggle for existence, protracted through countless ages, with the painful extinction of the weaker members of the race, and even of whole races, is hardly the course which benevolence, such as we conceive it, combined with omnipotence, would be expected to take. If in the case of men suffering is discipline, though this can hardly be said when infants die or myriads are indiscriminately swept off by plague, in the case of animals, which are incapable of discipline and have no future life, it can be nothing but suffering; and it often amounts to torture. The evil passions of men, with all the miseries and horrors which they have produced, are a part of human nature, which itself is a part of creation."

But he stops short at the conclusion that, if "omnipotence and benevolence are to meet, it must apparently be at a point beyond our ken."

Professor Smith shows how Drummond juggles with the word "altruism," and Kidd and Balfour get hopelessly confused between reason and authority. The entire gist of his teaching is to honestly follow the conclusions of intellect. He expresses the wish that the clergy could write with freedom; yet he halts and limps occasionally, as though he longed to be in the old camp. If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?

J. M. WHEELER.

From the beginning of the fourth century, to the end of the fourteenth century, Christianity had everything its own way. By bolts and bars, by excommunications and tortures, it silenced every voice raised against it. That thousand years was an age of superstition and mental darkness, such as the world had not seen for a thousand years before. Through the ignorance and degradation of that thousand years we cast our vision backward, like looking through a desert, to the painters and poets, the sculptors and orators, of pagan Greece and Rome. The fertile field of Paganism contrasts in a telling manner with the desert of Christianity.—*John Peck.*

CHRIST'S "MASTERPIECE."

FROM the days when Christ is supposed to have lived, down to the present time, the views entertained of him by his admirers have been both varied and conflicting. At first he was regarded by some as a mere man, by others as a combination of God and man, and by others again as a phantom having no real existence. To-day Christ is looked upon from three standpoints. First, he is worshipped by the orthodox party as a divine being; in the second place, he is extolled as a great Socialistic reformer; and, thirdly, he is revered as the most exalted "Ideal" of all time. Now, the present writer does not share any one of these views. Supposing such a person as the Jesus of the New Testament to have lived (about which I have grave doubts), he appears to me to have been an enthusiastic spiritualizer, a man in many respects well intentioned, but destitute of those qualities which constitute true greatness. Considered as a man possessing but limited education, surrounded by unfavorable influences for intellectual acquirements, belonging to a race not always remarkable for literary culture, retaining many of the failings of his progenitors, and having but little regard for the development of mundane duties, an impartial observer can recognize many commendable traits in his character. When, however, it is claimed for him that he was an example of virtue and wisdom, surpassing anything previously produced by any age or country; that he presented to the world a unique career, and that he furnished a code of ethics superior to all others, I am bound to designate such a claim as extravagant, and destitute of any foundation in fact.

As with his character, so it is with his alleged teachings. The orthodox believers in Christ are so indiscriminate in their adoration of him that they regard his recorded sayings and doings as the very quintessence of wisdom and utility. True, there are some notable exceptions to this hero-worship among men of ability, both in and out of the Church. For instance, the late Bishop of Peterborough wrote: "It is not possible for the State to carry out all the precepts of Christ. A State that attempted to do so could not exist for a week. If there be any person who maintains the contrary, his proper place is in a lunatic asylum" (*Fortnightly*, January, 1890). John Stuart Mill also observes, in his work, *On Liberty* (pp. 28, 29), in referring to Christian morality: "I do not scruple to say of it that it is, in many important points, incomplete and one-sided, and that, unless ideas and feelings, not sanctioned by it, had contributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are." And Renan, in his *Life of Jesus*, remarks that Christ had "no knowledge of the general condition of the world" (p. 78); he was unacquainted with science, "believed in the Devil, and that diseases were the work of demons" (pp. 79, 80); he was "harsh" towards his family, and was "no philosopher" (pp. 81-83); he "went to excess" (p. 174); he "aimed less at logical conviction than at enthusiasm"; "sometimes his intolerance of all opposition led him to acts inexplicable and apparently absurd" (pp. 274, 275); and "bitterness and reproach became more and more manifest in his heart" (p. 278; American edition, published by Carleton, Madison-square, N. Y.) Even the Rev. Charles Voysey admits that Christ could "not have been God, because he was not a perfect man. He had faults which neither I nor my readers would venture to imitate without loss of self-respect. His mind gave way, and he was not responsible for what he said." Instead of regarding Jesus as an impostor, the reverend gentleman said that "he was simply mistaken, and finally insane" (*Fortnightly*, January, 1887).

The religious press has recently teemed with unqualified exultations over the person and teachings of Christ. Many believers, who are not considered "orthodox," tenaciously cling to the notion that "Christ's masterpiece," the "Sermon on the Mount," is the grandest compendium of wisdom to be found in the literature of the world. The latest published work upon this "Sermon" is that written by Canon Gore, in which he endeavors to show that Jesus was "the boldest revolutionary teacher that the world has ever known," and that, at the same time, he was equally good as "a Conservative and upholder of the principles of law and order." In my opinion, a careful analysis of this alleged "masterpiece" of Christ will show that it is the

very opposite to what it is claimed to be. Certainly the better part of its teachings did not originate with Christ, and, whoever the author of the sayings therein might have been, the fact remains that they are of no practical value to us, for it would be impossible to act upon them as society is at present constituted, and in no instance would their application to human conduct be conducive to the elevation of the human race. They may suit a community of ascetics, but they would be impotent for good among an active, civilized people. This we hope to clearly demonstrate. We may, however, mention here that the genuineness of the "Sermon" has been questioned. Professor Huxley writes: "I am of opinion that there is the gravest reason for doubting whether the Sermon on the Mount was ever preached, and whether the so-called Lord's Prayer was ever prayed by Jesus of Nazareth" (*Controverted Questions*, p. 415). The Professor then gives his reasons for arriving at this conclusion. The Rev. Dr. Giles, in his *Christian Records*, speaking of the Sermon on the Mount, says: "There is good ground for believing that such a collective body of maxims was never, at any time, delivered from the lips of our Lord" (p. 155); and Milman declares that scarcely any passage is more perplexing to the harmonist of the Gospels than this sermon, which, according to Matthew and Luke, appears to have been delivered at two different places.

The sermon is supposed to be fully reported in the Gospel ascribed to Matthew, and in part in that attributed to Luke. In the former it occupies one hundred verses, while in the latter it is given in thirty only. That of Luke, says the Rev. Dr. Giles, is given "with every circumstance of time, place, and manner diametrically opposed to what is found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew." In one account it is stated that the sermon was delivered from a mountain; in the other report it is alleged that it was given while Christ "stood on the plain." Of course, such contradictions do not affect the value or otherwise of what was said; but, inasmuch as the two reports are, in the words of the Rev. Dr. Giles, "diametrically opposed" to each other, the accuracy of either cannot be relied upon. One of the accounts *must* be erroneous, and both *may* be.

While some of the precepts found in the "Sermon" are good enough in themselves, the reason given for their acceptance is purely of a selfish character. The poor in spirit are blessed because the kingdom of heaven is theirs, the poor because the kingdom of God is theirs, the mourners because they shall be comforted, the meek because they shall inherit the earth, the hungry and thirsty because they shall be filled—all in the kingdom of heaven. That is, that those who are suffering and degraded in this world are to have their "reward" in the kingdom of heaven, not for any good that there was in them, but solely because they lacked any reward here. In the story of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 25) Jesus makes Abraham tell Dives, who is in hell: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Dives is in hell, not because, according to the account, he was a bad man, but because he was comfortable on earth! Those who have any part in the good things of this world are to be considered as having had all that they are entitled to *here*, and consequently everything is to go wrong with them *hereafter*; they "shall be cast into outer darkness," where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii. 12; xxii. 13). There certainly is neither wisdom nor justice in the following exclamations: "Woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation" (Luke vi. 24). "Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger" (Luke vi. 25). "Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke vi. 25).

It is necessary to repeat that the better parts of this "sermon" are not original upon Christ's part; the portions that are peculiar to him are those which award punishment because a person had some degree of comfort on earth. R. W. Mackay, in his *Progress of the Intellect*, says: "It has often been observed that the Gospel morality is no absolute novelty, but that the same precepts had been already announced, if not among the Jews, at all events in other times and countries. The requital of good for evil, the virtue of loving an enemy instead of ill-treating him, had been appreciated by the philanthropy of Greeks and Hindoos" (vol. ii., p. 376). Quoting Wettstein, Mackay writes: "It is a curious fact that the Lord's Prayer may be

reconstructed almost *verbatim* out of the Talmud" (ibid., p. 379). He then points out that the "Golden Rule" upon which so much praise is bestowed, together with the commandments, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and "Love God with all thy heart and soul," were taught before the time when Christ is supposed to have lived. Sir William Jones, in his tenth discourse before the Asiatic Society, says: "Christianity has no need of such aids as many are willing to give it, by asserting that the wisest men of the world were ignorant of the great maxim that we should act in respect to others as we would wish them to act in respect of ourselves, as the rule is implied in a speech of Lysias, expressed in distinct phrases by Thales and Pittacus; and I have seen it word for word in the original of Confucius." The Rev. George Matheson, upon page 83 of his book, *Faiths of the World*, says of the Golden Rule: "That Confucius is the author of this precept is undisputed, and therefore it is indisputable that Christianity has incorporated the article from Chinese morality." In the *Religions of the World*, by Dr. Grant, published in connection with the Church of Scotland, on page 64 the author writes: "Perhaps the most remarkable feature of his moral code," speaking of Confucius, "is the distinct enunciation of the Golden Rule. Professor Legge tells us that Confucius understood it in its positive and most comprehensive sense, as well as in the negative form in which it is usually quoted in the classics. The peculiar nature of the Chinese language enabled him to express the rule by one character, which, for want of a better term, we may translate in English by reciprocity."

