

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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THE OLD WAX NOSE.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain who first likened the Bible to a wax nose, which could be twisted in any direction. The expression is ascribed to Luther, but it was used before him by Erasmus, and before *him* by more than one Catholic controversialist. In all probability it originated with the Catholics, and not with the Protestants. Those who championed the living voice of God in the Church, against the dead letter of the written Bible, were always prone to deride the consequences of private judgment when applied to such a large and heterogeneous volume as the Christian Scriptures. They contended that the Bible is a misleading book when read by itself in the mere light of human reason; that any doctrine may be proved from it by a judicious selection of texts; and that Christianity would break up into innumerable sects unless the Church acted as the inspired interpreter of the inspired revelation. They argued, further, that the Bible was really not what the Protestants supposed it. What they said on this point was a curious anticipation of a good deal of the so-called Higher Criticism. Both sides were right, and both sides were wrong, in this dispute. The Protestants were right against the Church. The Catholics were right against the Bible. It was reserved for Rationalism to accept and harmonize the double truth, and to wage war against both infallibilities.

Perhaps it will not eclipse the gaiety of nations if we are never able to discover who first employed the phrase "a nose of wax" in regard to the Bible. In any case it is sufficiently expressive. The Bible is inspired, but the man who reads it is not. The consequence is that he deduces from it a creed in harmony with his own taste, temper, fancy, and intelligence. He lays emphasis on what fits in with it, and slurs over all that is opposed to it. Every one of the various and conflicting Protestant sects is founded upon one and the same infallible book. "The Bible teaches this," says one; "The Bible teaches that," says another. And they are all right. The Bible does teach the doctrines of all the sects. But do they not contradict each other? They do. What is the explanation, then? Why this—the Bible contradicts itself.

The self-contradictions of the Bible have occasioned the writing of many "Harmonies," in which it is sought to be proved that all the apparent discrepancies are most admirable agreements, when they are properly understood. All that is requisite is to add a word here, and subtract a word there; to regard one and the same word as having several different meanings, and several different words as having one and the same meaning; and, above all things, to apply this method with a strong and earnest desire to find harmony everywhere, and a pious intention of giving the Bible the benefit of the doubt in every case of perplexity. This sort of jugglery, which would be derided and despised in the case of any other book, is now falling into discredit. Most of the clergy are ashamed of it. They frankly own, as it can no longer be denied, that a more honest art of criticism is necessary to save the Bible from general contempt.

But the "Harmony" game is not the only one that is played out. All the "Reconciliations" of the Bible with science, history, morality, and common sense are sharing the same fate. The higher clergy leave such exhibitions of perverted ingenuity to laymen like Mr. Gladstone. Divines like Canon Driver see that this mental tight-rope

dancing may cause astonishment, but will never produce conviction. They therefore recognise the difficulties, and seek for a more subtle and plausible method of removing them. They admit that Moses and Darwin are at variance with each other; that a great deal of Bible "history" is legendary, and some of it distinctly false; that such stories as those of Lot's wife and Jonah's whale are decidedly incredible; that some passages of Scripture are vulgar and brutal, and others detestably inhuman; and that it is positively useless to disguise the fact. Yet they are naturally anxious to keep the Bible on its old pedestal; and this can only be done by means of a new theory of inspiration. Accordingly, these gentlemen tell us that the Bible is not the Word of God, but it contains the Word of God. Its writers were inspired, but their own natural faculties were not entirely suppressed by the divine spirit. Sometimes the writer's spirit was predominant in the combination, and the composition was mainly that of an unregenerate son of Adam. At other times the divine spirit was predominant, and the result was lofty religion and pure ethics. Moreover, the sacred writers were only inspired in one direction. God gave them a lift, as it were, in spiritual matters; but in science and sociology he let them blunder along as they could.

The old wax nose is now receiving a decided new twist, and a considerable number of accomplished and clever divines are engaged in manipulating it. One of them is Dean Farrar, who has just published a bulky volume on *The Bible: its Meaning and Supremacy*, which we shall subject to a very careful criticism.

Dean Farrar's book contains nothing that is new to fairly well-read sceptics. It presents the commonplaces of modern Biblical criticism, with a due regard to the interests of "the grand old book" and of "true" and "fundamental" Christianity, which is probably no more than the particular form of Christianity that is likely to weather the present storm of controversy. But although this book contains no startling novelties, it is of importance as the work of a dignitary of the Church of England. It is also of value, inasmuch as it will be read by many persons who would shrink from Strauss and Thomas Paine. It is well that someone should tell Christians the truth, if not the *whole* truth, about the Bible, and tell it them from within the fold of faith. His motive in doing so may be less a regard for truth itself than for the immediate interests of his own Church; but the main thing is that he does it, and Freethinkers may be glad even if they are not grateful.

