

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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GOOD FRIDAY.

THE old Pagans used to talk about dying for their gods, and whenever the necessity arose they were ready for the sacrifice.

For how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods?

It never occurred to them that their gods could, would, or should die for them. This refinement of human vanity was reserved for the Christians. They assert that God Almighty came from everywhere to this planet; got born without a father, to the confusion of physiology; went through all the trials and indignities of infancy and childhood; earned his living for several years in a carpenter's shop, at the risk of wounding himself with chisels and jack-planes; took to the high road as a revival preacher, living on what was put into the collection-box; fell into trouble at Jerusalem, and finally suffered a painful and ignominious death on a cross, where he was satirically hoisted between two crucified thieves. And all this was done for them, although multitudes of them are neither worth saving nor damning, their "precious souls" in many cases being of less intrinsic value than that of an honest and valiant dog. Every worthless fellow, who happens to profess the only true religion, is ready to join in singing the hymn, "My Jesus died for me!" He was buffeted for me! He was scourged for me! He was crowned with piercing thorns for me! He was crucified for me! He bled, and thirsted, and agonized for me! For me, John Thomas, the tallow-chandler, who go to church and also to the public-house, and pray on Sunday and swear on Monday, and sometimes have a bit on a horse when I get a good tip!

What a sublimation of egotism! Talk about lifting up man to God! this is pulling God down to man; not down to Shakespeare or Darwin, but down to the lowest in character and intelligence.

Having made God die for him, the average Christian proceeds to enjoy himself. Yes, on the very anniversary of his God's death, on Good Friday, as he facetiously calls it, he eats and drinks well, takes a trip into the country, or packs up his portmanteau for a few days at the seaside, where he jogs about merrily during the time his God was lying in the tomb, or getting more or less painfully straight after vacating it.

"Hath this fellow no feeling of his business," asks Hamlet, "that he sings at grave-making?" Have these Christians, we ask, no feeling of the tragedy of Calvary, that they celebrate it with festivities?

Well, the real fact is, that the festivities are older than the monstrous superstition with which they are connected. Easter is an ancient Pagan festival. It was celebrated centuries, and probably millenniums, before the birth of Christianity. The sun crossed the vernal equinox, and began to show himself conspicuously in northern latitudes. Nature once more exhibited her sempiternal powers of reproduction. Spring had arrived, the herald of glorious summer and teeming autumn. The black limbs of the trees began to clothe themselves in delicate green, the grass sprang up soft and succulent for the sheep and cattle, the air was infused with balminess, the days grew long and pleasant, and man shared in what seemed the rejoicing of earth.

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Christianity simply appropriated Easter, and connected it with manufactured history and new-woven doctrines. Just in the same way, it appropriated an immemorial Pagan festival, and called it Christmas; although, as Mosheim says, we are absolutely ignorant of "the identical day, or month, or even year," of the birth of Christ, since "all the historians of the life of our blessed Savior, with whose writings we are acquainted, are entirely silent as to these particulars."

It is easy to change men's opinions, if you command the schools, the colleges, the pulpits, and have the secular power at your service to suppress dissent and inquiry. It is very difficult, however, to alter manners and customs. Therefore the Church was obliged to adopt the festivals of the Pagan world, and give them a Christian significance. The very name of Sunday itself shows how little it had to do with any incident in the career of Christ. It was the Sun's Day in the Roman Empire, a day of rest from ordinary labor, before the name of Jesus was ever moulded by human lips.

Men will continue to enjoy themselves at this time of the year, because it is natural to do so, and because their forefathers did it thousands of years ago. They will continue to do so after they have outgrown Christian doctrines and lost every particle of belief in Christian history.

Meanwhile we are justified in pointing out the inconsistency between their faith and their conduct, their profession and their practice. The orthodox associations of Good Friday have just as much influence now as they ever had—which is none at all. Suppose we travel back along the stream of time, and halt at the capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders. They entered the Holy City on Good Friday afternoon, but no ray of mercy pierced the darkness of their brutality at the thought that they stood on the spot which had been trodden by the feet of their crucified Redeemer. Sparing neither age nor sex, they massacred seventy thousand men, women, and children, whose only crime was that they were Mohammedans and dwellers in the land of their birth. After they were sated with slaughter, the Christians rested and performed their religious devotions; then they resumed the massacre of the "infidels" in cold blood. "The Saracens," says Michaud, "were forced to throw themselves from the tops of towers and houses; they were burnt alive; they were dragged from their subterranean retreats; they were haled to the public places and immolated on piles of the dead." "Women with children at the breast," says Mills, "girls and boys, were all slaughtered." Even the poor, helpless Jews were driven into their synagogue, and burnt alive.

All this was done deliberately. The first day's massacre was perpetrated in what might be called the heat of battle; but no such excuse can be offered for the subsequent atrocities, which, as old Fuller says, were "no slip of extemporary passion," but "a studied and premeditated act." Gibbon justly called it a bloody sacrifice offered to the God of the Christians.

That week's bloody work is still bearing fruit. It was not Good Friday, but Black Friday, to the Mohammedans; and the memory of it, with that of similar atrocities perpetrated by the Crusaders, has been transmitted through eight centuries, and is still a factor in the Eastern question, which is once more rising as a frightful spectre before the eyes of Europe.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE RESURRECTION MYSTERY.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.—*Shelley.*

THE mystery of the Resurrection is a very simple one. It comes before us with each returning year:—

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months on meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lip of leaves and ripple of rain.

When the seed underground germinates; when plants burst into bud, and blossoms peep above the dull earth, like daffodils—

That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty;

when verdant foliage, bursting from barren branches, tells of the rejuvenescence of life, we celebrate the true perpetual miracle of nature's resurrection, not the paltry, unrepeatable thaumaturgy of a Jerusalem ghost.

The spring-poet is responsible for much. He it was who first saw in the return of life to nature the sign and seal of his own re-emergence from the underworld of darkness and death to a land of pure delight,

Where everlasting spring abides
And never-withering flowers.

Leave it as poetry, and the hope of immortality must ever awaken sympathy. Sighs at the sad futility of human hopes may mingle with smiles at the absurdity of human egotism. Preachers of every age and creed have followed in the poet's wake, picturing the miracle of nature's resurrection in various forms of myth and fable, as the return of Persephone or the resurrection of Osiris, Thammuz, Adonis, Attis, or Jesus Christ.

It was this wonder of life rising out of death that was the great theme of all the ancient mysteries. The explanation will form an important chapter in *Footsteps of the Past*. Briefly, the custom of placing food with the dead led to the plants which sprang from the seeds being regarded as embodied spirits, or the return made by the ghosts for the food. Hence widespread tree-worship, and the idea that the death was essential to the life. Hence, too, sacrifices to promote agriculture, at first human, afterwards animal, and the victim being identified with the god who gave the food.

Hippolytus* tells us that the central mystery at Eleusis was the giving the initiated the ear of corn, a symbol of the resurrection.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they had sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead;
But the cheerful Spring came kindly on,
And showers began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surprised them all.

Paul says, unpolitely and mistakenly: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die"; and the passage, in which he uses the same illustration of immortality as was used in the Eleusinian mysteries, has been taken as part of the burial service throughout Christendom. The naturalist may answer Paul, "Thou Christian, that which thou sowest is not quickened if it die." It is only when the principle and power of life have never been for one instant interrupted that resurrection takes place.

The key to the mystery of the Christian Resurrection may be found in my *Footsteps of the Past*; or, better still, in Mr. J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which traces the mystery of the priest of the grove of Nemi, the King of the Wood, who was the sylvan deity incarnate in a man whom it was necessary should be put to death while in the full bloom of manhood, in order that his sacred life, transmitted in unabated force to his successor, might renew its youth, and thus perpetually reincarnate itself ever fresh and young.

Readers of my chapter on "Sympathetic Magic" will understand how the rites of the old faiths sought to assist nature by enacting its processes. Of this, the dancing round Jack-in-the-Green, and the customs of performing all such actions as stirring a pot "sun-wise,"† are interesting remnants. Before the days of reading and writing,

* *Refutation of all Heresies*, v. 3.

† The Keltic rite of deisul is the same as the Hindu rite of pradaksina.

doctrines were taught by action; and long before the Christian are women mourned for Adonis, and rejoiced at his resurrection, much as Christians celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday. In Sicily to-day, at the approach of Easter, they sow wheat, lentils, and canary seed in plates, which are kept in the dark and watered. The plants soon shoot up; the stalks are tied with red ribbons and placed on the sepulchres, which, with effigies of the dead Christ, are made up in Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, "just as the gardens of Adonis were placed on the grave of the dead Adonis," says Mr. Frazer.* In one of the chambers dedicated to Osiris at Philæ, the dead body of Osiris is represented with stalks of corn springing from it, and a priest is sprinkling water on the corn.

I have already given instances of the enactment of the scenes of the death and resurrection as still performed in Jerusalem.† Before the people were acquainted with any book-story of a resurrection, they had been for ages used to an enacted representation of it.

One of these services used in the churches in the Middle Ages, entitled *Mystery of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ*, has come down to us with particulars of the way in which it was performed. Three deacons, arrayed in dalmatics, and their heads covered with veils "like women," representing the three Marys, advanced, with vases in their hands, to the middle of the choir. With their heads bent down they proceeded singing the anthem, "Who shall roll away for us the stone from the tomb of the sepulchre?" A chorister boy, "after the manner of an angel," attired in a white alb, and holding a palm branch, addressed to them the question, "Whom seek ye here?" to which the three deacons replied, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth." Then they are told he is risen. A triumphal chorus celebrates the victory of Christ over the grave. Throughout this mummery, as much as in the old customs of carrying out Winter, bringing in Spring, and in the decoration of the altar with lights and flowers at Easter, we have the constant symbolism of the triumph of life over death, the resurrection from the underworld, of vegetative life, symbolized in the old Saxon spring goddess *Estre*.

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRIST'S "MASTERPIECE."

(Concluded from page 228.)

IN my article last week the doubtful character of the "Sermon on the Mount" was pointed out. It was also shown that most of its precepts did not originate with Christ. I now propose to briefly examine some of the teachings of the "Sermon," and to demonstrate how thoroughly impracticable they are as factors in human conduct. It will also be indicated where Jesus himself failed to practise what he is said to have taught in this his "masterpiece." The "Sermon" is composed of various aphorisms, or maxims, which are regarded as giving the keynote to Christ's ideas of ethics. It was his first attempt to expound his moral code, and by what is taught therein his system must be judged. It is alleged that much of its language is figurative, and that it should not be taken in a literal sense. If this be so, the question arises, In what way is it figurative? No clear indication is given as to what should be accepted as figurative and what should be taken as literal. As Confucius remarked: "In language it is simply required that it conveys the meaning." The words supposed to have been employed by Jesus have a certain recognized signification, and to attach to them any other meaning is, to say the least, very misleading. If the language he used did not express what he meant, how are we to know what his teachings really were? To me it appears that the only reasonable mode of judging of Christ's meaning is to take his language in its ordinary and obvious sense. To resort to the subterfuge of "figurative expression" in this instance is not only to destroy what is termed the "simplicity of the gospel," but it affords every theological enthusiast an opportunity to put his own construction upon the reported sayings of Jesus.

Metaphorical language should never be indulged in unless what it is intended to represent is thereby made clear. If this rule is not observed, the most unfortunate consequences are apt to follow. Take, for instance, the

* *Golden Bough*, i., p. 195.