Thus it will be seen that the teachings which constitute the "masterpiece" of Christ did not originate in his mind, that even his prayer was borrowed, and that the "Golden Rule" was taught, both in its positive and negative sense, before his day. In our next article we will consider of what ethical value this "Sermon on the Mount" (or in the plain) really is.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

INGERSOLL'S NEW LECTURE.

ON "TRUTH"

"TRUTH" was the subject of a lecture delivered on March 6, by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, at the Columbia Theatre, Chicago. Not a seat was vacant when Colonel Ingersoll made his bow to the audience, which was as friendly as large. His sentences were of epigrammatic force, and his brilliancy of illustration captured his hearers, as always. Following is the discourse in full, as set forth in the *Inter-Ocean*:—

Primeval man changed two of his feet into hands, and in the darkness of his brain there came a few glimmerings of reason. He was injured by ignorance, by fear, by mistakes, and he advanced only as he found the truth, only as he got into harmony with facts. Through countless years he has groped, and crawled, and struggled, and stumbled towards the whole truth. He has been deceived by altars and prophets, by popes and priests. He has been haunted by saints, and deluded by apostles. He has been frightened by devils and by gods. He has been robbed by chiefs and plundered by kings, and in the name of adoration his mind has been filled with mistakes, with the impossible, with the absurd and infamous; and in the name of religion he has been taught humility and arrogance, love and hatred, forgiveness and revenge.

But at last the world has changed. We are tired of the bibles of barbarians and the creeds of savagery. We want knowledge, and when I say that, I mean sane and sensible people of this planet.

Nothing is greater, nothing is of more importance, than to find, amid the errors and darkness of this life, a shining truth.

Truth is the intellectual wealth of the world.

The noblest of occupations is to search for truth.

Truth is the foundation, the superstructure, and the glittering dome of progress.

Truth is the mother of joy. Truth civilizes, ennobles, and purifies. The grandest ambition that can enter the soul is to know the truth.

Truth gives man the greatest power for good. Truth is sword and shield. It is the sacred light of the soul.

The man who finds a truth lights a torch.

How is truth to be found?

By investigation, experiment, and reason.

Every human being should be allowed to investigate to the extent of his desire—his ability. The literature of the world should be open to him—nothing prohibited, sealed, or hidden. No subject can be too sacred to be understood. Each person should be allowed to reach his own conclusions, and to speak his honest thought.

He who threatens the investigator with punishment here, or hereafter, is an enemy of the human race. And he who tries to bribe the investigator with the promise of eternal joy is a traitor to his fellow-men.

There is no real investigation without freedom—freedom from the fear of gods and men.

So, all investigation—all experiment—should be pursued in the light of reason.

Every man should be true to himself—true to the inward light. Each man, in the laboratory of his own mind, and for himself alone, should test the so-called facts—the theories of all the world. Truth, in accordance with his reason, should be his guide and master. To love the truth, thus perceived, is mental virtue—intellectual purity. This is true manhood. This is freedom.

To throw away your reason at the command of churches, popes, parties, kings, or gods, is to be a serf, a slave.

MAN SHOULD BE MENTALLY HONEST.

It is not simply the right, but it is the duty, of every man to think—to investigate for himself; and every man who tries to prevent this by force or fear is doing all he can to degrade and enslave his fellow-men.

He should preserve as his most precious jewel the perfect veracity of his soul.

He should examine all questions presented to his mind, without prejudice—unbiased by hatred or love—by desire or fear. His object, and his only object, should be to find the truth. He knows, if he listens to reason, that truth is not dangerous, and that error is. He should weigh the evidence, the arguments, in honest scales—scales that passion or interest cannot change. He should care nothing for authority—nothing for names, customs, or creeds—nothing for anything that his reason does not say is true.

Of this world he should be the sovereign, and his soul should wear the purple. From his dominions should be banished the hosts of force and fear. He should be intellectually hospitable. Prejudice, egotism, hatred, contempt, disdain, are the enemies of truth and progress.

The real searcher after truth will not receive the old because it is old, or reject the new because it is new. He will not believe men because they are dead, or contradict them because they are alive. With him an utterance is worth the truth, the reason it contains, without the slightest regard to the author. He may have been a king or serf—a philosopher or servant; but the utterance neither gains nor loses in truth or reason. Its value is absolutely independent of the fame or station of the man who gave it to the world.

TRUTH CAN STAND ALONE.

Nothing but falsehood needs the assistance of fame and place, of robes and mitres, of tiaras and crowns.

The wise, the really honest and intelligent, are not swayed or governed by numbers—by majorities.

They accept what they really believe to be true. They care nothing for the opinions of ancestors, nothing for creeds, assertions, and theories, unless they satisfy the reason.

In all directions they seek for truth, and, when found, accept it with joy—accept it in spite of preconceived opinions—in spite of prejudice and hatred.

This is the course pursued by wise and honest men, and no other course is possible for them.

In every department of human endeavor men are seeking for the truth—for the facts. The statesman reads the history of the world, gathers the statistics of all nations, to the end that his country may avoid the mistakes of the past. The geologist penetrates the rocks in search of facts—climbs mountains, visits the extinct craters, traverses islands and continents, that he may know something of the history of the world. He wants the truth.

The chemist, with crucible and retort, with countless experiments, is trying to find the qualities of substances—to ravel what nature has woven.

The great mechanics dwell in the realm of the real.

They seek by natural means to conquer and use the forces of nature. They want the truth—the actual facts.

The physicians, the surgeons, rely on observation, experiment, and reason. They become acquainted with the human body—with muscle, blood, and nerve—with the wonders of the brain. They want nothing but the truth.

SUPPRESS NOT THE TRUTH.

And so it is with the students of every science. On every hand they look for facts, and it is of the utmost importance that they give to the world the facts they find.

Their courage should equal their intelligence. No matter what the dead have said or the living believe, they should possess intellectual courage.

If it be good for man to find the truth—good for him to be intellectually honest and hospitable, then it is good for others to know the truths thus found.

Every man should have the courage to give his honest thought. This makes the finder and publisher of truth a public benefactor.

Those who prevent, or try to prevent, the expression of honest thought are the foes of civilization—the enemies of truth. Nothing can exceed the egotism and impudence of the man who claims the right to express his thought, and denies the same right to others.

It will not do to say that certain ideas are sacred, and that man has not the right to investigate and test these ideas for himself.

Who knows that they are sacred? Can anything be sacred to us that we do not know to be true?

For many centuries free speech has been an insult to God. Nothing has been more blasphemous than the expression of honest thought. For many ages the lips of the wise were sealed. The torches that truth had lighted, that courage carried and held aloft, were extinguished with blood.

Truth has always been in favor of free speech—has always asked to be investigated—has always longed to be known and understood. Freedom, discussion, honesty, investigation, and courage are the friends and allies of truth. Truth loves the light and the open field. It appeals to the senses—to the judgment, the reason, to all the higher and nobler faculties and powers of the mind. It seeks to calm the passions, to destroy prejudice, and to increase the volume and intensity of reason's flame.

It does not ask man to cringe or crawl. It does not desire the worship of the ignorant or the praises of the frightened.

It says to every human being: "Think for yourself. Enjoy the freedom of a god, and have the goodness and the courage to express your honest thought."

WHY TRUTH SHOULD BE KNOWN.

Why should we pursue the truth? and why should we investigate and reason? and why should we be mentally honest and hospitable? and why should we express our honest thoughts?

To this there is but one answer: For the benefit of mankind.

The brain must be developed. The world must think. Speech must be free. The world must learn that credulity is not a virtue, and that no question is settled until reason is fully satisfied.

By these means man will overcome many of the obstructions of nature. He will cure or avoid diseases. He will lessen pain. He will lengthen, ennoble, and enrich life. In every direction he will increase his power. He will satisfy his wants, gratify his tastes. He will put a roof and raiment, food and fuel, home and happiness, within the reach of all.

He will drive want and crime from the world. He will destroy the serpents of fear, the monsters of superstition. He will become intelligent and free, honest and serene.

The monarch of the skies will be dethroned—the flames of hell will be extinguished. Pious beggars will become honest and useful men. Hypocrisy will collect no tolls from fear; lies will not be sacrificed for another; human beings will love each other instead of gods; men will do right, not for the sake of reward in some other world, but for the sake of happiness here. Man will find that nature is the only revelation, and that he, by his own efforts, must learn to read the stories told by star and cloud, by rock and soil, by sea and stream, by rain and fire, by plant and flower, by life in all its curious forms, and all the things and forces of the world.

When he reads these stories, these records, he will know that man must rely on himself—that the supernatural does not exist, and that man must be the providence of man.

(To be continued.)

ACID DROPS.

RADICAL newspapers insist on giving a religious character to the Eastern Question. When the Admirals shell the Cretan insurgents, these papers call it "Firing on the Christians." Yes, that's the crime. Fire on Mohammedans as much as you please; that is first-rate sport; but firing on Christians is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Fortunately there is more brag than valor in a great deal of the warlike language we have heard. There seems a good chance that the Cretan business will, after all, be settled without unlimited bloodshed. Slowly but surely the Powers are gravitating to the policy of turning both Turks and Greeks out of Crete, at least for the present, and formulating an acceptable scheme of autonomy.

It appears that all the talk about the destitute condition of the Turkish Army is sheer Greek romance. Newspaper correspondents admit that the Turkish soldiers near the Greek frontier are a fine body of men, well-equipped, well-officered, and splendidly provisioned. They are also spoiling for a fight, and yearning to settle the hash of the hated Christians, who hate them just as cordially. Greece is almost certain to get a bad beating if she begins hostilities. We hope she will turn a deaf ear to her hot-headed friends who are egging her on to destruction. It is all very well to have Christ on your side, but a ghost (real or imaginary) is a poor shield against Moslem bullets.

In view of the Diamond Celebration, the London Stereoscopic Company has issued a photograph of the Queen as she appeared in her coronation robes in 1838, with the legend beneath: "Queen Victoria taking the oath to maintain the Protestant Faith." Considering the progress of Romanizing Ritualism within the Church of England, this looks like a subtle satire.