Dr. Farrar's book has an Introduction, and we propose to examine it first. He opens by telling the clergy that they ought not to pursue an "ostrich policy" in regard to religious difficulties; that they should not indulge in "vituperative phrases," nor assume a "disdainful infallibility"; that they do wrong in denouncing as "wicked," "blasphemous," or "dangerous" every conviction which differs from their own form of orthodoxy; and that they must not expect all that they choose to assert to be "accepted with humble acquiescence." No doubt this advice is quite necessary; and the fact that it is so shows the value of Christianity, after eighteen centuries of trial, as a training-school in the virtues of modesty and humility, to say nothing of justice and temperance.

The clergy are also invited by Dr. Farrar to recognize the general diffusion of scepticism:—

"In recent years much has been written under the assumption that Christianity no longer deserves the dignity of a refutation; or that, at any rate, the bases

on which it rests have been seriously undermined. The writings of freethinkers are widely disseminated among the working classes. The Church of Christ has lost its hold on multitudes of men in our great cities. Those of the clergy who are working in the crowded centres of English life can hardly be unaware of the extent to which scepticism exists among our artisans. Many of them have been persuaded to believe that the Church is a hostile and organised hypocrisy."

This is a sad state of things, and how is it to be met? Not by denouncing reason as a wild beast, nor yet by relying on emotion and ceremonial, for "no religious system will be permanent which is not based on the convictions of the intellect." Dr. Farrar recommends a different policy. He has "frequently observed that the objections urged against the Christianity are aimed at dogmas which are no part of Christian faith, or are in no wise essential to its integrity." Even men of science have been led astray by objections "based on travesties of its real tenets." One of these false opinions is that "which maintains the supposed inerrancy and supernatural infallibility of every book, sentence, and word of the Holy Bible." This is the principal point to be dealt with; it is here that we must make an adjustment. Nine-tenths of the case of sceptics "is made up of attacks on the Bible," and the only way to answer them is to show that they misunderstand it, and that what they demolish is not Christianity, but "a mummy elaborately painted in its semblance," or "a scarecrow set up in its guise."

"It is no part of the Christian faith," says Dr. Farrar, "to maintain that every word of the Bible was dictated supernaturally, or is equally valuable, or free from all error, or on the loftiest levels of morality, as finally revealed." Such a view of the Bible has been popularly expressed by divines, but they really did not mean it, and it "never formed any part of the Catholic creed of Christendom." The doctrine of everlasting punishment is another of these delusions. There is such a thing as future punishment, but it is not everlasting, it is only eternal. In the same way, the Bible is the Word of God, but it is not infallible, it is only inspired. And what *that* means we shall see as we proceed.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

IS RELIGION A DISEASE?

"La maladie est l'état naturel des Chrétiens."—PASCAL.

Blessed are the healthy, for theirs is the kingdom of man.

HEALTHY and happy people seem to be naturally Secularists. Their thoughts are in and of the world they are fitted to enjoy. The unhealthy and unhappy, those under the influence of fear, sorrow, or depression, as naturally resort to the consolations of an imaginary hereafter. Byron says: "There's nothing so consoles the mind as rum and true religion." But these seductive stimulants are dangerous. The holy spirit may prove to be as intoxicating as alcohol, for religious dram-drinkers soon come to prefer their supernaturalism undiluted with secular philosophy. They fancy themselves exalted above the things of this world, while to sober eyes they grovel in the mire of superstition.

Often slight symptoms of a disease may show themselves in a body otherwise healthy. Having descended from savage ancestors, man inherits superstition in his very blood. Little sign of the taint may appear in healthy manhood, but age, sickness, and distress may develop the hereditary disorder, which has been carefully nourished in infancy by the inculcations of a barbarous fetish book, and of such savage doctrines as those of hell-fire and salvation through blood. The poor lunatic, tormented by terror, lest she has sold her soul to Satan, and is doomed to eternal punishment; the maniac ready, like Abraham, to offer his only son at the bidding of the voice of God, but display in virulent form a disorder once rampant, which is now being mitigated by secular civilization.