† See *Footsteps of the Past*, p. 147.

following advice ascribed to Christ: "If thy right eye offend thee [in the New Version it is "causeth thee to stumble"], pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew v. 29, 30). Now, whatever construction Christians of to-day may put upon these ambiguous phrases, the fanatical followers of Christ in the Middle Ages founded upon them a system of punishment and torture most cruel and degrading. Not only did the deluded enthusiasts consider that these passages justified them in mutilating themselves, but the governments, who professed to be influenced by the symbol of the Cross, inaugurated the reign of the cutting-block, the tongue-tearers, the eye-gougers, branding-irons to put on the forehead, the mark of the beast, and martyr lashes. The conception of sin, extending from "one of thy members," grew to include the whole body; and then the gallows, the executioner's axe, and fires were made to do their deadly work, until the whole thing culminated in the punishment of thought and the infliction of the horrors of the Inquisition. Would it not have been better if Christ in his "masterpiece" had spoken in language that could not have been misunderstood, and that could not have furnished any pretext for such inhuman conduct?

I have already admitted that the "Sermon" contains a few good precepts which were taught by men who lived long before Christ ascended the mountain, or "stood in the plain," to preach. There are, however, other injunctions not only useless, but, if they were acted upon, would be very injurious in their results. His commendation of poverty and his condemnation of riches were absurd; and evidently his own followers think so, for they do their "level best" to avoid the former and to possess the latter, despite their Master's preaching to the contrary. The poor are not blessed, for poverty is one of the greatest curses that have ever afflicted humanity. Through its blighting influence many brave men and noble-minded women have been kept from occupying a position in life to which they were justly entitled. Poverty has made homes sad and desolate; it has, like an iceberg, chilled the loftiest aspirations of the human mind, and it has prevented many of the rising generation from reaching the height of their laudable ambition. Neither do riches in themselves deserve the censure which Christ, according to the New Testament, passed upon them. It is not wealth *per se* that should be condemned, but rather the improper use of it. Had Christ devised some plan by which his followers could have been induced to fairly distribute wealth among all sections of the community, he would have won for himself a higher reputation than his ascetic proclivities have conferred upon him. Equally objectionable is his declaration, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." A person in such a condition is a stranger to that healthy enthusiasm which imparts a charm to life. Poverty of spirit deprives its victims of the heroism necessary to physical and mental progress. Such teaching has enabled kings to plunder their people, while the Church looked on, shared in the plunder, and in return taught the people that it was their duty to be satisfied "with that station in life in which it had pleased God to place them," and to honor the God and the Church which helped to plunder them!

"Blessed are the peacemakers" may be true; but why did not Christ furnish practical rules whereby peace could be secured? Christians have ever been the greatest promoters of strife and war. Christ says of himself: "Think not I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matt. x. 34, 35). If this were the object of his mission, certainly it has not failed; but the world would have been better if he and his sword had never appeared. This, however, was not the only instance where Christ acted the very opposite to what he taught. It is reported that Jesus said: "Whoever shall say Thou fool shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. v. 22); yet we find him exclaiming, "Ye fools, ye fools and blind" (Luke xi. 40; Matthew xxiii. 17). He advised others to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you"; while he himself addressed those who were not his friends as "hypocrites" (Matthew vii. 5); "ye serpents,

ye generation of vipers" (Matthew xxiii. 33). In Luke (vi. 37) he counsels us to "forgive, and ye shall be forgiven"; but in Mark (iii. 29) it is stated, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." While Christ could command others to "love their enemies," he did not act upon the advice himself, and neither he nor any of his followers have ever pictured God as acting on it, or as going to act on it in the judgment day. In sending out the disciples to preach Jesus tells them: "Whoever shall not receive nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matthew x. 14, 15). Again: "Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father, which is in heaven" (Matthew x. 33). "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). If we are bidden to hate our nearest relations, where is the utility of telling us to love our enemies? What is Jesus's own account of how he or God will show his love to his own enemies at the last judgment? "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew xxv. 41). Jesus asks men to love their enemies, but on earth he was intolerable and unloving to his enemies; and he threatened that on high there shall be no love shown them by himself or God. If man's natural want of love for his enemies is wrong, surely Jesus's or God's wrath and cursing theirs with eternal torment is more so. If the divine perfection does not include any love or forgiveness for its enemies, it is useless to ask men to love their enemies in order that they may be perfect, "even as our father which is in heaven is perfect." But such teaching as "love your enemies" is useless, because it is quite impossible to be acted upon. And if Christ could not obey his own injunction, he ought not to condemn us because we are unable to do so.

The teaching of Jesus, "that ye resist not evil," is pernicious in the extreme. Here again he failed to practise what he preached, as shown by his forcibly driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple. We are told that Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money and overthrew the tables" (John 11-13, 14, and 15). Strange conduct this upon the part of one who taught non-resistance to injury. Here the "Prince of Peace" deliberately makes a scourge, and then perpetrates an unprovoked attack upon persons lawfully occupied. No one but a lunatic would attempt to emulate Christ in such violence. Besides, not to resist evil is to offer a premium for wrong and despotism. Our personal reforms and national liberties have all been won through disregarding this command of non-resistance. Mr. W. R. Greg, referring to this injunction of "Resist not evil," writes as follows in his *Creed of Christendom*: "The common sense, or the common instinct, of Christians, in all ages and in all lands, has quietly but peremptorily put it aside as not meant for use.....The whole of our criminal law and our police arrangements are based upon a systematic repudiation of the precept in question; and the order of modern society, the security of modern life, could not otherwise exist.....No one would fail to resist the blows directed against our neighbors—against those whom we are taught to love, to assist, and protect. A man may be so disciplined as to take meekly the blow struck at himself, but would never dream it his duty to endure in the same fashion the blow struck at the woman leaning on his arm.....The worst ill-service you can do to the violent is to show them that they may work their wicked will unpunished and unchecked by the natural instincts of humanity. Non-resistance, then, becomes connivance and complicity in wrong. In the case of nations, for one country to submit to outrage and wrong at the hands of another, when the means of resistance lay in its power, has never been held right or obligatory. The doctrine of non-resistance would mean nothing but the destruction of the gentler and finer races, and the rampant tyranny of the stronger; the reign of violence, not of peace."

If the "Sermon on the Mount" is really Christ's "masterpiece," then it reflects but little credit upon him; either as a man of wisdom or as a teacher of practical rules of conduct. Therein can be found no teachings of science, no factors of education, no elements of philosophy, and no wise injunctions as to the regulation of political, social, and domestic life. It is the ebullition of a rhapsodical nature tinted with asceticism, and therefore is of no practical service in the modern progress of the world.

CHARLES WATTS.

INGERSOLL'S NEW LECTURE.

ON "TRUTH."

(Continued from page 230.)

WHO WOULD HIDE THE TRUTH.

ALL that I have said seems to be true—almost self-evident—and you may ask who it is that says slavery is better than liberty. Let me tell you.

All the popes and priests, all the orthodox churches and clergymen, say that they have a revelation from God.

The Protestants say that it is the duty of every person to read, to understand, and to believe this revelation—that a man should use his reason; but if he honestly concludes that the Bible is not a revelation from God, and dies with that conclusion in his mind, he will be tormented for ever. They say "Read," and then add, "Believe or be damned."

"No matter how unreasonable the Bible may appear to you, you must believe. No matter how impossible the miracles may seem, you must believe. No matter how cruel the laws, your heart must approve them all!"

This is what the Church calls liberty of thought.

We read the Bible under the scowl and threat of God. We read by the glare of hell. On one side is the Devil, with the instruments of torture in his hands. On the other, God, ready to launch the infinite curse. And the Church says to the readers: "You are free to decide; God is good, and he gives you the liberty to choose."

The Popes and the priests say to the poor people: "You need not read the Bible. You cannot understand it. That is the reason it is called a revelation. We will read it for you, and you must believe what we say. We carry the key to hell. Contradict us, and you become eternal convicts in the prison of God."

This is the freedom of the Catholic Church.

And all these priests and clergymen insist that the Bible is superior to human reason; that it is the duty of man to accept it—to believe it, whether he thinks it is really true or not, and without the slightest regard to evidence or reason.

It is his duty to cast out from the temple of his soul the goddess Reason, and bow before the coiled serpent of Fear.

This is what the Church calls virtue.

Under these conditions, what can thought be worth? The brain, swept by the sirocco of God's curse, becomes a desert.

But this is not all.

THE CHURCH AND TRUTH.

To compel man to desert the standard of reason, the Church does not entirely rely on the threat of eternal pain to be endured in another world, but holds out the reward of everlasting joy.

To those who believe it promises the endless ecstasies of heaven. If it cannot frighten, it will bribe. It relies on fear and hope.

A religion, to command the respect of intelligent men, should rest on a foundation of established facts. It should appeal, not to passion, not to hope and fear, but to the judgment. It should ask that all the faculties of the mind, all the senses, should assemble and take counsel together, and that its claims be passed upon and tested without prejudice, without fear, in the calm of perfect candor.

But the Church cries: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Without this belief there is no salvation. Salvation is the reward for belief.

Belief is, and forever must be, the result of evidence. A promised reward is not evidence. It sheds no intellectual

light. It establishes no fact, answers no objection, and dissipates no doubt.

Is it honest to offer a reward for belief?

The man who gives money to a judge or juror for a decision or verdict is guilty of a crime. Why? Because he induces the judge, the juror, to decide, not according to the law, to the facts, the right, but according to the bribe.

The bribe is not evidence.

So the promise of Christ to reward those who will believe is a bribe. It is an attempt to make a promise take the place of evidence. He who says that he believes, and does this for the sake of reward, corrupts his soul.

Suppose I should say that at the centre of the earth there is a diamond one hundred miles in diameter, and that I would give \$10,000 to any man who would believe my statement. Could such a promise be regarded as evidence?

Intelligent people would ask not for rewards, but reasons. Only hypocrites would ask for the money.

Yet, according to the New Testament, Christ offers a reward to those who would believe, and this promised reward was to take the place of evidence. When Christ made this promise he forgot, ignored, or held in contempt the rectitude of a brave, free, and natural soul.

The declaration that salvation is the reward for belief is inconsistent with mental freedom, and could have been made by no man who thought that evidence sustained the slightest relation to belief.

Every sermon in which men have been told that they could save their souls by believing has been an injury. Such sermons dull the moral sense, and subvert the true conception of virtue and duty.

The true man, when asked to believe, asks for evidence. The true man, who asks another to believe, offers evidence.

But this is not all.

In spite of the threat of eternal pain—of the promise of everlasting joy, unbelievers increased, and the Churches took another step.

The Churches said to the unbelievers, the heretics: "Although our God will punish you for ever in another world—in his prison—the doors of which open only to receive, we, unless you believe, will torment you now."

And then the members of these Churches, led by priests, popes, and clergymen, sought out their unbelieving neighbors—chained them in dungeons, stretched them on racks, crushed their bones, cut out their tongues, extinguished their eyes, flayed them alive, and consumed their poor bodies in flames.

All this was done because these Christian savages believed in the dogma of eternal pain—because they believed that heaven was the reward for belief. So believing, they were the enemies of free thought and speech; they cared nothing for conscience, nothing for the veracity of a soul—nothing for the manner of a man.

THE SCIENCE OF THEOLOGY.