By the way, Captain Cobham, in the *Church Intelligencer* for April, says that the Pope intends to present his annual Golden Rose this year to Queen Victoria. He addresses a letter to Lord Salisbury on the subject. What a pity that making a rumpus beforehand should stand in the way of the jewel coming to England.

Dr. R. De Villiers, who writes on "Manning the Sceptic" in the *University Magazine*, says: "His stern severity, seldom relaxing, was almost phenomenal, and not quite natural. A foreigner, not accustomed to his ways, received the impression that even with his most intimate friends Cardinal Manning was extremely cautious, and even suspicious. He was careful and calculating in every sentence he uttered, patronizing even with his equals, and with one idea as the aim of his life—power."

One interesting point Dr. De Villiers brings out is, that Manning was the unfortunate instrument, under Providence, as he expressed it, of bringing his antagonist at the Vatican Council, Archbishop Darboy, to his death in 1871. The Communists declared they only held him as a hostage, and would have surrendered him had their own prisoners been returned. But Manning took the strange course of writing to Bismarck to interfere on Darboy's behalf, and the interference of their arch-enemy sealed his fate with the Communists.

"Father" Black has not joined the Church of Rome; not that we should care a farthing if he had. "The English Church," he says, "commands now, as she has ever done, my reason and my heart." How much reason it commands is not stated. Not very much, we reckon.

The Boer thinks the Kaffirs do not possess souls. He considers them the descendants of Cain, and makes use of them accordingly. It is a very convenient theory—for the Boers, but devilish rough on the Kaffirs.

The Boer's two certain possessions are a rifle and a family Bible. From the one he learns how the Lord loves the welfare of his saints; with the other he promotes that welfare while God is getting ready.

More anti-Semitic riots have taken place in Russia; and at Spola, near Kieff, the entire Jewish quarter has been destroyed. With very few exceptions, every Jew has been beggared. Christian love manifests itself so strongly that

there is little wonder the Jew desires as little of it as possible.

The *Freeman* says: "It has been estimated that 750,000,000 of the family of man are heathen, while Protestants number only 30,000,000." And then, "a large number of the nominally Christian are really ungodly or godless." This is rather a poor show for a faith with divinity at its back for near nine hundred years.

A friend of ours dropped in recently to hear Canon Wilberforce preach at St. John's, Westminster. This friend took large verbatim notes of the sermon, and has supplied us with a copy of them. Canon Wilberforce is what is called an eloquent preacher; that is to say, he has a good flow of words, but his powers of thought seem much like those of the average pulpiteer. One of his illustrations, very early in this sermon, was singularly infelicitous. "The unveiling of the wonderful face of our Universal Father," he said, "is like the gradual development of a tiny stream into a great river." It goes on and on, sweeps around obstacles, and finally touches the broad breast of the heaving ocean, and then "by the evaporation of the sun passes up into the glorious blue of the sky." Yes, but it comes down again. Canon Wilberforce forgot that. And so the human mind, after trying to find God in the sky, drops down to earth, feeling that this is its home and the proper scene of its activities.

Canon Wilberforce referred to Bruno as a Pantheist, and said that the Church of Rome, to its everlasting shame, burnt him, believing that he was an Atheist. One would think that no such everlasting shame attached to Protestant Churches, whereas they burnt heretics and unbelievers just as readily as their great rival. Calvin's treatment of Servetus, for instance, was even worse than the Catholic Church's treatment of Rome.

Why does Canon Wilberforce speak of the Logos as revealed by St. John? In the first place, John did not write the fourth Gospel; in the second place, the Logos was written of by Plato centuries before the Christian era. Any chronology seems good enough for a sermon.

Mrs. Besant has been interviewed on the subject of "human auras." She says that people are all surrounded by a sort of astral atmosphere, colored according to their characters. "Can any eyes save those of an adept detect the aura?" asked the interviewer. "No, no," said Mrs. Besant; but the "adepts detect them readily." Why, certainly. That is how the mystery business is always managed. Some people see things with the eye of faith, and get other people to take the information on trust.

Mrs. Besant told the interviewer that the aura of Gladstone, W. T. Stead, and Emperor William would be "very green." We fancy that the aura of those who believe this nonsense must be very, very green.

The Marquis of Dufferin, who has had a most extended experience as a diplomatist, says that, "in spite of Christianity and civilization—in spite of humanitarian philosophies, the triumphs of scientific knowledge—in spite of the lessons of history, and the bitter experiences of the more recent past—force, and not right, is still the dominant factor in human affairs, and that no nation's independence or possessions are safe for a moment unless she can guard them with her own right hand." The statesman's experience overthrows the pretensions of the preachers.

"You have heard, have you not," said Mrs. Besant to a New York interviewer, "that the soul of Madame Blavatsky has been transmitted to a young Brahmin? That is quite true. She told me before she died that her soul would reappear in India, and it has come true. This Brahmin is only nineteen years old, so his occult powers will not be shown for several years to come; but that he possesses these powers is indisputable."

We were not aware that Mrs. Besant was in England at the time of Madame Blavatsky's death. We thought she was on the Atlantic, crossing from New York, and that Mr. Burrows went to Queenstown to meet her and break the news gently. If these were the real facts of the case, it is, to say the least of it, misleading on Mrs. Besant's part to talk about what Madame Blavatsky "told me before she died."

Where these Theosophists are not free to draw upon their imagination backwards, they are confined to the same sources of information as other people. Mrs. Besant received no "occult" intimation of Madame Blavatsky's death. She had to wait until the news was conveyed to her through the ordinary channels of intelligence.

Now a few words for this young Brahmin. Madame

Blavatsky died six years ago; consequently the young Brahmin was at least thirteen years old when her soul took possession of his body. Will Mrs. Besant kindly tell us what became of his own soul? Did it emigrate, or is it working in partnership with Madame Blavatsky's? Will she also tell us precisely when Madame Blavatsky's soul entered this Brahmin boy, and whether any change took place in him, such as could be established by good evidence in a court of law?

It is curious to see how the Theosophists cut up chronology to suit their own purposes. Madame Blavatsky taught, and Mrs. Besant after her (for the latter is original in nothing), that after death the soul goes into Devachan, which seems to be a good, solid sleep, lasting, in some cases, for thousands of years. Twelve hundred years, we believe, was the shortest period. Yet here is Madame Blavatsky's soul incarnated again within six years! Evidently the Theosophists, like other imaginative believers, make up their theory as they go along.

This young Brahmin's occult powers will not be shown for several years. Meanwhile, it is of no use to ask for proofs of their existence. At the same time, their existence is indisputable. This is really too thin. It is a form of the confidence trick that ought not to impose on any grown-up person outside a lunatic asylum. What a pity it is to see Mrs. Besant reduced to this sort of jugglery!

Professor Oliver Lodge, the dupe of Eusapia Palladino, in an address at the Conversazione of the London Spiritualist Alliance, last week, suggested that "a black book for detected impostors might be tried." This is just what spiritists will not do. They hug their delusions and their mediums to the last, as the recent case of T. Wild shows. Such a black book would contain too many noted names. The Fox sisters, the Davenport brothers, Home, Slade, Monck, Bastian, and, in short, the most eminent mejums known to spiritism, might be included.

Professor Lodge extolled the methods of the Spookical Research Society, and objected to phenomena produced for money. But mejums must live. Even Jesus Christ paid his taxes by getting a fish to bring the money, if the story be not indeed an allegory.

The Rev. C. M. Fisher, D.D., pastor of the First Reformed Episcopal Church, of Toronto, has been asked to resign. The grounds of complaint against Dr. Fisher are that he has been guilty of untruthfulness and deceit, which have caused him to lose the confidence and respect of his congregation.

A Boston paper says: "Throughout the Western States there are scores of abandoned churches. Over the door of one Western church is the inscription, 'This is the Gate of Heaven,' and beneath it is this notice, 'Closed by the order of the American Loan Company.'"

The New York *Observer*, an Evangelical organ, says: "If we are not very much mistaken, one outstanding fact challenges attention at the present time, which is full of very serious suggestion as to the spiritual future of America. It is the widespread denial of the supernatural. At the idea of the supernatural, which underlies the whole of the Christian religion, the drive of criticism is tremendous and constant. Never was that idea more uncongenial than it is at present." It is hardly likely to become less so, unless science takes a back seat.

The Duke of Argyll is one of the most eloquent and pompous champions of Christianity. He confesses to taking a little whiskey for his health's sake, but says he is "strongly against the unlimited and indiscriminate sale of it, especially when it involves temptation to the working classes." Of course, it doesn't involve the same temptation to dukes. It is the working man who is most liable to excess. Perhaps that accounts for the miracle of Cana, when Jesus turned ever so many gallons of water into wine to keep a wedding fuddle going. The Carpenter of Nazareth might have been a different character if there had been a Duke of Argyll to keep him in order.

By the way, I was in a 'bus on Sunday about church time. Opposite to me sat a very stout dame, who held in her podgy hands a portly prayer-book bound in rich purple. I myself was immersed in a newspaper, but my attention was presently attracted by a gurgle, and, looking up, what do you think I saw?—a furtive thumb and finger screwing round a golden stopper which was let into the end of the purple volume! Of course, I discreetly buried myself in my paper again. But what a revelation! I should say that the lady and I were the only passengers, and the conductor was on the roof.—*Daily News*.

The Salvation Army's "Self-Denial" week has hitherto

been in the autumn, but Booth has taken time by the forelock this year and had his collection the first week in April. Salvation Lasses have been rattling their boxes at railway stations, and other places of public resort. "Self-Denial! Self-Denial!" is a cry that has met one at every turn. It is safe to say that, if Secularists went out cadging in that way, they would soon be moved on, if not arrested and brought before a magistrate; but everything is permissible in the name of religion.