A mind awakened to fear of the wrath of God, and the terrors of a Devil who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and having before it an eternal hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, is a mind unhinged. The thought of eternity dwarfs this world into comparative nothingness. Those who really believe that we are born, naturally depraved, into a vale of tears, where all attempts to enjoy this brief existence are but treading the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire, should have an aspect of chronic melan-

choly. For, even if they lay the flattering unction to their souls that they themselves are safe, they must admit that the world, the flesh, and the Devil triumph over most of their brethren.

If heaven and hell are terrible realities, then Dr. Isaac Watts was right:

There's nothing worth a thought beneath
But how we may escape the death
That never, never dies.

How can any real believer be happy unless first callous as to the possible sufferings of others? The attempt to secure a cosy corner in cloudland must engender selfishness.

Those begin to pray when in trouble and danger who never think of doing so when in safety. Their very attitude is that of slavery. It is prostration before a superior power, in whose hands are the issues of life and death. It is the resort of the distressed, the stricken, and afflicted. It is a bad case when one has to trust to the Lord. "Sickness," said Pascal, "is the natural state of the Christian; it puts us in the condition in which we always ought to be"—humble and prostrate before our maker and judge. So, as our Laureate (Mr. Mackenzie) says,

In business trust your healthy head;
In sacred matters trust instead
Your brain, impaired and nearly dead,
When lying on your death-bed.

The old proverb says:—

When the Devil was sick the Devil a saint would be;
But when the Devil was well the Devil a saint was he.

Read the lives of the saints. What an insanitary lot they were! Fasting and maceration to subdue the flesh rendered them virtually insane. The body was despised. Baths were eschewed, and the odor of sanctity was often the odor of filth. In the eyes of the great Catholic Church, to enter on the Christian life means to become dead to the world. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." There is an absolute incompatibility between devotion to God and attention to the things of this life. Whatever is given to the one is taken from the other. Observe the people, even among Protestants whose faith is diluted with Secularism, who turn to religion. They are usually either those who find that godliness is great gain, and for these a Sunday faith usually suffices; or those who look for consolation in their mundane troubles. The girls who cannot get sweethearts join the church, chapel, or Salvation Army. When men will not have them they direct their thoughts to God. Marriage is a cure for religious hysteria. So many a man who, laden with melancholy, has turned his thoughts to a presumably better world, has, on loosening his bile, returned with zest to the affairs of this life a happier and a less religious man. Women have ever been the effective tools of the priests, because of their troubles and restrictions. They are attracted to the Christian faith not so much by its morality—which, indeed, is not original or peculiar to itself—as by its central story of a victim and its promise of a time when all tears shall be wiped away. Their timidity, too, helps to keep them slaves to religion. Hence the instinct of the men of God is to denounce bicycling, or aught else which, contributing to freedom and happiness, renders them less dependent.

J. M. WHEELER.

OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

ON Sunday, June 6, in the Secular Hall, Leicester, the annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held. Personally, I am exceedingly gratified that our meeting this year is to take place in the most Secular town of the Midland districts. For more than thirty years, to my knowledge, Leicester has maintained a consistent and dignified advocacy of practical Secularism. Not only has its local society carried on a determined propaganda against the pretensions of dogmatic theology, but it has always, in its Freethought work, shown the advantages of Secular philosophy. The late Josiah Gimson, one of the most earnest and honored friends of our movement, devoted his time, his ability, and a large portion of his wealth to establish in his native town a permanent hall wherein all opinions upon theological subjects could be freely expressed, and the utility of Secular principles judiciously expounded. Since his death his son, Mr. Sidney Gimson, has proved

himself a "worthy son of a noble sire" by faithfully carrying on the work of his father. Therefore, the place of our Conference this year is particularly suitable, associated as it is with such pleasing recollections. Besides, the Secular friends there are so hearty in the cause, and so hospitable in their nature, that it will be to them a "labor of love" to make Freethought visitors as comfortable as possible. Moreover, Leicester being the centre of many towns where Secularists and Freethinkers are numerous, the Conference no doubt will be well attended.

All the Branches of the N. S. S. both in London and the provinces should appoint their delegates, and give them full instructions as to the duties they are expected to perform at the Conference. It may be an advantage to remember that our meetings in the morning and afternoon will be purely for practical purposes. Oratorical displays are not necessary—these can be reserved for the evening gathering. Neither is it desirable to waste time in discussing "fads," or questions that have no legitimate relation to our Society. The first two sessions of the Conference should be devoted exclusively to the consideration of subjects that have a direct bearing upon the improvement of the organization. The very name "conference" implies that we should confer together as to the best measures to be adopted to enhance the interests of the Association. If all the delegates present will bear these facts in mind, and act upon them, much valuable time will be saved, and the accomplishment of useful work will be the result. It has been my lot to attend many conferences during the last thirty years, not only in this country, but also in Canada and the United States, and I have been sorry to witness the sacrifice of much valuable time in the airing of crotchets which were entirely foreign to the objects of the gatherings. Let us all try to avoid such mistakes at Leicester. The Secularists there are men of business, and we should show them that we are not behind them in this particular.