All the sciences, except theology, are eager for facts—hungry for the truth. On the brow of a finder of a fact the laurel is placed.

In a theological seminary, if a professor finds a fact inconsistent with the creed, he must keep it a secret or deny it, or lose his place. Mental veracity is a crime, cowardice and hypocrisy are virtues.

A fact inconsistent with the creed is denounced as a lie, and the man who declares or announces the fact is a blasphemer. Every professor breathes the air of insincerity. Every one is mentally dishonest. Every one is a pious fraud. Theology is the only dishonest science—the only one that is based on belief—on credulity—the only one that abhors investigation, that despises thought and denounces reason.

All the great theologians in the Catholic Church have denounced reason as the light furnished by the enemy of mankind—as the road that leads to perdition. All the great Protestant theologians, from Luther to the orthodox clergy of our time, have been the enemies of reason. All orthodox Churches of all ages have been the enemies of science. They attacked the astronomers as though they were criminals—the geologists as though they were assassins. They regarded physicians as the enemies of God—as men who were trying to defeat the decrees of Providence. The biologists, the anthropologists, the archaeologists, the readers of ancient inscriptions, the

delvers in buried cities, were all hated by the theologians. They were afraid that these men might find something inconsistent with the Bible.

The theologians attacked those who studied other religions. They insisted that Christianity was not a growth—not an evolution—but a revelation. They denied that it was in any way connected with any natural religion.

SOURCE OF ALL RELIGIONS.

The facts now show beyond all doubt that all religions came from substantially the same source; but there is not an orthodox Christian theologian who will admit the facts. He must defend his creed—his revelation. He cannot afford to be honest. He was not educated in an honest school. He was not taught to be honest. He was taught to believe and to defend his belief, not only against argument, but against facts.

There is not a theologian in the whole world who can produce the slightest, the least particle of evidence tending to show that the Bible is the inspired word of God.

Where is the evidence that the book of Ruth was written by an inspired man? Where is the evidence that God is the author of the "Song of Solomon"? Where is the evidence that any human being has been inspired? Where is the evidence that Christ was, and is, God? Where is the evidence that the places called heaven and hell exist? Where is the evidence that a miracle was ever wrought?

There is none.

Theology is entirely independent of existence.

Where is the evidence that angels and ghosts—that devils and gods exist! Have these beings been seen or touched? Does one of our senses certify to their existence?

The theologians depend on assertions. They have no evidence. They claim that their inspired book is superior to reason and independent of evidence.

They talk about probability—analogy—inferences, but they present no evidence. They say that they know that Christ lived, in the same way that they know that Cæsar lived. They might add that they know Moses talked with Jehovah on Sinai the same way they know Brigham Young talked with God in Utah. The evidence in both cases is the same—none in either.

How do they prove that Christ rose from the dead? They find the account in a book. Who wrote the book? They do not know. What evidence is this? None, unless all things found in books are true.

(To be continued.)

AN HISTORICAL FACT.*

IN a lecture which does not seem to have had an appreciable effect on the religious doubts and controversies of the age, a dignitary of the English Church set himself to prove that the asserted Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was an ascertained historical fact. Although his pronouncement, now some six years old, has not been accepted as final by either Christians or Freethinkers, it is, in its own way, sufficiently remarkable as an example of Church-taught history to merit exhuming and tender dissection.

The opening sentences are distinctly promising. "I am here," says the reverend lecturer, "to speak on the historical verity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—to show from history that Jesus Christ.....died upon the Cross.....and on the third day rose again from the dead. That event is regarded, and must be regarded, as crucial to the Christian faith."

The hopeful impression produced by this confident assertion is, however, speedily weakened by the subsequent paragraph, and we begin to have an inkling of the nature of the "historical proofs" which will be served up to us.

"In dealing with this question, I must begin by pointing out what I am sure you will see—that evidence, witness, and testimony does a great deal in producing conviction, but that it does not go the whole way. Testimony

from outside never can actually produce conviction at all. There must always be, if we are to receive testimony to any event, an antecedent disposition to believe the event."

This remarkable logic, of forming judgment before examining the evidence, irresistibly recalls the trial-scene in Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, where, immediately the accusation had been read, "'Consider your verdict' the King said to the jury. 'Not yet, not yet,' the Rabbit hastily interrupted. 'There's a great deal to come before that.' 'Call the first witness,' said the King."

Without stopping to quarrel with a procedure so ill calculated to bring the inquirer to a reliable and unbiassed conclusion on any subject, let us follow the lecturer on his own lines. According to him, if the resurrection really happened, the apostles were, above all other contemporaries of Jesus, the men who might be relied on to faithfully report an event of the kind. These Asiatic peasants, in short, had been carefully selected and trained for the purpose; one of them appears hardly to have justified his selection, but we are to take it that the remainder were singularly free from the proneness to superstitious fancies, exaggeration of language, and tendency to supplement the truth with artistic variations, which have always characterized the common or garden Oriental peasant. Nevertheless, if outside testimony, even of the most unimpeachable authority, "never can actually produce conviction," would it not have been as well if the enemies of Jesus and the population of Jerusalem at large had been given an ocular demonstration of his coming to life? Or are we to infer that outside testimony includes the testimony of our own senses? We may presume that a naturalist, profoundly sceptical as to the existence of wolves in a country through which he happened to be travelling, would, if he heard the howling of a pack, and saw it coming rapidly in his track, so far modify his opinion in deference to this "outside testimony" as to get up the nearest tree with all possible expedition.

We fail, therefore, to follow the lecturer when he says: "This explains why Jesus Christ should not, according to all showing, appear after his resurrection to his adversaries, but only to those who were, more or less, believers in Him."

Waiving, however, this point, and assuming for the sake of argument that these Galileans were the fittest persons to witness the Resurrection, the question remains, Did they witness it? Canon Gore arrives at the conclusion that they did, by a process of exhaustion. Brushing aside any suggestion of fraud or personation as unworthy of being entertained, he goes on to contend that the Apostles could not have been deluded by a vision, because they weren't in the frame of mind for seeing visions. Without inquiring too closely what special information the Canon possesses as to the frame of mind these gentlemen were in some nineteen hundred years ago, it is well worth while to follow his line of argument.

"You must have the frame of mind in order to produce the vision; but here the 'vision' produced the men, and therefore it was no vision, but real."

This is delightfully simple; the vision—which wasn't a vision—produced the men (who apparently were already there), consequently the vision which these vision-made men saw wasn't a vision, but real; so they didn't see a vision. This, by the way, is one of the historical proofs.

But to return to the lecturer and his deductions. Granting once more, for the sake of argument, that these twelve Apostles, bar one, were the likeliest people to see the resurrection, if there was such a thing, and that they were not in the frame of mind to have any spurious imitation palmed off on them, what historical record do we possess that they testify to having seen such a thing? What documents do we possess in which all, or even a bare majority, of them attest to such an event? It is no use, at this time of day, to quote such and such a text from such and such a "gospel," unless the quoter is prepared to show that both text and gospel carry the authority of the Apostle to whom they are attributed. Can we, for instance, say with certainty that every statement contained in the gospel "according to St. Matthew" was vouched for or authorized by that Apostle? Can we say that any part of the gospel "according to St. John" was undoubtedly written during his lifetime even? Christian apologists, some of them holding high positions in the Church, have admitted that these things are legitimate matter for honest doubt, and that being so, where is the

* *The Resurrection: An Historical Fact.* By Canon Gore. In fairness to Canon Gore—and fairness should ever be a leading feature in a Freethinker's controversies—it must be stated that the lecture was printed without the personal revision of the Canon; but, as it was published as one of the St. Giles's Hall Lectures, it is legitimate subject for criticism.

historical proof that all, or most, or any of the Apostles stated that they had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth?

Even taking the gospels as having the authority of the Apostles with whose names they are identified, the significant text, "And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted," would seem to indicate that there was at least the possibility of a "minority report" being presented by this picked body of resurrection experts.

Thus the historical proofs put forward by the lecturer may be briefly summed up as follows:—

That, if there was a resurrection, the Apostles were the people who ought to have seen it.

That, if they did say they had seen a Resurrection, it was the genuine article.

That there are no reliable proofs that they did say so.

But that "testimony from outside never can actually produce conviction."

That Canon Gore has an antecedent disposition to believe the resurrection.

Therefore the Resurrection is an historical fact.

Before taking leave of this choice fragment of historical fact (decidedly stranger than fiction), there is one sentence which is worthy of a valedictory notice: "All His appearances subsequent to the Resurrection postulate that he had got into a state of superior existence, that His humanity was in a transition state between the ordinary mortal body and the glorified body of heaven."

Having understood that the Church taught that the second Person in the Trinity was both God and man, and that whoever held a contrary opinion would have things made unpleasant for them in a future existence, it is disconcerting to find him here portrayed in an uncomfortable chrysalis stage of transition from one to the other.

GIBBELLINE.

ACID DROPS.

REED palms, cut down in Palestine, were carried by the choristers in St. Paul's Cathedral last Sunday morning. This is almost as good as bringing home Jordan water to christen royal babies.

As a reward for giving the Hooley Communion Plate to St. Paul's Cathedral, the donor expects to be dubbed Sir Ernest Terah Hooley at the Diamond Jubilee. It is curious that Hooley is the name of the successful shopman in *The Shop Girl*. A Hooley also appears in an excellent comedy, *The Times*, by Pinero, published, but seldom performed, because too severe a satire on the parvenus who profess Conservatism in order to enter aristocratic society.

The American sky-pilots have been set howling by the assertion of the Rev. Dr. Henry A. Brann, a Roman Catholic, that the United States is not a Christian nation, but contains a majority of infidels—in which category he perhaps includes all non-Catholics. Dr. Da Costa, of the Anglo-American Church, says: "I agree with Dr. Brann completely. His statements are perfectly correct. America is not, in a certain sense, Christian. It does not recognize Christ in its daily life." Dr. Hall, on the other hand, says it is quite an exaggeration.

Father Brann drew an awful picture of the results of living in a non-Christian country, and of course trotted out the French Revolution, when, said he, "In place of God it took a woman of the streets, stripped her of her clothes, and seated her, nude, upon the high altar of Notre Dame Cathedral, where it adored her as the 'Goddess of Reason.'" This is a Roman-Catholic-American version of an incident in French history.

In November, 1793, when the Paris Commune ordered a Feast of Liberty to be celebrated, and marched in procession to the Cathedral Notre Dame, the principal figures in a pageant represented Liberty and Reason. One character was taken by Madame Mommoro, the wife of a well-to-do printer, the other by an actress, Mdle. Maillard. Both were clad in classic costume, the goddess of Reason being attired in celestial blue. There was no sitting on the altar.

The Rev. Dr. Inglehart is true blue. He says the book of Jonah, from first to last, is a historical record. He stated that Christ believed the record to be historical, and that that settled the question for Christians. Give him a harp!

Mr. Dunn, the bookmaker, who has lately been advertised

by the Anti-Gambling League, has a boy who stayed at a school kept by a parson. This clergyman decided to act on Biblical lines and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children; so he expelled young Dunn from the school in a most heartless fashion, reading him a lesson on the evils of gambling, as though the poor little chap made a "book" on his own account. Mr. Dunn thereupon sued the parson for damages, and when the man of God found the game was up, and that the Court would do justice even to a bookmaker, he consented to pay the costs of the action and £20 to the East Molesey Hospital. We suppose he is now figuring up how much he gained by that pious transaction.