The Salvation Army has frequently been compared to the early Christians. The best remaining specimens of the primitive Christians are in Abyssinia, where isolation has preserved them from improvement. This is how the Rev. M. Russell describes their proceedings: "There is something fantastic in their mode of conducting divine service. Their musical instruments are little drums, which they hang about their necks and beat with both hands. They begin their devotions by stamping with their feet on the floor, and playing gently on their drums; but when they become warm and animated they leave off beating and proceed to leap, dance, and clap their hands, straining their voices at the same time to the highest pitch, till at length they have a greater resemblance to an infuriated crowd than to a religious assembly. For this manner of worshipping they quote the Psalm of David, 'O clap hands, all ye nations.'"

In his latest sermon Dr. Abbott spoke of Solomon as a half-pagan, and intimated that effort was necessary in order to find in the Old Testament a reference to the coming of Jesus upon the earth. At a point where Dr. Abbott was especially earnest in defending his position there was an outburst of applause. Dr. Abbott checked the demonstration by raising his hand, and then exclaimed, "I thank you!"

"I was brought up," Dr. Abbott said, "in the traditional school. For years I endeavored to satisfy myself and get rid of the constant difficulties that were presented to me in the way of understanding the Bible. When I finally got this truth into my hands, when I learned that the Bible is a human book, the difficulties which had before stood in my way slipped out from my vision."

Dr. Abbott has certainly encouraged other ministers in heresy. The Rev. T. Dixon is said, in the *New York Journal*, to have "out-Ingersolled Ingersoll in his ridicule." He declared it "made him sick" to hear the modern evangelist declaring every word of the Bible to be inspired and holy. "It is vile rhetoric to say that every sentence in the Bible is the word of God. I dare not open the Bible at random and read the first passage I come to in this assembly. There are verses that cannot be read in public, and I say this as a fact, and you may like it or not, as you please."

Further on he said: "If David or Solomon or old Jacob were here to-day attempting to live their lives in New York, they would be sent to the penitentiary; yes, every one of them." All these heterodox utterances are reported in the *New York Journal*.

The same paper cites the Rev. Minot J. Savage, Unitarian, as saying that Adam and Eve were a myth. "The ancient tradition of man fixes the beginning of the human race as about 4,004 years before the birth of Jesus. We of to-day know that thistles and plants and rocks have existed in this world for millions of years, and that the world is millions of years old. We cannot accept as true the ancient tradition of Adam and Eve. We cannot believe that on the conduct of Adam and Eve, two inexperienced and ignorant people, the destiny of you and me and countless millions of people depended. It is absurd. It is grotesquely hideous to entertain such a belief. There does not exist on the face of the earth the slightest reason to believe in the truth of the tradition, which was a myth of pagan people, and was from them grafted upon the Hebrews."

Railway companies seem fond of cultivating religion among their employees, probably because it has a tendency to keep them contented with low wages and long hours of labor. Tract distributors are apparently allowed free scope in the Companies' workshops, and some of the productions they circulate are so idiotic that only a religious propagandist would ever think of using them. We have just received a copy of a tract which is extensively circulated in a certain workshop of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Company. It emanates from Crossley Hall, Manchester, and we give it a few words of criticism in order that we may, if possible, reach some of the workmen who have been deceived by its pious artifice.

This tract opens with a story of an infidel father, whose daughter went wrong; but somehow she was "brought to the Redeemer's feet," and, on finding "peace and pardon," she wanted to see her mother, who happened very opportunely to be dying. The daughter was taken to her

mother's house, and there was the usual pathetic scene. In the midst of it her father entered the room, and the daughter slipped behind a curtain—there is always a curtain or something ready for these occasions. The hard, infidel father said he would not forgive his long-lost daughter; he would allow her to say farewell to her dying mother, but he would turn her out of the house the next moment. Out pops the daughter from her hiding-place, and pleads with her father, who at last falls into her arms, and there finds Jesus. It was a remarkably quick conversion, but "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" To which we reply, "Is anything too soft for a religious tract?"

On the next page there is a lying story about the death-bed of Thomas Paine, who is represented as being "in the most destitute circumstances"; whereas he had a house and a large farm of his own, besides other resources. Mary Roscoe, the nurse, is then brought upon the scene, and Paine is made to tell her that the Devil inspired him to write the *Age of Reason*. Finally, it is said that Paine left writings behind him in favor of Christianity; but they were destroyed by his infidel associates. This is a tissue of falsehoods from beginning to end. William Cobbett, who went to America in 1819, investigated this Mary Roscoe story. He did not share Paine's sceptical opinions, but he wanted to do justice to the memory of a great political reformer. Cobbett wrote a long account of his investigations, and showed Mary Roscoe to be a most deceitful woman. She never had any conversation with Thomas Paine, and her master, Stephen Grellet, a French Quaker, who sent her to Paine's house with delicacies for his sick friend, told Cobbett that her story was absurd, and that Paine never intimated any sort of change in his religious or other opinions. Cobbett justly asks whether any man in his senses would believe that Paine affected to be still a Deist to an educated friend like Grellet, and confided his change of mind to an ignorant servant girl, who simply brought a basket to his door.

"Even Paine," says this lying tract, "found that his theories would not stand the test of his dying hour." Indeed! Why, as a matter of fact, Paine wrote a great part of the *Age of Reason* while he was imprisoned under the Terror in Paris, and was expecting every day to be led out to the guillotine. That fact alone—which, however, the tract writers carefully conceal—is enough to make every sensible man laugh at the idle stories of his death-bed recantation.

The *Tablet*, April 3, contains a story of a converted Catholic woman, who, when put under chloroform, called out to the Protestant surgeon: "Do not let me die a Protestant, doctor." The story may be correct, for it is paralleled by others of people who have gone back to the faith of their childhood when in extremity.

Judge Strange tells how, when in India he sought to bring the prisoners to Christ, one, who professed to be Christianized, when they met at the gallows, proclaimed his trust to be in Rama, and not in Christ. "He died earnestly calling upon his fancied mediator and savior." The Brahmans boast that converts to Christianity from Hinduism return on their death-beds; and Jews say the same of Christianized Jews. The evidence given in *Infidel Death-Beds*, that the most eminent unbelievers have not shown any such symptoms, proves they are stronger-minded than the mass of believers, who expect them to act in this way.

It is announced in the *New York Journal*, March 22, that Leo Taxil's assistant, who calls herself Diana Vaughan, is going to New York in May to lecture on Devil Worship, and "to show people that, while supernatural manifestations inspired by the devil constantly occur, they are not divine, as is claimed by the Luciferans, but the work of demons." We guess the lady will not go to Charleston, where she is said to have had an interview with the devil in 1889, in the company of Grand Master Albert Pike. The lady is said to claim to have been High Priestess of the Palladists, but to have escaped the unholy rite of the *pastos*.

When the Bishop of Norwich attended the confirmation service at Gorleston Church last week, he observed lighted candles on the altar, and at once asked the vicar, the Rev. Forbes Phillips, to remove them. The vicar curtly declined, and asserted his supreme authority in his own church. The bishop said he should decline to proceed with the service unless the lights were removed; but the vicar said, taking out his watch: "I shall give you one minute to make up your mind, and then, if you still refuse, I shall conduct the service myself, and ascend the pulpit, and declare the candidates members of the Church of England, throwing upon you the responsibility of rejecting them afterwards." The bishop caved in, and allowed one more triumph for Ritualism.

Abdel Wahab writes from Syria to *The Crescent*, on the

question, "Was Christ Crucified?" He cites two passages from the New Testament in confirmation of the teachings of the Koran, which informs us that J. C. was never crucified, but God took him to himself. These passages are: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7), and "I have overcome the world" (John xii. 33).

More to the point are the contradictions which Abdel Wahab points out in the Gospel story, and the statement that Basilides (110-160) tells us that Jesus was not crucified, but that Simon of Cyrene suffered in his stead. A similar statement appeared in a Gospel according to Barnabas.

The creatures who undertake to dictate to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and to map out His duties, sometimes play some wonderful pranks before high Heaven. An example of that sort of thing was presented a few days ago, in a prayer which was delivered in the lower house of the Oklahoma Legislature, by the Rev. Jason Sweeny, chaplain of that body. On the opening of the morning session Mr. Sweeny prayed as follows, so says a dispatch: "O Lord, look down upon us, and guide our footsteps from the pitfalls which hem us in. This town is full of pitfalls. Look after the members of this honorable body, O Lord, and keep them true and decent. Keep them from the saloons and dens of evil, and, Lord, keep an eye on the newspaper reporters, and see that they act righteously, and write righteously. Help the suffering Cubans, good Father, and prompt Congress to disregard an unholy President's mandates, and give succor to the afflicted people on the isle. And, O Lord, hear now and smile on us, and protect us from the gangrened, corrupt influences, and sway of Buzzard's Bay. Give us prosperity and bimetalism. Speed this assembly in its work. Amen." The merits of this remarkable prayer were at once recognized by one of the members, who moved that the salary of the chaplain be increased to the extent of one dollar.

One of our readers ordered a copy of Foote and Wheeler's *Crimes of Christianity* from a local bookseller. This tradesman had some difficulty in obtaining it from his general agent. "We asked," he wrote, "for the *Crimes of Christianity*, and was told there was none." Our reader pressed the matter, and finally the book was supplied with the following bill:—"One Crime of Christianity, 2s. 6d." Comment would spoil it.

It is said that a great feature of the Paris Exposition of 1900 will be the Palace of Religions, in which visitors of all nations, except Atheists, will see the chief features of their beliefs. "For the Christians," says M. Delaigne, the promoter, "there will be a panorama of the life and death of Christ, and of the principal items in the history of Christianity."

M. Delaigne adds: "A special section will be reserved for the cult of the Sacred Heart, another for the cult of the Virgin Mary; and the reproduction of images and pictures found in the catacombs, and dating from the second century of the Christian era, will prove how ancient is the cult of the Mother of God." This is quite correct, for the catacomb picture of the Virgin and child really represents Isis and Horus.