I am not unmindful of the fact that, ours being a Freethought organization, the widest latitude possible in free speech is expected. To this no one can reasonably object, providing such freedom is discreetly and appropriately indulged in. It is not against the use, but the abuse, of free utterance that we need to guard ourselves. Under the guise of virtue the greatest vice may be perpetrated, and in the name of wisdom the veriest folly may be committed. The present position of the Freethought party, with its vast power for good, its ever-increasing membership, and the growing desire of its exponents to consolidate its forces, will make the coming Conference one of the most important that has ever been held in this country. Motions have to be considered, and propositions discussed, that affect the very foundation of the organization. Regulations that governed our body years ago will not suffice now. The situation, in many respects, has entirely changed, and consequently improved machinery is necessary to enable us to successfully operate under the altered conditions. It is, therefore, a duty devolving upon all Secularists and Freethinkers throughout the United Kingdom to make special efforts to be present at Leicester, and to aid with their counsel in the solution of the problems which will then be brought before their notice. In my opinion, precautions should be rigidly observed to avoid introducing personal matters, except where the actions of any person may have reference to the affairs of the Society. I trust that the members of the Conference will see the necessity of strictly adhering to this wholesome rule.

In the *Freethinker* of last week will be found the Agenda, containing a statement of the principal business which is to be transacted. I venture the opinion that the President's Annual Report, his explanation of the great work he has done during the past year in bringing to completion "the incorporation of a society to hold and to use property, and to receive gifts and legacies for Secular purposes," and his personal statement, will be of special interest, and will furnish materials for grave reflection; and I hope and believe that what is then stated will receive that candid and thoughtful consideration which its importance will deserve. I am particularly anxious that the three motions which are upon the Agenda paper in my name shall be judged upon their merits. My sole object in introducing them is to improve the constitution and mode of advocacy of the National Secular Society. It may be necessary for me here to briefly indicate my reasons for bringing forward the motions; and, in order that the reader may see at a glance the

motions and the reasons, I here reproduce the former: (1) "That the office of Honorary Secretary be abolished." (2) "That, in the interest of vigor and continuity of action, it is advisable that, without any interference with the autonomy of the Branches, the Central Executive, which transacts all general business, should consist of a definite number of persons well known to the party at large; that these persons should be the President and the Vice-Presidents elected yearly at the annual Conference; and that such Vice-Presidents who, by reason of distance, cannot often attend the Executive meetings should be communicated with in regard to any matters of exceptional importance." (3) "That it is necessary that in our Secular advocacy the distinction between Secularism and mere Freethought should be kept before the public."

(1) The office of Honorary Secretary is purely nominal, and, so far as our Society is concerned, it has no duties attached to it. We have a paid Secretary who performs all the duties of the office, and, so far as I am aware, the Honorary Secretary has not been called upon to do any official work since he has held the office. Besides, the two offices are apt to lead to confusion by causing some persons to suppose that two individuals perform the duties which are really fulfilled by one. Moreover, it is no honor or dignity to confer upon such an active worker, as Mr. Forder has been, merely an empty title. As Vice-President he retains his official connection with the N. S. S., and in that capacity he may be called upon at times to act; whereas as Honorary Secretary no labor is ever required of him. As our organization professes to be a practical one, it should, in my opinion, be divested, as much as possible, of all superfluous appendages.

(2) This motion is thoroughly democratic, and provides for an extensive and direct representation of all the Branches, inasmuch as each Branch would be entitled to have a Vice-President, who would be elected at the annual Conference. It also provides that the management of the Society should not be confined to one or two persons, but that its business should be under the control of duly-appointed officials from every Branch throughout the country. This would make the duties of the Vice-Presidents more than nominal; it would impose upon them services for the benefit of the Association. Those who may reside too far from London to enable them to attend every Executive meeting would be communicated with on all business of importance by our Secretary, and thus each section of the organization would have a voice in its affairs. An Executive, to be useful, should be composed of members who are capable of practical work, and who are placed upon it by those who have some knowledge of their ability for such service. I trust that each Branch will well consider this subject, and that it will instruct its delegate to vote for this democratic motion.