While preaching in Boston, Revivalist Moody asserted that the Prince of Wales had left the Freemasons on account of their ungodliness. The grand secretary of the United Lodge of Great Britain has written to the Freemasons of Boston a letter, in which he says: "The statement made by the religious teacher to whom you refer is untrue."

In a recent sermon by the Rev. W. J. Dawson it is stated that "no less a man than Darwin has borne witness to the miraculous change wrought by the love of Christ among the more than brutal creatures of Tierra del Fuego." This is sheer nonsense. Darwin never said anything about the love of Christ. The missionaries, coming from a civilized country, brought some civilizing ideas with them. That was all. Darwin was not a Christian himself, and never subscribed a penny to the promotion of Christianity in England. Surely it is a stupid thing to boast that he thought it might do some good among the lowest savages.

The *Daily News* says: "We hear that Mr. Basil Thompson is purposing to publish an exhaustive work on the polity, religious ideas, and domestic and social characteristics of the Fijians. In the religious part of his work the influence of Christianity will be discussed with the writer's usual candor and directness. The son of an Archbishop, Mr. Thompson might naturally be disposed to favor the missionary effort. But it is well known that he has not found any lasting good come of it, either in Fiji or in any of the Pacific islands, which he knows as well as he does his native country." Mr. Thompson has been a magistrate in Fiji, where the missionaries boast so much of their civilizing influence.

Mr. Thompson, speaking from long experience, magisterial and other, says that the converted heathen take on the vices of Christians, and lose their old native virtues. The same tale is told everywhere—in Australia, South Africa, India, or the Pacific Islands. Even missionaries prefer the unregenerate heathen as servants rather than their own converts.

A correspondent of the *Sketch*, who has had seventeen years' experience of India, writes as follows: "It is the sight of a missionary's house which generally strikes the stranger as so incongruous with missionary life. In the district I am speaking of now, I know only one of these houses which does not boast an upper storey (a great luxury in India). Wherever you go you find the missionaries possess the largest houses in the station. You find the same on the hills, where every parson goes regularly every year for the hot months. In short, directly one of these gentry comes out to India he sets to work (with home funds) to build himself a spacious mansion. Whether the Boards who send out these men know how gorgeously they are housed, I am not in a position to say; I can only wish the Government treated their servants half so well."

Mr. Foote, in his *Bible and Beer* pamphlet, says that, in a certain sense, the Bible may be called the Drunkard's Text-Book. We see from a news paragraph in the *Westminster Gazette* that the truth of this observation has just been illustrated in a New York police-court. A "drunk and disorderly" prisoner stated in his defence that he had "obeyed the teachings of the Bible." Requesting the loan of the volume which was used in the court for swearing purposes, he turned quickly to Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7, and read aloud: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." The magistrate listened attentively, and replied in one word, "Discharged."

Mr. Athelstan Riley has resolved not to stand again for the London School Board. "I am convinced," he says, "that the special work I set myself to accomplish on the School Board is done." This means that the Church party is perfectly satisfied with the present situation, and that the so-called Progressives have been soundly beaten. These gentlemen thought there could be such a thing as un-denominational religious teaching. Mr. Athelstan Riley and his friends knew better.

"A north-country minister," says the *Glasgow Weekly*

Herald, "is angry with the railways for not giving reduced fares to members attending Synod meetings, while they grant such privileges to people going to a football match. If the reverend gentleman can raise as big a crowd at the Synod gatherings as at a match, the companies will, no doubt, be pleased to reconsider the point."

Falkirk's U. P.'s are exercised just now on the deceased wife's sister question, and they want the Synod to define the law of the Church on the subject. It seems to be quite usual in Falkirk to marry, not only a deceased wife's sister, but a deceased husband's brother.

The *Weekly Press*, of Christchurch, New Zealand, accompanies its account of the latest sensational murder at Melbourne with the portrait of the confessed murderer, one William Phillips, in his chorister's dress.

Every good thing has its disadvantages, and if you want it you must take it with them. Individuality is a good thing, but you cannot have it without putting up with a certain amount of eccentricity. Liberty is a good thing, but it brings along a number of cranks. America, being a free country, has a large supply of these oddities. One of them, a man called Walters, has introduced a bill in the Kansas legislature to make the Ten Commandments part of the law of that State. His bill is such a curiosity that we venture to reproduce it.

This is cranky Walters's little bill:—

"Whereas, the men of the present generation have become doubters and scoffers, and

"Whereas, they have strayed from the religion of their fathers, and

"Whereas, they no longer live in fear of God; and

"Whereas, having no fear of punishment beyond the grave, they continually violate the law given to the world from Mt. Sinai; therefore, be it enacted by the legislature of the state of Kansas."

(Here follow the Ten Commandments in full, each commandment being a separate section of the act.)

"Any man who shall violate any of the provisions of this act shall be punished as follows:

"For violating section 1, \$1,000 fine; for violating sec. 2, \$1,000 fine and one year in the penitentiary; for violating sec. 3, one year in the penitentiary; for violating sec. 5, \$500 fine and six months in the penitentiary; for violating sec. 6, hanged by the neck until dead; for violating sec. 7, penitentiary for life; for violating sec. 8, fine or imprisonment in the discretion of the court; for violating sec. 9, imprisonment in the discretion of the court; for violating sec. 10, fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court."

Unless Kansas is a particularly pious State, or intends to become so immediately, the passing of this bill would soon fill the state exchequer to overflowing. This bill would also necessitate the building of a vast number of new prisons. One half the population would be occupied in locking up the other half; and, perhaps, before the expiration of six months, the worthy Walters would be in a penitentiary himself.

The roof of the church at Brouse fell in last Sunday while two hundred and fifty people were worshipping. Eight people were killed and twenty injured by the accident, and several old men and children were crushed to death in the terrible panic which ensued. At Pennel Welsh Baptist Church, the same evening, a man named Rees Williams dropped dead in his pew. The laws of nature take no heed of religious buildings or religious exercises.

It is curious to read, after this, that the Government in New South Wales has set aside April 16 as a day of humiliation and prayer for rain. We hardly imagine that any member of the Government really believes that prayer will bring rain or keep it off. No doubt the proclamation is a concession to the clergy, who always try to look in on such occasions. If the rain comes, prayer brought it, of course; if it doesn't come, the people didn't pray hard enough. Heads we win, and tails you lose.

The Rev. H. W. Clarke has been taking a long and conscientious census of the City of London churches, and has furnished the Bishop with the result. The following is a selection from this edifying list:—

"St. Martin's, Ludgate.—Income £550 a year. Sunday attendance, sixteen in the morning; nineteen in the evening; at week-day services—rector and sextoness!

"Christ Church, Newgate-st.—Income £375 and a house. Sunday morning forty-four, evening forty-six; no week-day service.

"St. Anne and St. Agnes.—Income £570. Sunday morning fourteen, evening nine. Half-hour week-day service. Rector doesn't live in the parish.

"St. Vedast, Foster-lane.—Income £550, plus £450 as

minor canon of St. Paul's. Sunday morning sixty, evening forty-six.

"St. Michael, Wood-st.—Income £357. Sunday morning nine, evening twelve.

"St. Albans, Wood-st.—Income £683, including rent of rectory-house. Sunday morning three, evening ten.

"St. Mary, Aldermanbury.—Income £711. Sunday morning twelve, evening seven.

"St. Alphege, London-wall.—Income 925. Sunday morning four, evening six.

"St. Lawrence Jewry.—Income £869. Sunday morning thirty-seven, evening forty-seven.

"St. Stephen, Coleman-st.—Income £750. Sunday morning fifty-nine, evening seventy.

"St. Margaret, Lothbury.—Income £968 and house. Sunday morning forty, evening thirty one.

"All Hallows, London-wall.—Income £720. Sunday morning thirty-seven, evening thirty-nine.

"St. Ethelburga.—Income £1,063. The rector has not performed service for over twenty years. A curate is in charge. Sunday morning seventy, evening seventy-eight.

"St. Helen, Bishopsgate.—Income £1,110 and house. Sunday morning fourteen, evening eleven. The average at the Wednesday and Friday services is four.

"St. Peter-le-Poer.—Income £800, plus £450 as minor canon of St. Paul's. The church is closed from Sunday to Sunday."

Some followers of Tolstoi started a sect in Russia called the Christian Anti-Taxpayers. The founders were sent to the Caucasus, or Siberia, their meeting-place closed, and the payments of taxes sharply enforced.

According to the German writer of a book on *The Black and White Clergy in Russia*, the popes or sky-pilots of the Greek Church are a very ignorant lot, who are despised and avoided by the educated classes.

The Rev. Edmund Casey, vicar of Ashley-cum-Sieverley, has got off very easily by being bound over to keep the peace. According to the evidence of two of his laborers, he so severely beat his field horses that they remonstrated with him. He threatened to shoot one of them; and when they asked for their money for the day, assaulted them with a hatchet, threatening to split their heads open with it. Had the laborers acted in this way to the rev. gentleman, we wonder if they would not more probably have had three months' imprisonment, than have been bound over to keep the peace for that term.

James Williams, a sergeant-major in the Salvation Army, got off easily with a fine of 5s. and costs, for singing at Harborne, near where a lady was lying dangerously ill. When requested to stop, he refused, and continued the service. The name of religion consecrates every nuisance.

The editor of the *Leon County (Florida) Journal* testifies that he recently had a religious argument with a Baptist minister, in the course of which the latter exclaimed with great vehemence: "If my wife and children did not believe the Bible to be the word of God—every word of it—and I found it out, I would kill every last one of them." The minister further declared that he "would sanction the burning of unbelievers at the stake." There is much of the same feeling extant in the community, but it is not often so freely expressed.

A trust deed, by which a Portland woman conveyed about one hundred thousand dollars to the University of that city, to be used for the construction of a religious annexe to the college, has been declared fraudulent and void. It was found that undue clerical influence had been used. The fraud is frequent, not its rectification.

Fitzsimmons, who whipped Corbett, has a wife who is proud of his ability to lick creation in the prize ring. She was present at the fight, and cheered her husband, urging him to let Corbett's jaw alone, and hit him about the body. Mrs. Fitzsimmons is a pious lady. Before the fight she went on her knees and prayed God that her husband might win. This was rather rough on poor Corbett, who had to fight Fitzsimmons and his god. It was also a trick on the betting.

The *New York Truthseeker* says there is no truth in the newspaper report of Colonel Ingersoll's having knocked down a ruffian in the streets of Chicago. Our contemporary declares it to be the invention of "some unscrupulous reporter." We know nothing about the matter ourselves; but, having given currency to the report, we give equal currency to the *Truthseeker's* contradiction.

After burning Colonel Ingersoll's effigy, the Salvationists have extracted a subscription from him. A member of the Blood-and-Fire brigade called at the Colonel's office, and

secured a contribution of five dollars, before the donor learnt what the mendicant represented.

Monsignor Merry Del Val, the Papal Envoy to Canada, to settle the many Catholic differences within the Dominion, finds he has arrived too late to help the bishops on the Manitoba school question, and he will return to London for the Queen's Jubilee. He is secretary of the Papal Commission for the Reunion of the Dissident Churches, which aims at the gathering in of all the Protestant churches within the Church of Rome; and his friends expect him to succeed Cardinal Taschereau, who is now the very head of the Canadian Catholics.