In the course of the hearing of a summons at the Worship-street Police-court under the Education Act, the father objected to his child attending the school of St. Columba, on the ground that it was a Roman Catholic school. Mr. Hetherington said the school was not an admitted Roman Catholic school, but belonged to the Church of St. Columba, Kingsland-road, which belonged to the Establishment. There had, however, been many objections on the part of parents, and the greatest difficulty was found in convincing them that the Church belonged to the Church of England. It was stated that it was the practice to take the children—boys and girls—from the schoolroom to the adjoining church, where a service was held. "The children were dismissed in classes," the letter stated, "so that every child had to bow to the 'altar,' and those who neglected were caught hold of by the teachers, twisted right round, and made to bow as if they were young heathen." Mr. Cluer told the mother that the child was not obliged to go to church from the school at all, but he advised that the child should not be withdrawn altogether. When the new Board school was ready it could go there.

The following choice epitaph on an East Tennessee lady appears in *Secular Thought*: "She lived a life of virtue, and died of cholera morbus, caused by eating green fruit, in hope of a blessed immortality, at the early age of twenty-one years, seven months, and sixteen days. Reader, go and do likewise."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 11, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. C. WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 10, 11, and 12, Stanley, Durham; 18, Camberwell; 25, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road. May 2, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road.—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.

LECTURING FUND.—Per Charles Watts: Mr. and Mrs. Glendinning, 13s. 6d.

H. W. P.—Palmistry appeals to the text in Exodus xiii. 9, which says: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand."

JAMES CLARKE.—Our best regards to your wife, who joins you in your subscription to the Lecture Scheme.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.—We believe in freedom, and we would try to defend your freedom if it were attacked; but freedom is one thing, and intellectual and moral agreement is quite another. We are unable to accept the program of the Legitimation League. It seems to us that the world wants more discipline rather than more freedom in "sexual relationships." But the subject is too large to be treated in this column. We have no doubt that you are perfectly honest in your efforts to bring about what you regard as a reform, and therefore we readily note that the Legitimation League has now its headquarters at the Holborn Restaurant building.

F. A. MASON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. FRENTON.—See "Acid Drops."

W. ELCOAT.—Memorandum received. We do not quite understand it, but will ask Mr. Cohen for particulars of the lectures.

JOHN HINDLE.—Thanks for your good wishes.

T. THELWALL.—Yes, it is better late than never. We note your wish for our success in "spreading Freethought ideas in this benighted, parson-ridden country."

JAMES HOBBS.—We do not know of any Freethought answer to Swedenborg. There is a fine essay on him in Emerson's *Representative Men*. Good things are scattered up and down Swedenborg's monstrously voluminous writings; but, as Blake said, Swedenborg to Shakespeare is a candle to the sunlight.

F. J. VOISEY.—Pleased to hear from you again. Your good wishes are appreciated.

E. PERCY WARD.—We are always pleased to insert N.S.S. lecturers' lists of engagements gratuitously. The only condition we make is that they shall take the trouble to keep them accurate and up-to-date.

F. R. COTTRELL.—No thanks are needed. You all did your share at Camberwell, and Mr. Foote was delighted to be present at the concert.

E. G. J.—We thank you for distributing back numbers of the *Freethinker* in London. If you can call at 28 Stonecutter-street, Mr. Forder will replenish your failing supply of same.

J. MCNUNN.—We share your wish that you could give a hundred pounds to the Lecture Scheme.

JAMES FULTON, a veteran Scottish Freethinker, sending a subscription to the Lecture Scheme, says: "I beg to give my vote against the proposition that the N.S.S. should be conducted without a President. I think the attempt would seriously damage it, and I cannot help suspecting that that would please the proposers."

HARRY ORGAN.—Many thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation at Oxford. No doubt clerical influence stood in the way of the Public Library Committee accepting your offer to pay for the *Freethinker* if they would let it lie upon the table. It is quite natural that *Reynolds's Newspaper* should be boycotted in the same way.—Your box of wild flowers came in fair condition. They make one sick of London streets.

MISS E. M. VANCE, the N.S.S. secretary, 377 Strand, W. C., begs correspondents who send postal orders to cross them, and even to take the numbers. No less than seven postal orders were intercepted on Thursday, March 18, two of which, having been crossed, have mysteriously turned up since.

SHILLING MONTH.—Tom Beach, 1s.; J. W. G., 1s.; B. Evans, 1s.; James and Mrs. Clarke, 3s.; Well-wisher, 2s. 6d.; E. Cruttenden, 1s. 6d.; Mr. Barnes, 2s. 6d.; Blackburn Branch (per C. Cohen), 10s.; Horace Seal, £5; R. Fountain, 2s.; John Hindle, 2s.; T. Thelwall, 2s.; F. J. Voisey, 2s. 6d.; Three Motherwell Friends, 6s.; J. Scott, 3s. 6d.; Chester-le-Street Friends, 4s.; J. Mc. Munn, 1s. 6d.; J. Barry, 5s.; James Fulton, 10s.; Three West Vale Friends, 3s.; Peter Weston, 10s.; A. Dipper, 1s. Per Miss Edith M. Vance: G. Billing, 2s.; C. Heaton, 2s. 6d.; F. W. Donaldson, 2s. 6d.; A. and F. Webster, 5s.; J. T. Embleton, 2s.; J. F. Hampson, 2s. 6d.; T. Halstead, 2s.; J. Halliwell, 1s.; Pitman, 1s.; Mrs. Mensbier, 2s.; J. Bawdon, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, 2s.; H. Barret, 10s.; T. Shore, 1s. Per R. Forder: S. H. Munns, £1 1s.; L. Organ, 1s.; H. Organ, 1s.; F. Organ, 1s.; O. Crook, 1s.; B. Crook, 6d.; T. Stone, 6d.; A Birthday Gift (Walham Green), 5s.

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

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—Reading Observer—Sydney Bulletin—Open Court—Freidenker—New York Public Opinion—De Degeraad—Yarmouth Advertiser—New York Herald—New York Journal—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Vegetarian—Herald of the Golden Age—Lucifer—Vegetarian Messenger—Firebrand—Humanity—Herts Leader—Yarmouth Independent—Daylight—Torch of Reason—Secular Thought—Liberator.

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

PRESIDENTIAL NOTES.

THE National Secular Society holds its Annual Conference on Whit Sunday. This year it would have been held at Derby, had not bigotry denied the Branch the use of a suitable hall. While refusal after refusal was being received from different hall proprietors, I saw it was necessary to take steps to prevent a mishap. Accordingly, I wrote to Mr. Gimson, the President of the Leicester Secular Society, asking whether its handsome hall would be available in case of a breakdown at Derby. Mr. Gimson replied that it was not usual for the Leicester Secular Society to let their hall pass out of their own hands on Sunday; however, he had no doubt that the Committee would grant the use of it for the N. S. S. Conference, though the matter would have to wait until the Committee met on March 31.

Of course the Conference could have been held elsewhere, but it is against the rule of practice to hold a Conference anywhere within seven years of the previous one in that town. Besides, it was time that a Conference should be held in the Midlands, and, in the circumstances, the nearer Derby the better.

I reported the matter to the last Executive meeting, and it was decided that the Conference should, if possible, be held at Leicester; and, in case of any hitch there, I was authorized to make other arrangements myself.

Fortunately there was no need to make other arrangements. The Committee of the Leicester Secular Society met on March 31, and resolved: "That the use of the hall be granted for the whole of Whit-Sunday to the National Secular Society free, for the purpose of their Annual Conference." Mr. E. Pinder, the secretary, who forwards this resolution, desires me to communicate with him in good time as to the nature of any assistance the Leicester friends may be able to render in order to ensure a thorough success. This is very kind of our Leicester friends, and, on behalf of the whole N. S. S., I beg to thank them with all my heart.

I have now to fulfil a less pleasant duty. In accordance with the wish of the Executive, I have to make a statement with respect to the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, and the obstructive action of Mr. W. H. Reynolds.

This Fund was, by order of the Executive, deposited at the Birkbeck Bank in the names of three persons, whose signatures were necessary for withdrawal. Those three were—G. W. Foote, W. H. Reynolds, and George Anderson. When it was seen that the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company would never come to anything, the subscribers were asked whether they desired their money to remain on deposit for possible investment in that Company at a later stage. The money of those who said "Yes" was left in the Bank, and the rest was, by vote of the Executive, on which Mr. Reynolds sat, invested in the Hall of Science

scheme. Mr. Reynolds signed the withdrawal note with the other trustees.

When the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company wound up, the Executive resolved that the subscribers who had ordered their money to stand over should be approached again; those who wished their money returned should have it, and the balance should go to the N. S. S., of which Charles Bradlaugh was President for so many years, and which was carrying on the work nearest his heart. Mr. Hartmann, the treasurer, was to act with Mr. Forder, the secretary of the Memorial Fund, in this matter. The whole of the deposit at the Birkbeck Bank was to be withdrawn, and Messrs. Hartmann and Forder were to give effect to the Executive's resolution.

Mr. Reynolds was asked by Miss Vance for his signature to the withdrawal note. He replied that he was busy. She said she would be happy to wait upon him. He then replied that if she would send on cheques for money to be returned to the subscribers he would sign them. Of course, she could do nothing of the kind, as it was contrary to the Executive's order.

Mr. Reynolds remains obstinate. Having left the N. S. S., he ought to have resigned the trusteeship, to which he had no moral right whatever, except that which was given him by the Executive. But he sticks to his legal right, and takes advantage of the Blasphemy Laws, under which the N. S. S. is outlawed. The Bank will not take the responsibility of paying over the money without his signature, and the result is an *impasse*. Mr. Reynolds claims to act irrespectively of his co-trustees, and irrespectively of the Society which appointed them all.

I have taken legal opinion on the matter, and I find that, although we might win in the end, it would be a very troublesome business, and might cost us five or six times as much as the £50 or so at issue. Personally, therefore, I rest satisfied, at least for the present, with having made this explanation.