(3) It has always been my chief aim, in the advocacy of Secular principles, to emphasize the difference between Secularism and mere Freethought. Of course the latter is necessarily included in the former, but, unfortunately, the former is not always allied with the latter. Freethought indicates a certain mental condition, while Secularism supplies practical rules for the guidance of human conduct. This is a distinction which I am anxious my co-workers in their advocacy shall keep before the public, in order that the N. S. S. shall not be held responsible for all the theories which, in the exercise of their Freethought, some speakers constantly expound to their hearers.

As "seekers for truth," let us assemble on Whit-Sunday in a calm and discriminating spirit, actuated by love for the "good old cause," and with the resolve to do our best to still further extend its usefulness in the task of promulgating positive Secular principles, and thereby emancipating the human mind from the machinations of priestcraft and the snares of theology.

CHARLES WATTS.

There is no way to escape the consequences of wrongdoing, only by refraining from doing wrong. That is the only escape, the only salvation. Belief has no merits. Do right, and peace and happiness will be as inevitable as that effect follows cause.—*J. S. Crum.*

It has been said that the more a person inquires, the less he generally believes. This is true, and arises from the fact that he soon discovers that great numbers of the priests in every age and of every religion have been guilty of frauds to support their systems, to an extent of which he could have had no idea until he made the inquiry.—*Godfrey Higgins, Preface to "Anacalypsis," p. 13.*

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN'S gospel is totally unlike any one of the other three. There is no account of Jesus's birth at all; but the writer abruptly introduces you to—you can scarcely tell what or whom.

He says the *logos* (translated word) was in the beginning (of what he does not explain); that the *logos* was with the God, and was a God; that he made all things that ever were made; that there was life in the *logos*; and that life was the light of men; that the light shone in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The above is an introduction, vague as vagueness could make it. Suddenly the writer says: "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." The other gospels say John was born of a woman. John bore witness of the light, the true light which lighteth every man. This is silly. Light needs no witness; the light that lights every man needs no announcement. That light is the sun, and the only witness it needs is the calendar which teaches people what position in the ecliptic the sun holds.

Worse still, this light which lighteth every man was already in the world, and the world knew nothing of it! As if the sun could be blazing away in noonday splendour, and yet attract no notice whatsoever! He came to his own (whether property or people is not said), and his own rejected him! Fancy the race of man rejecting the sun! The few who did receive him obtained power to become sons of God—although they were not so before—a mystic puzzle or a monkish joke, just as you may please to regard it.

The writer adds that those believers who *became* sons of God were "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." He ought to have said Goddess, for none but a female could be a mother, except in mythology, of course.

He proceeds: "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," etc. We cannot suppose the mystic who wrote this had any notion of what he wrote. If honest, he was a mystical fanatic; I suspect him to have been a monkish trickster writing to bewilder as many as possible, and by means of that bewilderment to entrap them into slavery and ruin.

After the complex introduction, the writer adopts a semi-narrative style, and relates how—

"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. Thou sayest thou of thyself? And he said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you whom ye know not; He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."*

The reader may compare this with the other gospels. He should also note the abruptness of "Jesus Christ," "only begotten son," "bosom of the father"; and also the deputation of priests and Levites sent to John—a subject not mentioned elsewhere, the other gospels knowing nothing of it, we must suppose.

The very next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and at once called him the lamb of God. The story in John i. is totally unlike those in the other gospels. John here does not know Jesus until the spirit, like a dove, descends and remains on him; he knew him before that in Matthew,

and objected to baptize him. In this gospel John does not baptize Jesus at all.

Two successive days does Jesus come to John, although the other gospels say he was immediately driven into the wilderness after his baptism, which took place on their first meeting. Instead of sending him to the Devil for temptation, the fourth gospel makes Jesus march off with two of John's disciples. One of them was Andrew, the other is not named. He brought over his brother, Simon Peter.

The next day again (there being no note of the forty days with Satan and wild beasts) Jesus finds Philip, Philip finds Nathaniel—one of the many Bible puzzles. Jesus bewildered poor Nathaniel, and told him he should hereafter see heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

After relating in chapter i. what occurred on the first, second, third, and fourth days, the authors tell us what occurred on the third day, when Jesus and his disciples attend a marriage at Cana, a place absolutely unknown, of course, and when he, as yet, had not so much as one disciple (i. 35-42). At this marriage Jesus showed his identity with God Bacchus, by turning water into wine, to the quantity of over 150 gallons!! and the master of the feast pronounced it the best wine they had had. This was Jesus's first miracle, although the other gospels know nothing of it. It seems a bit funny that a God almighty should take the trouble to be born a man, to live so long encumbered by flesh, for the sake of performing a wretched trick of this sort. The monkish jester who wrote the tale knew the gullible character of his audience. Millions upon millions have swallowed this miracle, wine-pots and all, and gaped round for more.