Good man Stead is writing on "The Illustrious Achievements of the Victorian Era in Journalism." The crown of the achievements appears to have been the publication of "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" in the pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Just think of those good people, the Wesleyans, getting their propaganda cards printed in Roman Catholic Austria. Yet so, alas! it is. We have before us such a card, illuminated with a portrait of John Wesley, founder of Methodism, and of Robert Raikes, founder of Sunday-schools, and with the text from Job, "The Light Shall Shine upon Thy Ways." Verily, the light shall shine upon the ways of the authorities of Methodism, if they do not cease having their work done by foreign firms, many of which take contracts at so cheap a rate that they can only be executed by the awful sweating of the employees.—*Reynolds's Newspaper*.

"One by one the roses fall." This time it is Rev. Dr. David M. Kirkpatrick, of the Congregational Church; and the "woman in the case" is Mrs. John Heberling, both of Rochester, New York. There are no variations in the case from the familiar old story. Reading how the good men and women in the Bible did, Brother Kirkpatrick and Sister Heberling concluded to try it on, and did so. Mr. Heberling suspected something wrong, and watched his wife until he found her—she having pretended that she was going away from the city—and Brother Kirkpatrick in a room together at three o'clock in the morning.

"Sky-pilots" is supposed to be quite a modern and American term for the gentry who lead us heavenward. It has, however, long been in use among the Amazulu of South Africa as a term for their rain-doctors, who are called abalusi, "heaven herds," or sky guiders.

Professor C. A. Briggs writes in the *North American Review* on works of imagination in the Old Testament, dealing chiefly with Jonah, Ruth, and Esther. Of Jonah he says its marvels are more like the wonders of the Arabian Nights than the miracles of Moses, etc. Of Ruth he says: "The scene is put in the times of the Judges, but there is nothing to remind us of that time except certain antique customs which the author thinks it necessary to explain to his readers. The book is an ideal picture of primitive simplicity and agricultural life in Bethlehem, separated from all that was gross, and rude, and rough, in the real life of those times." Here we must "query" the *all*.

Of Esther, Professor Briggs says: "The language is one of the latest specimens of biblical Hebrew. The style is dramatic, and rapid in its development of incident. Scene after scene springs into place until the climax of difficulty is reached, and the knot is tied so that it seems impossible to escape. Then it is untied with wondrous dexterity. All this is the art of the story-teller, and not the method of the historian. The things which interest the historian are not in the book. The book is connected with the Purim festival, and is supposed to give the historical account of its origin. This is denied by many modern scholars. It is held that Esther is a piece of historical fiction designed to set forth the importance of the Purim festival as a national feast, and to teach the great lesson of patriotism. The feast of Purim, in all probability, had another origin than that reported in the story of Esther."

The *Times* of April 9 advertised the "next presentation to a valuable living," the incumbent of which is "upwards of seventy." The rectory is described as "large," the garden as "excellent," and the population as "small." The income is stated to be about £700 a year. Not a word of spiritual interests or souls to be saved. Every consideration is worldly. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.

According to the *Schoolmistress*, there is a North-country parish in which the Church school teacher has to be a remarkable factotum to the parson. She has to train the choir, teach in Sunday-school, read lessons in church, prepare the schoolroom for use as a chapel of ease, attend at reading-room every evening, and assist at christenings and churchings. The parson also wanted her to read the Litany at service, but this was prohibited by the bishop.

It is such clerical schools as this one that are given an extra £616,000 a year by our blessed Tory Government.

Religion again! Dear, good, holy religion! It is reported that Emperor William of Germany is angry with Greece, and willing to inflict upon it insult and injury, because his sister Sophia saw the policy of being "converted" to the Orthodox Greek faith.

Mrs. Ormiston Chant has gone off, with a few more ladies, to play the part of a nurse with the Greek army. A number of friends gave her an enthusiastic send-off, and of course it was all duly reported in the newspapers. The London *Echo* gave the matter an editorial, from which we extract the following: "And for whose benefit have these ladies volunteered to go on the battlefield? Have they gone forth in the name of our common humanity, as Florence Nightingale would have done, to bind up wounds, and to mitigate suffering wherever it could be found? Nothing of the kind. They will offer no succor to the Jew or the Moslem, but confine their ministrations to Christian Greeks, and bestow none of it on Mohammedan Greeks. All through this Cretan discussion we have heard no compassionate word from the forward party, of which Mrs. Chant and her sisters are a kind of advanced guard, in favor of man as man, or woman as woman, or child as child. Their agonizing sympathies are limited to one faith and to one race."

If we may believe the French papers, the Covent Garden management desire this season to produce *Samson et Dalila* on the stage, and have accordingly asked permission of Dr. Saint Saëns to vary the libretto and suppress the names of the Biblical characters. This plan was adopted by Verdi in *Nino*, and also in the case of Rossini's *Moses in Egypt*, which became *Peter the Hermit*. Dr. Saint Saëns has telegraphed in reply from Las Palmas: "*Changements demandés pour 'Samson' impossibles.*"

Joseph Howton has got off lightly with six weeks' hard labor for putting a red-hot poker between a poor mulatto's legs "just to see how he would jump." The Rev. W. J. Roxburgh, of the Oxford Mission (Trinity College), Stratford, E., gave the prisoner the character of being one of the best boys connected with the mission. Mr. D'Eyncourt remarked: "If this is one of the best boys, I don't know what the worst can be like."

Christianity at the outset only pretended to be a reform of Judaism. The tendency of a reform to become a different sect is well instanced in the case of the Sikhs, or disciples of the Adi Granth. All the gurus or teachers of this faith were Hindus. They observed the Hindu rites, revered the Brahmans, performed the Sraddha, regarded the Ganges as sacred, and were cremated exactly as Hindus. But with the reform came a peculiar wearing of breeches and hair, a special reverence for the *Adi Granth*; and now the Sikhs are often classified as of a distinct religion.

The Bishop of Truro made a rather too clerical speech at the recent meeting of the Theatrical Mission, and was taken to task by Mr. Charles Wyndham, the actor. With regard to the temptation to take stimulants, which his lordship thought actors were specially liable to, Mr. Wyndham said that this was a mistake, members of the theatrical profession being noted for longevity. As to the vanity supposed to be excited by the wearing of fine dresses on the stage, Mr. Wyndham said that this was mere business; off the stage actors and actresses were not more dressy than other people. He denied, also, that his profession was more in need of "spiritual influence" than any other. Altogether, the Bishop must have passed a bad quarter of an hour under the skilful hands of Mr. Wyndham.

From an essay on the Maid of Orleans by a schoolboy: "Joan of Ark was out in a ship when he was thrown overboard and before he was drowned a shark swallowed him and one day the shark swam away and came into land and shoked Joan of Ark up and he was not the worse after it."

Whoever hesitates to utter that which he thinks the highest truth, lest it should be too much in advance of the time, may reassure himself by looking at his acts from an impersonal point of view. Let him duly realize the fact that opinion is the agency through which character adapts external arrangements to itself—that his opinion rightly forms part of this agency—is a unit of force, constituting, with other such units, the general power which works out social changes, and he will perceive that he may properly give full utterance to his innermost conviction, leaving it to produce what effect it may.—*Herbert Spencer*.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.—*Thomas Paine*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 18, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, "Easter on the Grecian Frontier; or, the Lifting of the Fiery Cross."
April 25, Birmingham.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 18, Secular Hall, 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.

J. POWELL.—We thank you for obtaining us two new subscribers at Newport.

W. PEARCE.—Thanks. See paragraph.

H. E. GOUGH.—We have already said in the *Freethinker* all that seems necessary on the subject. Life is too short to spend any part of it on answering Christian journals, that regard personalities as the be-all and end-all of controversy.

R. JOHNSON.—In such matters it is always a great deal better late than never. We are still open to receive subscriptions for the Lecture Scheme, though we have discontinued the special appeal.

ROYALIST.—A little out of our line. Try *Reynolds*.

G. CRUDDAS.—Much pleased to hear that Mr. Watts had splendid audiences at Stanley, and made such a grand impression; also that you enrolled seven new members at his lectures.

A. E. DAVIS.—"Conscience is born of love" is from one of Shakespeare's sonnets, numbered 151. Pleased to accept your congratulations on Sunday's lecture. We are quite ready to discuss the question of Jesus Christ's actual existence with any competent clergyman. Thanks for the cutting.

F. J. BOORMAN.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Ward made an excellent impression at New Brompton.

A. W. ORR.—To show that we have no prejudice, we will insert your letter *in extenso* in our next issue. We have the highest respect for Spiritualists like Dr. Wallace, for instance—that is, personal respect; but Spiritualism is not above criticism, and imposture ought to be exposed.

NORTHUMBRIAN.—Certainly it is strange that persons who have not, and never had, any sort of connection with the N.S.S. should be deluged with attacks on its President and his principal colleagues.

SHILLING MONTH.—G. B. Taylor, 5s.; J. Powell, 2s.; J. Haskings, 2s.; J. H., 2s.; R. Johnson, £1; Miss Carden, 2s. *Per W. A. F.*: A. F., 2s. 6d.; R. F., 1s.; W. F., 1s.; F. R., 1s.; R. M., 1s.; L. A., 1s.; Wilson, 1s.; T. F., 1s.; J. Shipp, 2s.; Haid, 1s. *Per R. Forder*: A. J. Lorkin, 2s. 6d.; W. R. Meller, 2s.; R. Wallis, 2s.; T. T., 1s.; W. Muller, 2s.

We should be glad if any friend who knows of a hall available for Sunday evening lectures, in the neighborhood of Tottenham Court-road or not too distant, would communicate with us immediately.

OWING to our going to press early this week, some correspondence stands over till next week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Freidenker—Lucifer—Torch of Reason—Echo—Truthseeker—Crescent—Islamic World—Free-thought Magazine—Clarion—Sydney Bulletin—People's Newspaper—New York World—New York Herald—New York Public Opinion—Boston Investigator—Nya Sanningar—Oldham Evening Chronicle—Vegetarian—Isle of Man Times—West Sussex Gazette—Herald of the Golden Age—Der Arme Teufel—Perthshire Advertiser—Southwark Recorder—South London Observer—Bradford Telegraph—Independent Pulpit.

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.

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 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.

After having exhausted the literature and the testimony bearing on the point, we have not found a single distinct trace of any one of those Gospels during the first century and a half after the death of Jesus.—"Supernatural Religion," vol. ii., p. 24.

SUGAR PLUMS.

A CAPITAL audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" Captain Adams, of Montreal, long the President of the Canadian Secular Union, came to hear the lecture, and was pressed into the chair. His introductory speech was bright and racy, and heartily applauded. Captain Adams told the meeting that Mr. Foote's lecture on "Life, Death, and After," at Toronto, was the best Freethought lecture he had ever heard. "We all agreed," said Captain Adams, "that it was a model lecture, and he added that he had heard all the best Freethought speakers in America. The chairman also told the audience how he and his friends had carried an Affirmation Bill in Canada, as Bradlaugh had done in England; and, of course the information was most interesting.

Mr. Foote lectures at the Athenæum Hall again this evening (April 18). This may be the last time he will occupy that platform, as the proprietor is negotiating with a proposed tenant whose use of the hall during the week would preclude its occupancy on Sunday. Freethinkers should therefore fill the place on this occasion. Mr. Foote's subject will be important and seasonable—"Easter on the Grecian Frontier; or, the Lifting of the Fiery Cross."