This leads me to the subject of my scheme for incorporating a Secular Society, which may hold property legally, receive gifts and legacies, and even act as trustee. I have given much time and thought to it, and I hope to carry it through before the Conference. It may be imagined that the legal difficulties are great, and that pitfalls on all sides have to be avoided. My solicitor is now taking counsel's opinion on the matured scheme. Some delay has been occasioned by communications and interviews with persons who are anxious to give or leave money to this incorporated Society.

Finally, I wish to say a word about the President's honorarium. It was decided nearly two years ago that £100 a year should be raised to guarantee the President against absolute loss in fulfilling the duties of his office. About £80 was subscribed the first year, and about £25 has been subscribed this year. I cannot press this Fund, as I do others, in the *Freethinker*, and I do not care to suffer the humiliation of prolonged and perhaps abortive begging by others. I think it best, therefore, that this honorarium should be discontinued. I never sought it, and I prefer not to have it, or any portion of it, in this fashion. Of course I am only speaking for myself. Any other President may have different tastes and opinions.

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

Children's Party.

W. W. Roberts, 2s.; W. Hardaker, 2s. 6d.; R. Gibbon, 2s. 5d.; per Mr. Munton, £1 10s.; F. Schaller, 2s.; W. Wicken, 6d.; C. Maskell, 6d.; T. Samuels, 6d.; F. Todd, 1s.; J. Bowden, 6d.; R. Lancaster, 1s.; C. Bond, 6d.; H. J. Stace, 2s.; M. Christopher, 2s.; T. S., 1s.; per M. Loafer, 10s.; C. A. Watts, 10s.; Grace, 11s.; collected in Liverpool, per Mrs. S. A. Thompson, 10s.—R. FORDER, Treasurer.

Religion is the shadow of which culture is the substance. The one pretends to be what the other is in reality.—Grant Allen.

SUGAR PLUMS.

A CAPITAL audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Jesus Christ and the Lady Novelists," dealing with Mrs. Lynn Linton's *Joshua Davidson*, Marie Corelli's *Barabbas*, and Olive Schreiner's *Peter Halket*. There was tremendous laughter over the criticism of Marie Corelli's picture of Jesus Christ; the lecturer himself, at times, appearing to find it difficult to keep from sharing in the merriment. Olive Schreiner's novel received different treatment, and the audience listened to the lecturer's review of it with more sober interest.

Mr. Foote lectures again at the Athenæum Hall this evening (April 11). His subject will be "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" Mr. Foote has only lectured once on this subject in London, and that was some years ago. He has accumulated fresh matter since, and the lecture should prove attractive.

A very interesting function took place in the Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday morning. It was a concert by the Bethesda Choir, which is recruited from Lord Penrhyn's quarrymen. These gallant fellows, and excellent singers, are employing their musical talent to raise funds for their comrades at home, who are fighting manfully for the elementary right of labor to combine for the protection of its own interests. Mr. Sabine took the chair, and introduced the Choir, who delighted the audience with their part singing. In the middle of the concert Mr. G. W. Foote made a brief speech, which was as much applauded by the Choir as it was by the meeting. Ladies then went round and took up a good collection, which, with the sale of Land Restoration League pamphlets (given for the purpose), realized, we understand, about eight pounds. After the concert the Choir leader returned thanks in an artless little speech that went home to every auditor. The Camberwell Branch is to be congratulated on this effort.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts gave three lectures in Sheffield to large audiences, particularly in the morning and evening. Friends mustered in good force from Chesterfield, Barnsley, Rotherham, Rawmarsh, and Ecclesfield, and twenty-five stayed to tea in the hall at the close of the afternoon lecture. Mr. Watts had a hearty reception at each meeting, and his lectures were warmly applauded.

Immense good has been done under Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme at Stanley, a mining place in the Newcastle district. Mr. Cohen's lectures there have been listened to by hundreds. Mr. Foote has been invited to pay Stanley a visit, and he hopes to do so shortly. Mr. Watts is billed to lecture there in the Albert Hall, on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, April 10, 11, and 12, and crowded meetings are expected. The local Secularists guarantee the lecturer a certain sum, which is supplemented from the Lecture Fund. No doubt our friend and colleague will have a glowing report to give next week of his visit to Stanley. We hope he will be fortunate enough to meet some of the local clergy in discussion. They are particularly invited to a free and open encounter.

Colonel Ingersoll is evidently in good form again. Walking to his hotel after his recent lecture at Chicago, he was accosted by a big tramp, who said he wanted some money. The Colonel stood aside to let the fellow pass, but the sturdy tramp said he wanted some money, and meant to have it; and as the fellow assumed a menacing attitude, the Colonel gave him one with the left, and another with the right, and deposited him on the side-walk. Witnesses of the scene testified that the Colonel did quite right, and only acted in self-defence. Ingersoll is a most benevolent man, but those who threaten him generally find they have caught a Tartar.

Mr. George Anderson strongly advises Freethinkers to obtain and read the edition of Buchner's *Force and Matter* which Mr. Forder is now selling for half-a-crown. It is a book of more than five hundred pages. "Anyone who masters its principles," Mr. Anderson justly says, "is proof against the dogmas of every religion." Its language is clear, direct, and never ambiguous. Mr. Anderson thinks that N. S. S. Branches, when they meet and have no lecturer, would profit by having a chapter of this book read aloud.

Mr. A. B. Moss has just lectured on "Thomas Paine" in the Unitarian Church, Bermondsey. Among the audience was a live M.P., who expressed himself delighted with the lecture. Despite the torrents of rain, Mr. Moss had a good audience.

The Rev. Charles Voysey writes to us as follows, under date of April 2: "I desire to thank you for your very fair

and generous critique of my book in the *Freethinker*, November 22, 1896, which I have only just seen. I think at such times the 'world' puts the 'Church' to shame." We beg to assure Mr. Voysey that we always try to be fair, and never like to be ungenerous.

We have received the sixth Annual Report of the Humanitarian League, copies of which we dare say can be obtained at the League office, 79A Great Queen-street, London, W.C. It is an admirable testimony to the zeal and energy of Mr. H. S. Salt and his associates in this noble work. The League aims at uniting the efforts of all humanitarians, no matter what their differences may be on other subjects. Its General Committee of "influential persons," in its Criminal Law and Prisons' Department, includes such widely sundered gentlemen as G. J. Holyoake, G. W. Foote, and J. M. Robertson, and Mr. W. T. Stead, Mr. A. E. Fletcher, and the Bishop of Hereford—to say nothing of Edna Lyall and Lady Henry Somerset.

The General Assembly of delegates of the Groups of the French Freethought Federation takes place Easter Monday, April 19, at the Salle de l'Harmonie, 94 Rue d'Angoulême, Paris. Business will begin at 1.30 p.m.

Under the title, "A German Poet of Revolt," Lauris Magnus gives in the *Fortnightly Review* for April an account of Arno Holz, a new and blasphemous poet. An extract from his poem on the Philosophy of Religion will give an idea of his truculent style:—

Oh, Lord, to thee in heaven
My cry of need I utter:
Give me my daily leaven—
And don't forget the butter.
A bit of liver-wurst
Thy next consideration,
And then my devil's thirst,
The crown of Thy creation.

Of course, Holz has written better verse than this, or he would hardly rank as a poet, even of revolt.

The Freethinkers' Children's Party happened this year to be held on the birthday of Miss Vance. The news soon spread among the children assembled at the Club Union-buildings, and their cheers when the fact was mentioned showed that her efforts, year after year, for their enjoyment were fully appreciated. And the children had a high old time. A substantial tea, well catered for, was followed by a round of amusements including shuttlecock contests, three-legged races, and tug-of-war contests, in which the girls were victorious over the boys. There was a really good entertainment by Professor John Warren, prestidigitateur and ventriloquist; and the Maynards created much laughter by their knockabout turn. There was plenty of music and dancing, including graceful exhibition dancing by Miss Nenie Harding and Miss Susan Birtwhistle; and at the close every child received a good toy or other present or prize. Mr. Church and Messrs. Strainer and Company contributed sweetmeats; Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, ginger-wine and jellies; and Mr. Bell, the printing. There is, nevertheless, a deficiency of several pounds to meet all the expenses incurred, and lovers of children are invited to send contributions to Mr. Forder, the treasurer, to clear off the balance.

A rowdy body of Christians did their best at Hammer-smith last Sunday to prevent the lecturer (Mr. A. B. Moss) or the chairman from obtaining a hearing. They were partially successful, and as they threaten to attend in force to-day (Sunday), it is desirable that Freethinkers should attend and checkmate the proceedings of these gentry. The lecture will be held in the Grove, instead of at the Bridge, as in former years.

The upward movement of conscience and thought is depriving men of the sense of the supernatural and the sense of a co-operating goodness, and is substituting for them a patient recognition of law and an animating devotion to humanity. Doubtless, except by a few, these two ideas are not yet grasped in all their fullness; but they are the cardinal conceptions towards which the enlarging reason and the enlarging affections of mankind are ever tending, and they are unconsciously influencing many who consciously would, perhaps, reject them. The uniformity of experience has a disciplinary effect even on the apostles of the supernatural, and the great figure of a suffering and achieving humanity moves many who never heard of Positivism, and who theoretically acknowledge no duty except to an unseen God.—*M. Q.*

Under the freest constitution ignorant people are still slaves.—*Condorcet.*

No peace was ever won from fate by subterfuge or agreement.—*Ruskin.*

PETER BAYLE—LIBRE-PENSEUR.

(Concluded from page 220.)

READ, too, the remarks our author had to make on "miracles." "It happens," he said, "in every country, both among the infidels and faithful, that some persons, when given over by the physicians, recover quite unexpectedly, and that others, by unforeseen circumstances, avoid misfortunes which were thought inevitable. In all countries in the world women, who had been barren many years, at last conceive, and become mothers of children. Now, the vows in question [Bayle here alludes to the religious vows made at shrines, etc., so prevalent in his time] are a wonderful artifice; for, in case they do not effect the deliverance, there are a thousand subterfuges, as that they had not been offered up with fervency enough, etc. The register is not kept of those ill-successes, and people are not allowed to attend to them. But if the sick persons recover, if barren women conceive, etc., all this is ascribed to the vow; it is added to the catalogue of miracles in the next edition of them; the offerings increase, and the devotion grows more and more extensive." *Voilà!* The matter is really quite simple.

The writer remembers how, in the days of her early youth, she was wont to attribute like reasons for the failure of Omnipotence to respond to the prayers which were, alas! so earnestly offered up to Heaven. It was the want of *faith* which rendered the petition inefficacious; it was really "for the best" that it remained unanswered; the fault lay anywhere but Godwards. Thus are religionists accustomed to delude themselves; a piteous spectacle! One of the most delightful passages (from a Sceptical point of view) occurs in Bayle's *chef-d'œuvre*, the *Dictionary*, where he gives two *imaginary dialogues*—the one between Epicurus and a Platonic philosopher, and the other between the same "Gargettian sage" and a *Pagan* priest.

There are some religionists at the present day who hold that the belief in the eternity of matter, *in some form or other*, is quite consistent with the belief in a God—the "Artificer" of the universe. These deists should read what the Epicurus of Mr. Bayle's article has to say on the subject.

"If Epicurus," wrote our Freethinker, "had asked a Platonic* philosopher these questions: "Tell me, pray, by what right God has deprived matter of the state wherein it had subsisted from eternity? What is his title? Whence does he derive his commission to make this reformation? What answer could he have returned him? Would he have founded the title on the superior power with which God was endued? In that case, would he not have made God act according to the law of the strongest, and after the manner of those conquering usurpers, whose conduct is manifestly opposite to right, and which reason and the notions of order oblige us to condemn?.....A Platonist, thus pressed, would be constrained to say that God exercised his power over matter only from a principle of goodness; that his design was to communicate to matter a more beautiful and noble state than that which it was at first in. I am," continued Bayle, "of opinion that Epicurus would.....ask, in the first place, whether there can be a state more agreeable to a thing than that wherein it has always been, and in which its own nature, and the necessity of its existence, has eternally placed it?"

"Secondly, Epicurus would say, let us suppose that the maxim, *Better late than never*; how will this reformer do to change the state and condition of matter? Will it not be necessary for him to produce motion in it? And to do this must he not touch and push it? If he can touch and push it, he is not distinct from matter; and if he be not distinct from matter, you are in the wrong to admit two uncreated beings—one which you call matter, and the other which you call God: there is in effect nothing but matter in the universe, and our dispute is at an end.....If God be distinct from matter, he has no extension; tell me, then, how he will be able to apply himself to bodies to drive them out of their place? The Platonic (or Christian?) would answer that matter was always in motion, and therefore it was only necessary to direct that motion; but it would be replied that, to direct the motion of certain bodies, it is necessary to move others.....The Divine Nature, if it was not

* The Platonists (in common with every other philosophical sect) held that matter was eternal and uncreated—thus being distinct from God, from whom it was altogether independent.

corporeal, could with no more ease give a new determination to a motion already existing than produce motion originally.....A wise agent (Epicurus would say) does not undertake to employ a great heap of materials without having well examined their qualities, and without being assured that they are susceptible of the form which he has a mind to give them. And if the discussion of their qualities informs him that they have incorrigible defects, which would render their new condition worse than the former, he is far from meddling with them; he abandons them to their state, and judges he shall act more wisely, and with more goodness, in leaving things as they are, without giving them another form which would become pernicious.....You see, therefore, that it was not the part of a good and wise Being to change the condition of matter, to transform it into such a world as this is. Matter.....should have been left in its eternal rest. It could not be answered to Epicurus that God did not foresee the malignity of the souls which should be hatched out of those seeds of matter, for he would immediately reply: (1) That thereby an ignorance would be attributed to God which would have fatal consequences. (2) That, at least, God would have restored things to their former state, after he had seen the ill effects of his work.

"His last objection would be the strongest of all. He would represent to his adversary that the most intimate, general, and infallible notion we have of God is, that God enjoys perfect felicity. Now, this is incompatible with the supposition of Providence; for, if he governs the world, he created it; if he created it, he either foresaw all the disorders which are in it, or he did not foresee them. If he did foresee them, it cannot be said that he made the world out of a principle of goodness; which overthrows the best argument of the *Platonic*. If he did not foresee them, it is impossible that, on seeing the ill-success of his work, he must have been exceedingly grieved. He would have been convinced that he was either ignorant of the qualities of the materials, or wanted the power to overcome their resistance, as he doubtless hoped to have done.....If you suppose afterwards that, instead of destroying such a work, he obstinately resolves to preserve it, and to work perpetually, and without ceasing, in repairing its faults or preventing them from increasing, you give us an idea of the most unhappy nature that can be conceived.....He must be continually struggling with the malignity of the matter productive of these disorders.....Can he be happy when, at the end of four thousand years' labor, he is not a whit more forward in the work he has undertaken, and which he passionately desires to finish, than he was the first day he began it?.....Do we not see in the scripture [continued the artful Bayle] that the *true* God, accommodating himself to our capacity, has revealed himself as a Being who, having known the malice of man, *repented, and was grieved that he had created him* (Genesis vi. 5, 6), and as a Being who is provoked, and complains of the small success of his labor (Isaiah v., *et passim alibi*). I know well enough that the same Book which teaches us these things teaches us also to rectify the idea which they present at first sight; but Epicurus, *who was destitute of the light of Revelation*, could not correct his philosophy, and was necessarily obliged to follow the path which such a guide showed them.....The objections of Epicurus, however, disappear and vanish like smoke with respect to those whom Revelation has taught that God is the creator of the world, with regard as well to the matter as to the form.....This truth is of the utmost importance, for from thence, as from an abundant source, we draw the most sublime and most fundamental doctrines.....From God's being the creator of matter it results: (1) That he disposes of the universe as he thinks fit, with the most lawful authority that can be; (2) that he needs only a single act of his will to do whatever he pleases; (3) that nothing happens but what he has inserted in the plan of his work..... If some things happen which he has forbidden, and which he punishes, they do not happen, however, contrary to his decrees, and they serve the adorable ends which he has proposed to himself from all eternity, and which constitute the *greatest mysteries of the gospel*."

We have no hesitation in affirming that, had our author lived a hundred years earlier, he would have met with the fate of Bruno.

Peter Bayle closed a tempestuous career on December 18, 1706. He had suffered for some time with his lungs, but had refrained from calling in medical aid, in spite of the

expostulations of his friends. He considered his case to be hopeless from the onset, as several members of his family had died of the same disease. We read that "he saw death approaching without either fearing or desiring it," acting the part of the true philosopher in this fatal crisis. He expired quite suddenly, at the age of fifty-nine (the day before his death he had spent in writing), in the presence of his landlady, none of his friends being present at his bedside when he passed away. The character of this great man has been given in no complimentary terms by his opponents, Le Clerc and Saurin. Wrote the former divine: "Mr. Bayle understood only a little of Cartesius's philosophy, and no geometry at all..... With regard to reasoning, he followed only probability, and argued continually *ad hominem*, without any settled principles, and only with a design to puzzle the unlearned readers..... He had no knowledge of divinity..... he never studied Ecclesiastical Antiquity..... the Law and Physics.....," and so on, *ad nauseam*.

M. Saurin spoke thus: "He [Bayle] was one of those extraordinary men..... whose opposite qualities leave us room to doubt whether we ought to look upon him as the best or as the worst of men. On the one hand he was a great philosopher, who knew how to distinguish truth from falsehood, who could at one view perceive all the consequences of a principle, and discover how they are linked together. On the other hand, he was a great sophist, who undertook to confound truth with falsehood, and knew how to draw false inferences from the principles he supposed. On the one hand, a man of learning and knowledge, who had read all that can be read, and remembered all that can be remembered. On the other hand, ignorant, or, at least, feigning to be so, with regard to the most common things..... On the one hand, free, at least, in appearance, from all the passions, which are inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity; grave in his discourses, temperate in his diet, austere in his manner of living; on the other hand, employing all the strength of his genius to overthrow the foundations of moral virtue, attacking, as much as lay in his power, chastity, modesty, and all the Christian virtues. [Why Christian?—F. B.] On the one side, appealing to the throne of the most severe orthodoxy, going to the purest springs, borrowing his argument from the least suspected writers. On the other hand, following the paths of heretics, proposing again the objections of the ancient heresiarchs, lending them new arms, and collecting together in our age all the errors of past ages."

Finally, the minister wound up piously by saying: "May that man, who had been endowed with so many talents, be acquitted before God of the ill use he made of them! May that Jesus, whom he so often attacked, have expiated his sins!"

In after years the following eulogium on Bayle's *magnum opus* was written by Voltaire: "It is," said the great infidel, "the first work of the kind in which a man may learn to think." "Such a man could not be considered as a foreigner," was the judgment of the Parliament of Toulouse when it declared Bayle's will to be valid in France. The memory of this great man, precursor of Voltaire, should ever be kept green by the lovers of Freethought—the cause for which he worked so hard and so well. True, he had to exercise a certain *discretion*, as when he repudiated the "soft impeachment" of infidelity. But what of that? An admission would have proved fatal, and—life is sweet to all! Who shall censure Vanini, Galileo, and Bayle for the various parts they played? Let all blame rest with those who forced these men into hypocrisy; with the Church who persecuted them until they denied their creeds! Enough for us that the remembrance of such men shall outlive their foe and tyrant—Religion!

FLORENCE BRADSHAW.

Obituary.

In an account of the late Dr. Andries, who was director of the Nautical Observatory at Wilhelmshaven, which Kenneth Romanes contributes to the April *Vegetarian Messenger*, he says: "Brought up a strict Roman Catholic, Andries gradually came over to Freethought in religious as well as in other matters, and about four years ago he sent in his formal renunciation of Christianity to the Berlin authorities—as is necessary in much-bethralled Germany, if the recusant will be legally freed from ecclesiastical creeds and taxes."

BOOK CHAT.