Mr. Charles Watts has had some very successful meetings at Stanley, partly under Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme. Five hundred persons were present at one meeting, and seven hundred at another. Mr. Watts will write an account of this expedition on his return to London.

This Sunday evening, April 18, Mr. Charles Watts lectures in the Secular Hall, New Church-street, Camberwell, taking for his subject, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?" Being Easter Sunday, the question is an appropriate one, and no doubt it will be especially interesting, as Mr. Watts will refer to an eminent American work recently published upon the subject.

The fact of the founder and Nestor of Secularism reaching his eightieth birthday on April 13 has been the occasion of some rejoicing among his numerous friends and admirers. On Monday he was entertained at a dinner at the National Liberal Club, presided over by Walter Morrison, M.P., and attended by Sir Philip Manfield, Mr. Hodgson Pratt, Mr. W. M. Thompson, L.C.C., Mr. W. R. Cremer, Mr. George Howell, Mr. J. H. Levy, Mr. H. L. Braekstad, and many other Club friends. On his birthday, by invitation of his daughter, Mrs. Emilia Holyoake Marsh, a large assembly of friends took place at the Holborn Town Hall. Among the guests were Mrs. Theodore Wright, who gave some excellent readings with her accustomed charm, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Watts, Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Wheeler, Mr. Truelove and Miss Truelove, Mr. Gould, and R. A. Cooper. Speeches were made by J. A. Pictou, E. O. Greening, Stanton Coit, M. D. Conway, and Mr. Holyoake.

The *Daily News*, in a leaderette on the dinner, said that the National Liberal Club did honor to itself in entertaining Mr. Holyoake. "He has lived," it observed, "to be honored by all men, and he had a convincing proof of it in the variety of opinion and station represented by the gathering of last night."

Good reports of the lecture on "The Life and Writings of Thomas Paine," delivered by Mr. Moss in the Unitarian Church, Fort-road, Bermondsey, appear in the *Southwark Recorder* and the *South London Observer*.

Mr. C. Cohen lectures to-day (April 18) at Gateshead, where he is breaking new ground under Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme. The meetings are to be held in the Co-operative Hall, and we hope they will be in every way successful.

We are pleased to note that Mr. S. R. Thompson is taking to the lecturing field. He opens the out-door season at Rochdale this Sunday by lecturing in the Town Hall-square morning, afternoon, and evening.

The Liverpool Branch will have their last social evening of the season at the Wellington Hotel, St. Anne's-street, on Thursday, April 22. Those intending to be present are requested to give in their names to the secretary.

Messrs. E. Candler and W. G. Hayward are elected members of the Littlehampton Urban District Council. They are also members of the School Board. Both gentlemen are Secularists, and do not disguise their opinions.

It is proposed to form a School of Ethics and Social Philosophy in London, the subjects of the lectures to embrace Psychology, the Theory and History of Ethics,

Political Philosophy, and the History of Political Theory. Before deciding on the establishment of this School, the Committee desire to raise a guarantee of £500 a year. The secretary is Mr. J. H. Muirhead, 30 Aynhoe-road, West Kensington. The general committee includes a number of distinguished and influential names, such as Sir Frederick Pollock, Professor Sidgwick, Mr. Leslie Stephen, Professor J. E. Carpenter, and Mr. C. G. Montefiore.

The Preston Branch of the N. S. S. have given up their room in Lancaster-road, intending to remain passive until September next. Members' subscriptions will be one penny each per week until their next re-union. Freethinkers in and around Preston, desirous of joining, should apply to the secretary, Mr. P. W. Baldwin, 2 Plant-street, Ashton-on-Ribble. As this bigoted borough contains a great number of latent Agnostics and Freethinkers, a strong, active Branch for next winter's propaganda is looked forward to with some degree of certainty.

The *Harbinger*, of Lahore, noticing Colonel Ingersoll's recovery from sciatica, says: "The Colonel is loved even by the impartial religious men. His service to humanity in dispelling the darkness of superstition can never be forgotten. We in India, both religious and irreligious, will hail him if he ever comes to lecture here, which is very needful. Christians, Theosophists, and politicians come here to lecture; but no famous Freethinker has yet come to India to lecture on Atheism and Freethought."

The *Crescent*, the organ of the Moslems in England, says: "An excellent article upon 'The Bible and the Koran,' from the pen of Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the N.S.S., has appeared in the columns of the *Freethinker* under dates of 28th March and 4th April. We hope to be able to find space enough to reprint the article in the April issue of the *Islamic World*."

The Bethnal Green Branch begin their out-door work to-day (April 18) in Victoria Park, at half-past three. The lecturer is Mr. Percy Ward. We hope the local Freethinkers will rally round the platform, and support the chairman in keeping order, as there is a rowdy element in that locality, which is always watching for an opportunity to cause a disturbance.

VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS.

HAVING occasion to pass St. Martin's Town Hall every day, I had noticed for the last fortnight that Lord Hugh Cecil was to speak on "Voluntary Schools"; and, being curious to know what arguments he could bring in favor of them, I arrived at the hall on Wednesday evening half an hour before the meeting commenced, to avoid a possible crush. There was no need to have wasted so much time, for I began to have misgivings that I might be one of an audience of three. However, things looked more cheerful as time went on, and by 8.30 the body of the hall was nearly one-third filled—ladies, of course, preponderating. Lord Hugh evidently found his subject difficult, and quite failed to arouse enthusiasm, though it is true the ladies stolidly kept their seats throughout his speech. After a historical survey of the dual system of education in England, Lord Hugh began to wax enthusiastic over a tale he had heard from a clergyman in the East-end of London. It appears that the reverend gentleman had an element of curiosity in his nature, and began to inquire what places of worship boys over fifteen years of age in his parish attended, and kept a book for accurate statistics. To his indescribable horror, he had to put beside the names of nine out of every ten of these young gentlemen the letters G. N.—Goes nowhere! "This," remarked Lord Hugh, "proves the inefficiency of Board schools with regard to religious education. It is quite certain to lead to absolute paganism, for in the long run Bible reading will be dispensed with altogether."

He went on to observe that educated or cultured people might be able to lead perfectly moral lives without the aid of religion, but the masses needed religion. This is a very hackneyed expression. It is true that the masses at one time were the most religious class; but now-a-days there is no class more irreligious. Who fill our churches? Certainly not the working classes. They have discarded superstition and lost all reverence for things formerly held sacred; and if Lord Hugh Cecil would only take the trouble to study the real needs of a working man, he would not find Voluntary schools among them. It is but a small percentage—and one ever growing smaller—of the nation who really care about religion or religious education.

F. A. U.

MISSIONARY JOTTINGS.

ALTHOUGH a considerable time has elapsed since I last rendered to the readers of the *Freethinker* an account of my wanderings, there has been no slackening in my usual labours. During the first quarter of the new year I delivered some seventy-five lectures in places as wide apart as Glasgow and Plymouth.

I opened the new year's week by delivering the first Sunday lectures—on Freethought—that have been given in Derby for many years. In spite of the beastly weather that prevailed, the meetings showed signs of the active propaganda that has been carried on in that town. But a short time ago and the friends at Derby, thanks to muscular Christianity, found Freethought meetings places where strong arms were as necessary as keen brains. However, a series of meetings were organized, chiefly under the Lecture Scheme, with the result that the position of the society is firmly assured, the membership has been trebled, and a quiet and cordial hearing has taken the place of senseless interruptions and free-fights.

Working my way North, I held four meetings at Stanley, Durham, on January 16, 17, and 18. Here I found audiences of about two thousand at each meeting, and the local clergy considerably agitated at the disturbance my previous lectures had created. The press behaved as well as on previous occasions, about five columns being devoted to reports of the lectures, and an equal space covered by letters upon the subject in succeeding numbers. When I left Stanley vague hints were in the air concerning the necessity of holding a special purification service, and a clearly-expressed determination to bring down some Christian orator to remove the effects of my lectures—a resolution showing but little confidence in the local clergy.

At Edinburgh, the next place to be visited, I found the meetings about as usual. The modern Athens seems a difficult place for Freethought work. From what I can see of the city, there appear to be two classes of people there—one class too degraded to think, and the other class too respectable to think. There is not the same proportion of better-class working men there as in other centres, from which class our best and sturdiest members are drawn.

At Glasgow the conditions are vastly different, and here I found a warm welcome and improved meetings. I lectured there on two Sundays, February 7 and 14, lecturing between those dates at Dunoon, Paisley, Greenock, Motherwell, and Law. The fruits of the Lecture Scheme in these places are apparent in the increased audiences and steadily growing interest in the meetings. Without the assistance of the "Lecture Scheme" these places would still have been parts of "Darkest Britain"; and the good results achieved here are timely indications of what can be done with proper organization.

From Glasgow to Bristol is a lengthy stride, and the next Sunday found me scraping acquaintance for the first time with a West of England audience. Although a stranger to Bristol folk, I was assured that my meetings were the largest the branch had held during the season. After the evening meeting several people became members, and I arranged for a return visit three weeks later. From Bristol I went to Plymouth, lecturing there five days. Commencing with a small audience, I had the gratification of seeing the attendance "swell visibly," and although a fearful storm was raging on the last evening I had a goodly-sized meeting to bid good-bye to.

The West showed no difference to other parts in the matter of opposition, that being as poor both in quantity and quality here as elsewhere. The most persistent opponent was a gentleman who assured me on the last evening that he was not himself—a confession which I accepted as being the best explanation for his speeches. Frankly, I have always much more respect for the intelligence of the Christian who remains silent than for that of the one who rushes into speech. The former shows that he has at least some slight appreciation of the strength of the case against him, while the latter, when he is not bidding for popularity, usually reminds one of the clergyman who complained that he was unable to secure a wooden partition to stretch across the church until he and the curates "put their heads together, and then they got it."

The next place to be visited was New Tredegar, about twelve miles from Cardiff. Although mine was the first anti-Christian lecture ever given here, and the place was

filled with Baptists and Methodists of the deepest dye, the audience appeared to be mostly upon our side, and I received many inquiries as to when I should return. The necessary amount of light and shade was given to the meeting by one man, who informed the audience that I was a liar, a thief, and a murderer; and who, refusing to obey the chairman's orders, received a pressing invitation, reluctantly complied with, to avail himself of the fine evening and take a walk. On the Friday and Saturday following I delivered four lectures in Cardiff, and, in spite of poor advertisements, the attendances were exceedingly good.

Altogether, my first tour in the West was a very successful one. I was delighted with both the places and the people, and I shall look forward with much pleasure to a return visit. Bristol, Plymouth, and Cardiff might all become strong Freethought centres if they were properly looked after. The friends of all the places I visited were anxious that I should return soon, but my engagements prevent my doing so until the end of '97 or the beginning of '98.

After lecturing three times at Bristol on March 14, I commenced a seven days' campaign in Manchester. The Co-operative Hall, capable of seating six hundred people, had been secured for six nights, and after the first two evenings the seats were all occupied. Everyone concerned was highly pleased at the result of the venture; it was a striking example of what can be done if we are in a position to secure good halls in good positions, and advertise the meetings well. Several clergymen were present at most of the meetings, but kindly refrained from exposing the errors of Secularism before such a large number of people. On Sunday, March 21, we adjourned to the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, for three meetings; the effects of the week were seen in the presence of three of the largest meetings I have yet held in Manchester on a Sunday. As I had delivered twelve lectures in eight days, with five or six opponents to deal with at the conclusion of some of them, I began to feel pretty tired by the time I had got through with the last lecture.

Having lectured at Derby, Bradford, Stanningley, Huddersfield, and Blackburn, I crossed to Hull, after an absence of nearly five years. At this place, thanks to religious bigotry, we are unable to obtain a hall unless admission is free—a proceeding that hampers the work to a considerable extent. The three meetings held here on April 4 were, however, well attended, and the collections were fairly good ones, although falling short of meeting the somewhat heavy expenses. Another meeting was held during the week, and I lecture here again on Sunday next, April 11. After that, a visit to Felling, Gateshead, and Sheffield will about complete my winter's touring before returning to London to carry on my share of the work in the "village by the Thames."

Most of the week-night lectures were, as usual, given under the "Scheme," and several other places that have not hitherto been visited, at least of late years, would have received attention had the subscriptions to the fund been large enough to justify further outlay. I am convinced that the only way to successfully open up new ground is to take a good hall, advertise well, and run a course of meetings. To do this means a considerable loss at first, but it is the wisest economy in the end. I could place my hands upon half-a-dozen places where, if we were in a position to lose £20 or so, a really strong branch might be built up. Another way in which our movement might be benefited would be by taking stalls in market towns, fitting them out with a good stock of Secular literature, and placing a man in charge. Even though profits on sales did not cover expenses, the money lost would be well worth the outlay. All this and much more might be done if only a determined and united effort were made by the Freethinkers of Great Britain in the right direction.

When one looks round at the powers that are arrayed against us—organizations that are born of centuries of experience, and tested by centuries of wear; with the forces of sluggish indifference and deep-rooted ignorance upon the one side, and those of threatened vested interests upon the other—one must surely feel that the odds are already sufficiently great without our endowing them with a false strength by neglecting the welfare of such organizations as define our position and champion our opinions.

Hull, April 8, 1897.

C. COHEN.

REVIEW.

THE GOSPELS COMPARED.

Vergleichende Uebersicht der vier Evangelien (Comparative Review of the Four Gospels), by S. C. Verus, reaches us from Leipsic, where it is published by P. von Dyk. The work is dedicated to all lovers of truth, and they certainly may find here the means of arriving at just conclusions concerning the Four Gospels, and the various stories of Jesus found therein. With German thoroughness, the author has made a synopsis in parallel columns of every narrative found in the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Keys and tables are given, so that any item with its parallels can be immediately referred to. The utility of such an apparatus for the just criticism of the documents is evident at a glance.

There have been many *Harmonies of the Gospels* published in all languages since the time of Tatian. They are one and all vitiated by their attempts at harmonizing the dissonance of the evangelists. But we know of but one such careful piece of work as this which exposes at once their harmonies, contradictions, interpolations, and new readings. The nearest approach in English is the valuable little book compiled by Dr. Edwin A. Abbott and W. G. Rushbrooke, entitled *The Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels*. This work, an English rendering of Mr. Rushbrooke's *Synopticon*, was intended to, and does, show that the common source of the Synoptics' yarns was nearest to that given in Mark; but, by the omission of John, it much minimises the proof of the liberties taken by the gossellers with the tradition of the Jesus Saga. Rushbrooke's *Synopticon*, giving the Greek in red and black and in differences of type, certainly takes us nearer to the original than the work before us. Herr Verus adapts his book to German readers of Luther's translation. But the *Synopticon* is far more expensive, costing as many shillings as this does pence, and yet is not so thorough; for a full view of the question.

Dr. Abbott, in his article on "The Gospels" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, says: "It is well known that in many parts of the first three Gospels the same words and phrases are curiously interlaced, in such a way as to suggest that the writers have borrowed either from each other or from some common source. For example, in describing the healing of the sick (Matthew viii. 16; Mark i. 32; Luke iv. 40) St. Matthew begins thus: 'Now, when it became late'; St. Luke: 'Now, when the sun was setting'; St. Mark: 'Now, when it became late when the sun set.'" From all such instances Dr. Abbott got little beyond the inference that Mark contained the earlier tradition from which the others borrowed; that Matthew and Luke contain nothing in common which is not also found in a slightly-modified edition of Mark, and that consequently Mark did not borrow from the other two. But there are many other questions which his own work, and, still better, the work of Herr Verus, should enable the student to solve. We may find not only which is the earliest, but which is the latest; which keeps closest to the common matter, and which departs furthest therefrom, etc.

It has often been noticed that in the turns of expression, modifications, amplifications, omissions, and additions of the four different Gospels, we can gather much of what the writers were driving at; their *Tendenz*, as the Teutons say. We may see, broadly speaking, that, with Matthew, his hero was pre-eminently the prophesied Messiah of the Jews; with Mark, a thaumaturgist; with Luke, a "syncretical parabolist," with Gentile leanings; and with John, the Logos made flesh. But there is more in a comparison of the Gospels than this. We can see from the liberties which each writer took with the Saga that they were all strangers to the alleged facts narrated, and that they adapted the story and *mise en scene* to suit their own purposes.

The general effect of a survey of Herr Verus's *Uebersicht der vier Evangelien* is to confirm the view that the Gospels are a concoction. The author does not quite say this, but he comes near it when he calls them *Dictung* poetry, invention, imagination, or legend. The Synoptics had not merely an oral tradition, but written notes before them. Their close resemblances can be explained in no other way. Their variations, on the other hand, prove that they were so far removed from the events that they felt at liberty to modify and alter *ad lib.* An instructive instance is the story of the fig-tree. In Luke (xiii. 6) we have a *parable* of a fig-tree, which, bearing no fruit, is cut down. In Mark (xi. 14-21) this is an actual fig-tree, which, being cursed, withers *the next day*. In Matthew (xxi. 19) it withers at once. John has the story of going to the temple, in which the incident is introduced, but omits it entirely. An analysis of most of the stories would similarly show allegories turned into realities, and discrepancies incompatible with the view that the gossellers were relating plain matters of fact.

Herr Verus gives less indication of the results of his work than we could like. He seems to say: "There are the facts properly arranged, before you, and you may draw your own conclusions." This is just and right for the critic; but the fact is, most readers are not critics; they want to have an

author's conclusions not only placed before them, but reiterated. That the conclusions of our author are of the most heterodox character may be judged from his consideration of the suggestion of Rudolf Seydel, that the germ of some of the Gospel *Dichtungen* may be found in the Buddha Saga. We cordially commend his volume to all readers acquainted with German. As an aid to Gospel criticism it is invaluable.

WHAT IS FREETHOUGHT?

THE *Christian Commonwealth*, of London, insists that Atheists and Agnostics have no right to a monopoly of the term "Freethought." "Men have never made greater mistakes," it says, "than in their definitions of freedom." This may be true, but among those guilty of making such mistakes we find this same *Christian Commonwealth*. While the term "Freethinker" has, by common usage, become generally associated with sceptics and unbelievers, any one of these will admit that even a believer may be free in his thinking. It may not be true that, in the strictest sense, anybody at all thinks freely. The thing for an honest person to do is to think as he can. To be a Freethinker in any commendable way is to subject everything to a rational process, avowing only that which appears to have the warrant of reason. He makes no surrender of his conscience, imagination, or moral perceptions, nor is he deaf to the voice of history and the testimony of others. All these he utilizes. He brings everything under the dry light of reason, and allows his judgment full freedom to decide as to what is true or false, probable or improbable. This our London philosopher chooses to call "bowing down in bondage to our lower intellectual faculties," which he defines as "the senses and reason." Now, we would like to know what he considers our higher intellectual faculties. According to his view, reasoning is a vulgar performance. But he is not the first Christian who has denounced it as something low and mean.

We are told that "sceptical thought"—that is, thought subjected to the reason—"cannot be free because the process by which it is reached is not." In other words, he who does not go beyond the facts in his possession, and who, taking these facts as a basis of thought, submits them to the crucial test of reason, is not free; but, "on the other hand," we are given to understand that "Christian thought is perfectly free, although it does accept as authority the Bible and Christian consciousness as well as private judgment—not the judgment of the reason simply, but of the entire man." This reveals the very point of difference between the Freethinker and the Christian. The Freethinker exercises the right of private judgment, and the judgment of the reason (if, indeed, you can exercise one of these without the other), in determining whether or not the Bible and Christian (so-called) consciousness are authority, while the Christian subjects his reason and judgment to their authority. "What we need in order to reach a just religious belief," says the *Commonwealth*, "is not to oust these authorities, but to know how to use them." But by what are we going to determine the extent of their authority, and how to use them, if we do not subject them to the judgment of the reason? How are we to discriminate between true and false authority except by our reason? The true Freethinker claims the right to think as he can, and to accept that only which has the warrant of reason; and he readily accords this right to every other man.

—*Independent Pulpit.*

A MIRACLE DEFINED.

THERE'S Mick M'Brierty, he has bothered the life out of ould Priest M'Guire for an explanation of how a miracle can be wrought; and he couldn't have come to a better hand, for it's his raverence that has got the larning, the logic, the metaphysics, the faith, and a big share of the practice that's necessary to distinguish between what's natural and what's supernatural. And, in troth, it's no child's play a clargyman has when he begins to chop up logic to a boy with a head on him like a hatter's block, and that doesn't know a B from a bull's fut; it's just another case of dropping your pearls in the pig market. But his raverence took a good, old-fashioned homely way of explaining to Mick; for you know there's a deal of people in the world whose feelings are more to be depended on than their judgments. So his raverence told Mick to stand up and step to the door, and, as he moved off, he gave him a tight lifter with the toe of his boot, asking him at the same time if he felt that! Mick turned round, with a lip on him like a motherless foal, and said: "Begorra! I rather think I do." "Well," said his raverence, "it would have been a miracle if you hadn't." So Mick's faith is confirmed, but he says he'll study no more at that seat of larning.

THE CHRISTIAN CREED VERSIFIED.

THAT three are one and one is three
I hold a sacred verity:
That Jesus Christ went down to Hell;
But what for? the devil must tell.
And then he winged his way above
To join the Pater and the Dove,
That Mary, *veneranda Mater*,
Gave being to her own Creator,
Married, but neither wife nor maid,
As by no natural impulse swayed;
Her husband Joe, for very shame sake,
Acting just like his sheepish namesake.
All this I strive hard to believe,
Expecting heaven to receive;
Good works, like rags, are of no use,
And our damnation may produce.
But if we've faith and show docility,
God will reward our gullibility.

MERRIE ENGLAND.

CLAVERLEY must have been a model village in the good old days. The school stood between the bull-ring and the church. Bull and bear baiting was carried on under the parsonage windows. Pious Thomas Cartwright says in his *Admonitions to Parliament*: "If there be a bear or a bull to be baited in the afternoon, or a jackanapes to ride on horseback, the minister hurries over the service in a shameful manner, in order to be present at the show." The dogs accompanied their masters to church on Sunday. The sermons must have made the people drowsy, for the virtuous founder of the school left a sum of money to be paid to a poor man to whip out the dogs, and to awaken sleepers during divine service. The parson and his flock did things in a nappy-go-lucky fashion—they were most accommodating. The clerk announced in the morning from his desk: "There will be no service here this afternoon, as the vicar is going to dine with Mr. Soames, the papermaker." That meant a long sitting, no doubt, and much drinking. In one of the adjoining villages the rector closed his church one Sunday in order that his clerk, who was the only tailor in the village, might make him a pair of hunting breeches, which he wanted finished early on Monday for the Melton Mowbray meet. Blessed parson! Happy meet! Splendid Melton Mowbray pies, to be washed down with nut-brown ale! Who would not worship at that shrine? I am ready to go all the way *ad inferos* with "such Christians." People were fonder of alehouses than churches. At Bridgnorth, in 1633, an assembly called Common Hall resolved to suppress two hundred licensed and eighty unlicensed alehouses. Every tenth house an alehouse! Of these places, how many were kept by clergymen? Parsons in our days largely apply for shares in big breweries—Allsopp's, Guinness's, and others. Many are heavy consumers "of reaming swats that drink divinely"—fonder of Bacchus than Jesus.