Laws of Eternal Life is the title the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam gives to "Studies in the Church Catechism" (W. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street; 1s.). It is really a striking instance of how far one can see, in a document to which he is attached, just what he wants to see. Mr. Headlam finds the Church Catechism, with its orders to "submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," etc., a charter of Christian Socialism. At the very beginning he tells that to "renounce the Devil and all his works" refers to "those evils which in ordinary language we call devilish," thus slurring over the actual existence of a personal Devil. Then we are told "he does not say he will not dance or sing or go to the theatre." And so throughout we have an interpretation of the Catechism, not in the spirit of the composers, but of a liberal, broad-minded clergyman of to-day.

* * *

We have considerable respect for Mr. Headlam. There is nothing narrow or bigoted about him. He stood forward for the right of Northampton to elect Mr. Bradlaugh, and has persistently sought the removal of the Blasphemy Laws. But we must say these studies on the Catechism do not increase our reverence for his historic sense. His attachment to sacramentalism, as it seems to us, finds its true place in the Church of Rome. We should recommend him and others to read Jeremy Bentham's *Church of England Catechism Examined*.

* * *

By the way, it is not generally known that as late as 1813 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge published the Church Catechism explained by the Rev. John Lewis, in which the old view of renouncing the Devil and all his works was preserved. To the question, "What is meant by renouncing the Devil?" the answer is given: "The refusing of all familiarity and contracts with the Devil, whereof witches, conjurers, and such as resort to them, are guilty."

* * *

Walter Sweetman, B.A., appropriately puts the motto, *Humanum est errare*, on his pamphlet on *Christian Rationalism* (Watts and Co., 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street; 3d.). Mr. Sweetman calls his pamphlet "A Reply to Mr. McCabe," the author of *From Rome to Rationalism*. Really, he undertakes to answer Darwin without understanding him, as may be seen from his asking "how the apes and the lowest savages could have invented our noble human frame." Mr. Sweetman's arguments for design show that he has never grasped the importance of the continual elimination of the unfit on the constitution of nature. Mr. Sweetman is a curious instance of a semi-rational Roman Catholic Christian, half emerging from the theological into the metaphysical stage of thought. If he would but put philosophy aside for science awhile, he might emerge with clearer ideas. Meanwhile, we can only say, *Humanum est errare*.

* * *

Unigraphy claims to be "a complete system of shorthand, surpassing all others for angularity and brevity," and is issued in twelve penny parts by P. W. Baldwin, C.M., Ashton-on-Ribble. Unigraphy, unlike Pitman's and other systems, does not represent sounds in light or heavy, but in short or long, characters of one thickness. Mr. Baldwin has given eleven thousand hours to the perfecting of his system.

* * *

An indication that English philosophy is not without its influence on the Continent is the publication of *Hobbes' Leben und Lehre*, by Dr. Ferdinand Tönnies. In considering the life and teachings of the great author of *The Leviathan*, Dr. Tönnies does full justice to his positive spirit and his anticipations of modern thought. Comte regarded Hobbes as the father of revolutionary philosophy.

The Supreme Being.

Congressman McLaurin vouches for the following story in the *Washington Post*: "The late Constitutional Convention in South Carolina passed an educational qualification declaring that a voter to register must believe in a supreme being, and be able to read or understand the Constitution when read to him. In the county of Horry, generally called 'the independent republic,' an old negro came into the supervisor's office to register.

"Well, old man," that officer said to him, "do you know who the supreme being is?"

"Oh, yes," replied the old fellow; "dat means de boss—de head ob de whole business."

"Well, who is he—what do you call him?" asked the supervisor.

"Oh, him is Mr. Johnny McDermott, de clerk ob de cot'."—*Tribune*.

RELIGION.

RELIGION, as worship of God or as a divine service, is entirely superfluous in human society. No such thing is needed by man.

Priests and ministers are superfluous members of the community. No such officers are required by human government.

All religious or ecclesiastical property is superfluous in the nation. No such property is of any use to human society.

Everything connected with religion in any way ought to be got rid of. Every dollar used for a religious purpose is wasted—no one yet ever received what he expected for his money. The most foolish thing that a man can do is to worship a god. His duty ends in being a man. No priest is needed to help us in being men.

The old idea of religion is rejected by the intelligent. The notion that there is a Being, a Person, or a thing in the universe that requires to be worshipped by man, is a relic of barbarism. Ignorance opens every church. Intelligence will close them. People are learning to stay at home on Sunday, or to enjoy themselves in work or play on this day. We have won intellectual independence. When we win moral independence, not a knee will bend in worship.

The most absurd thing that a being with brains can do is to pray to God for some blessing. When work fails, prayer is useless.

The entire observance of religious duties ought to cease. There is too much time wasted in going to church, and too much money wasted in carrying on religious services. The next century will let the houses of God decay, and improve the homes of men; it will stop throwing away money in the service of worship, and use it in educating the children of the nation; it will make Sunday a live day instead of a dead one, as it is now; it will throw off the incubus of religion, and rejoice in doing good to one another.

PROFANE JOKES.

A VICAR for a long time had to bear what was to him a very unpleasant state of things—namely, a large number of empty pews. He had tried to find a remedy, and at last thought of a novel idea. He had bills and posters printed, and sent broadcast, announcing that on a certain Sunday he would preach a special sermon on "The Old and the New Sacrifice," and that to illustrate the old sacrifices "real fire" would come down from heaven. The vicar accordingly arranged for a boy to go up in the roof of the church, and when he repeated, for the second time, the text, "And fire came down from heaven and burnt the sacrifice," the boy was to light some paper and drop it down. The appointed service came: the church was, of course, filled almost to suffocation. The vicar arose, and gave out the text—once—twice—but no fire came down, and on looking towards the roof to find the cause the boy shouted out: "If you please, sir, the rain has got on the matches, and they won't strike!" At the end of the sermon the vicar said he hoped there would be a good collection to carry on the work of the Lord at that place.

"Mrs. O'Rooney," said the Reverend Father McMurphy, "why do I never see Patrick at church now?" Mrs. O'Rooney shook her head sadly. "Is it anarchism?" "Warse than that, your riverence." "Is it atheism?" "Warse, your riverence." "What is it, then?" "Rheumatism."

Sunday-school Teacher—"Who was it went up to heaven in a cloud of fire?" Small boy—"Elijah." Teacher—"Correct. Why?" Small boy—"He probably was monkeying with a naphtha launch."

Little Ephraim—"Daddy, whar did de fust tukkey come from?" Daddy—"Nebber yo' mine askin' irreligious questions. An' w'en Pahson Thompson come fer dinner, Sunday, doan yo' fink yo' hab ter ask whar dat tukkey come fum, eider."

Fair Tourist (to long-haired Westerner)—"Were you ever attacked and robbed, then deserted in a strange part of the country without a cent?" Westerner—"Yes'm, once." Fair Tourist—"Where did it happen?" Westerner—"At a church fair in New York, about a year ago."

Missionary—"And how did you like my predecessor, King Totem?" King Totem—"He was very nice—very nice, though just a little stringy."

Inspector—"What is an army?" Boy—"A place where they beat a drum and sing hallelujah."

Parson (to crippled mendicant)—"I would have liked to give you a shilling, my poor man, but I find I have nothing less than a florin." His Poor Man—"S'pose we toss up to see who keeps that."

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, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, Touzeau Parris, "The Mystery of the Death of God." April 12, at 8.30, Quarterly meeting of members. Good Friday, at 8.30, Soirée and Dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Stanley Jones, "Arthur James Balfour: Philosopher and Politician."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): H. Silverstein, "The Relations between Atheism and Agnosticism."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, Ellis Thurtell, "John Stuart Mill."

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Athenæum, Camden-road, N W: 7, F. J. Gould, "Guesses at the Riddle of Existence."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road: 11.15, Sunday-school—Lesson by F. J. Gould on "Honest Work"; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "George Eliot."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Robert Browning."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (381 Harrow-road, Paddington): April 12, at 9.30, Business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S.W.E. station): 7, R. P. Edwards, "Christ and His Teachings."

HARROW-ROAD (corner of WALTERTON-road): 3.30, J. Fagan, A lecture. HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "Absurdities of the Christian Faith."

KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon's lane): 11.30, H. P. Ward, "The Faith that Failed."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Christian Creed"; 7, W. J. Ramsey, "God so Loved the World." April 14, at 8, W. J. Ramsey, "Jesus."

COUNTRY.

BARNSELY (Black-a-moor Head Hotel): 7, James Hooper, "The Bible Up to Date."

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 7, Discussion on "Secularism in Relation to Social Life."

BRISTOL BRANCH (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, J. Watts Treasure, "Why I am a Secularist"; 8.15, Business.

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, H. P. Ward, "The Faith that Failed."

DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, "Radicalism or Socialism: Which is the More Progressive?"

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—W. Gilmour: 6.30, Musical evening.

LEEDS (Crampton's Hotel, Briggate): 7, Readings and Recitations.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, Mr. L. Small, B.Sc., "The Duke of Argyll on Evolution."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Mr. Wainscott, "A Solution of the Labour Problem."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rotherham-street): 3, Members' quarterly meeting; 7, W. Dyson, "The Man who Conquered England."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—April 11, Hull; 12, Felling; 18, Gateshead; 25, Sheffield.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—May 2, m., Hyde Park; a., Harrow-road; e., Kilburn. 9, m., Clerkenwell. 23, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham-rye. 30, e., Edmonton.

H. PERCY WARD, 9 Leighton-crescent, Leighton-road, N.W.—April 11, m., Limehouse; e., New Brompton. 18, m., Camberwell; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton. 25, m., Mile End Waste; a., Victoria Park.

POSITIVISM.

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

SUNDERLAND.—Church of Humanity, 23 Blandford-street. Service and discourse every Sunday morning at 11.

WEST HARTLEPOOL.—Druids' Hall, Tower-street. Meeting for inquirers, conducted by Mr. Malcolm Quin, first Wednesday of every month at 7.30.

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