CHARLES KROLL LAPORTE.

BIBLE READING.

ONLY a short while ago an intelligent gentleman asked us to tell him what book we had read that caused us to lose faith in religion, to which we replied by saying, "The Bible." "Why," said he, "I read the Bible." "Well," said we, "do you believe it?" "Yes," he replied, with some hesitation, "I believe it; that is, I believe a good deal of it." We then asked him what parts he believed, and what parts he did not believe, to which he replied that he believed much of the historic parts, but that the miracles were "a little too strong" for him. He said he thought there was about as much truth in the Bible as there was in ancient histories. "Then," said we, "you don't think the Holy Spirit is any more reliable than other historians," to which he very frankly confessed that he did not think the Holy Spirit had anything to do with it; that it was of human origin, just as all other books are; "but," said he, "it contains many good precepts, such as we find in the Proverbs and in other portions. Many of the Psalms are good and soul-inspiring, and I rather like the character and teachings of Jesus, though I don't believe he ever raised the dead, or that he himself was raised from the dead." When asked what he thought about the birth of Jesus, his reply was: "I don't believe there was any miracle in it. I think he was a natural human being, and that Joseph or some other man was his father." "Then," said we, "you have read the Bible too much to be a true Christian." Our advice to that gentleman was to either leave the Church, or quit reading the Bible.

J. D. SHAW.

BOOK CHAT.

NUMBER twenty-four of the Humanitarian League's publications is a pamphlet entitled *The Gallows and the Lash*, by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner (Reeves, 2d.). The historical and statistical parts are very valuable. Mrs. Bonner shows that capital punishment has no specially deterrent effect on crime; indeed, it is questionable whether the amount of crime in a given state of society is not an absolute certainty, quite irrespective of the lenity or severity of the penal code. However that may be, the question remains, What is to be substituted for the death penalty in the case of murder? Mrs. Bonner argues that murderers are not always the "worst" of criminals. Perhaps not, according to romantic standards; but evidently it is more dangerous to have to deal with a potential murderer than with a potential thief. A person not deliberately wicked, but so passionate as to kill another person when provoked, is not safe to be at large; and the public feeling must be considered as well as that of the criminal. Mrs. Bonner would imprison murderers "for a term in the discretion of the judge." But how on earth can you tell whether your murderer is "cured"? Let him stand in the same temptation again, and he may repeat his crime. We do not believe the question is as simple as Mrs. Bonner seems to think it; at the same time, we recognize large room for differences of opinion. With what she says about the irredeemable brutality of flogging we heartily concur. For the rest, we have only to say that Mrs. Bonner's pamphlet is carefully and well written, though we hope in the next edition she will correct such a plethora as "but," "notwithstanding," and "yet" in two lines of a single sentence.

* * *

Noticing the volume of Paine's religious writings, *Public Opinion* of New York says: "Whoever will read through these four hundred pages with unprejudiced mind cannot but be impressed anew with the misrepresentation and vilification which Paine has suffered for more than a century. So far from being an Atheist, or even an Agnostic, he declared himself again and again a Deist. He might today find a congenial home with the Unitarians. The bitterest retort which, in his own opinion, the orthodox Christian of to-day can hurl at the so-called 'higher critic' is, that his criticism of the Bible is substantially the same kind of criticism, stated, it is true, in language somewhat less offensive to orthodox ears, that Paine inaugurated a century ago when he attacked the claim of Biblical inspiration and infallibility. And the sting of the retort lies in the fact that it is essentially true."

* * *

Professor Dowden's new book, entitled *The French Revolution and English Literature*, will be issued soon after Easter. It will deal with the influence of the great upheaval on Burke, Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley.

* * *

The Rev. J. Irwino Whitty has published *Palestine Explorations: Further Revelations*. According to Mr. Whitty, he was the pioneer of Palestine Exploration, and the people of P. S. F. now ignore his claims. He drops into poetry, and his pamphlet may excite a smile at human vanity.

EXORCISM.

THE belief that the air is peopled by a variety of beings called angels, or demons, is very naturally associated with the idea that these essences can enter into the body of a human being, and produce therein a series of strange phenomena. When a man, previously quiet, and differing in no appreciable manner from other mortals, suddenly takes to preaching, prophesying, starving himself, and scolding other people, it is very natural for him to assume, and for other people to believe, that he is in reality divinely possessed; nor can the modern physician wonder at this, for his experience of insanity shows that many of its victims see visions of the Almighty, and hear utterances from his lips, which have no real existence. Such men have a profound belief that they are in reality that which their diseased brain leads them to suppose. Again, when either man or woman is affected with mania, and rages more like a wild beast than a human being, tearing into shreds every article of clothing which he or she possesses, not abstaining even from murdering others, injuring himself or herself, or yelling out day and night the most horrible blasphemies or obscenities, it is equally natural that the idea should prevail that the victim is possessed by an evil spirit. The former have been canonized as saints, the latter have been subjected to the most ingenious system of religious exorcism.—Dr. Thomas Inman, "Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names," vol. i., p. 513.

PROFANE JOKES.

THE squire's son had just been ordained, and on the following Sunday he was to take the morning service in his native village. He was a young man, and very nervous; however, he did his best, and returned to the vestry, having accomplished the service to his own satisfaction. "I think I got through the service without a mistake, John," he remarked to the old clerk, who was helping him off with his surplice. "It was first rate, Master Dick," said the old man, with enthusiasm; "I don't know as I ever heard it better done." After a pause, he added: "But the old parson, he never gives us the evening service of a morning!"

Ethel—"I don't hate anyone, Edith, but I have made up my mind to renounce this vain, frivolous, heartless world, and be a missionary in Africa." Edith—"Why, what's the matter?" Ethel—"Papa has refused to buy me a new dress for the Johnson's soirée."

One fine Sunday morning a tourist arrived at a kirk in Argyleshire, intending to enter for the English service as soon as the Gaelic was over. "Is the Gaelic service over?" he inquired of the beadle. "No; but it will not be fery long." So the tourist strolled on into the churchyard, where the tombstones lay deep in the long grass. By-and-bye he was recalled by the shouts of the beadle, who stood at the door waiving to him. "But is the Gaelic service over?" he asked, once more. "Oh, ay! it will be over." "But I have not seen the congregation; which way did it go?" The beadle directed his attention to a solitary figure slowly wending his way up the hill, and said, "That's him."

A sky-pilot, seeing a carpenter at work, who boasted of his skill, said, "Do you think you could make me a devil?" "Why, yes," said the man. "Put up your foot; you want the least alteration of any man I ever saw."

Sunday-school Teacher—"What is faith?" Little Boy—"Faith is believing in the superintendent's stories."

Bobby—"Maw, I read of a man to-day who was one hundred and seventy years old." Mother—"Oh, what a lie!" Bobby—"No, mamma, it was in the Bible."

Willie—"Papa, isn't a monarchy the best form of government?" Papa—"No; a republic is." Willie—"Then why do they say the 'Kingdom of Heaven'?"

"This," declared the young man, airily, "I am certain, is at the least my three hundredth time on earth." "It's very funny you don't know any more, then," said the old man, who had listened to his Theosophical harangue.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

SECTARIANS are only for religious liberty when they are in the minority. There is no doubt that if the Seventh-Day Adventists were in the majority they would persecute those who did not observe Saturday as the Sabbath, as bitterly as Sunday "Christians" are persecuting them. In countries like the United States, where Catholicism is in the minority, it talks glibly of religious liberty; but where it is in the majority, as in Latin countries, it exercises the worst spirit of persecution against other religious beliefs. All this is because persecution is the natural ally of sectarianism, which, being partial, selfish, and error-bound, can know nothing of the spirit of Universal Brotherhood, Love, and Liberty, and, therefore, cannot practise it. It is the spirit of Truth that sets free from all limitations and restrictions, not the darkness of error.—Lucy A. Mallory.

The doctor sees the weakness of mankind, the lawyer its wickedness, and the theologian its stupidity.—Schopenhauer.

The supposition, that the terrors of hell-fire are essential or even conducive to good morals, is contradicted by the facts of history. In the Dark Ages there was not a man or a woman, from Scotland to Naples, who doubted that sinners were sent to hell. The religion which they had was the same as ours, with this exception—that everyone believed in it. The state of Europe in that pious epoch need not be described.—Winwood Reade, "Martyrdom of Man."

Give up material fire, and you lose the bodily resurrection. Renounce the bodily resurrection, and away goes the visible coming of Christ to a general judgment, and the climacteric completeness of the Church scheme of redemption is wanting. Mar the wholeness of the redemption plan, and farwell to the incarnation and vicarious atonement. Neglect the vicarious atonement, and down crumbles the hollow and broken shell of the popular theology helplessly into its grave.—William Rounseville Alger, "A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," p. 518.

People talk of Calvinism; Calvinism is just Bibleism.—Dr. R. Wallace.

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, "Easter on the Grecian Frontier."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Insanity." April 20, at 8.30, Social party.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "Moral Action."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road: 11.15, Sunday-school—Lesson by F. J. Gould on "Duty"; 7, Washington Sullivan, "Morality and Immortality."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, H. P. Ward, "Christianity or Secularism?"

HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S.W.R. station): 7, R. Rosetti.

HARROW-ROAD (corner of WALTERTON-ROAD): 8.30, R. P. Edwards, "Secularism."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. Rosetti.

KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7.30, R. P. Edwards. LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon's-lane): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Christianity a Fraud."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack, "Come to Jesus or Go to Hell"; 7, F. Haslam, "The Story of the Resurrection." April 21, at 8, W. J. Ramsey, "David."

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Jesus Christ and Modern Novels."

VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 8, H. P. Ward, "Christianity v. Secularism in the Queen's Reign."

COUNTRY.

BRISTOL BRANCH (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, J. Keast, "Is Christianity True?"

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Stanley Jones, "Jesus Christ and Modern Novels."

GATESHEAD (Co-operative Hall, Whitehall-road): Mr. Cohen—11, "The Ideal Christ"; 3, "Foreign Missions"; 7, "Atheism v. Christian Theism."

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): R. Forder—11.30, "Is the Story of Jesus in the Gospels History or Myth?" 6.30, "The Bible and Ancient Monuments."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, Mr. Hammond, "Is Theism Reasonable?" April 22, at 8, Social evening.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed Easter Sunday.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rotherham-street): 7, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc. April 21, Members' last social dance of the season—8 to 12 o'clock.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): S. Thompson—11, "Easter: What is It?" 3, "Christian Civilization a Delusion"; 6.30, "Is there a God?"

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—April 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 18, m., Camberwell; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton. 25, m., Mile End Waste; a., Victoria Park; e., Camberwell.

POSITIVISM.

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

SUNDERLAND.—Church of Humanity, 23 Bradford-street. Service and discourse every Sunday afternoon at 3.15.

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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