Not long after, it seems, Jesus visits Jerusalem at the Passover; and, without riding into Jerusalem on a stolen donkey, committed the riot in the temple. The donkey and the smitten fig-tree are here omitted from the story.

Many believed on him at the Passover on account of his miracles, though the writer does not mention so much as one that he performs there.

The third chapter of this gospel is filled, in its earliest part, with the tale of Nicodemus, and the casuistical manner in which Jesus bamboozled him about the new birth—as Jesuitical a tale as one could easily find.

Of course, we have not Nicodemus's report of the interview; if we had, we should find a very different presentment. A Jewish ruler must have been a poor creature indeed to be puzzled or impressed with the style of "argument" adopted by Jesus.

Some of John's disciples go to him and inform him that Jesus had started baptizing, and all the people are flocking to him. This is a most astounding statement! None of the other gospels names any baptism by Jesus; but here he beats the Baptist himself, who already had baptized all the people of the land. Jesus must have rapidly repeated the ceremony upon all John's dipped ones, and extended his operations to others. It is most curious that no one else should have known of his baptizing at all. Of course, the tale is inserted to belittle John in order to exalt Jesus, as if baptism could exalt any but a lunatic!

Chapter iv. opens by asserting that Jesus baptized more than John, but adds an explanatory note to the effect that Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples. This only deepens and complicates the falsehood, and is evidently thrown in to soften the effect of the lie.

If there were any truth in this Johannine tale, then Jesus must have baptized every person in Judæa and more; and those who hated and hounded him to death, who were guilty of the greatest crime ever perpetrated, according to popular theology, must have been his own disciples. How will the Christian account for such multitudes of backsliders, and for their being the worst criminals the world had ever known? This is a point not often raised, if ever; and it should be urged against the Christians to the uttermost.

But what shall we say of verse 32? John Baptist, speaking of Christ in a very flattering manner, says: "He that cometh from above is above all [he means Christ]..... And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony."

Let us grasp the situation. John had been so successful that he had baptized the entire Jewish nation; Jesus had baptized still more; John says Jesus is from heaven; that he testified to what he himself had seen and heard, and no

* John i. 15-28.

man received his testimony—that is to say, that, although the whole nation and more submitted to his baptism, not one of them all (say a few, if you like) believed in him. I suppose he means to say that the people treated his baptism as a joke, and submitted to it just to humor a crank. We can easily believe that a few persons might have done so, but the whole nation!

Well, well, the Jews, like their God, have ways which are not our ways; and they must indeed have been the strangest people imaginable if they behaved as the New Testament relates. Let us hope they did nothing of the kind.

In the other gospels John finds Jesus a mystery; here he knew all about him, even more than Jesus knew of himself.

In chapter iv. this gospel sends Jesus to Samaria, where, in a village, he converses with a woman at a well. All this is quite unknown to the other gospels. If "the woman of Samaria" had but known the young man's history, she might have told Jesus to look at home, when he reproached her with living with an unmarried man. The Samaritans were easily converted, according to this tale; and yet they remain Samaritans unto this day, and show no signs of turning Christian.

Now Jesus is wheeled round on the pen or style of the gospeller to Cana again, and there he is entreated by an unknown nobleman to heal his son. Jesus obliges him, and the writer adds: "This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee"—a very modest statement, truly, in face of the crowds of miracles reported in the other gospels.

The fifth chapter relates the absurd tale of the pool of Bethesda, and the regular miracles there occurring—a tale that has given the commentators no end of trouble. Jesus, of course, beats Bethesda and the angel; and that is the sole reason for inserting the story.

The Jews are said to have persecuted Jesus for curing the lame man on the Sabbath. But this cannot be true, for the cripple was there by the side of the pool ready to be lifted in for a cure, Sunday or any other day; and there is no hint that those cured at the pool on Sunday were persecuted for it; nor does it appear that the Pharisees persecuted the angel for descending and troubling the waters on the Sabbath. The tale was invented by some one unacquainted with Jews and Jerusalem.

To any unprejudiced person the mistakes and contradictions I have above called attention to are quite sufficient to destroy the credit of this gospel, and to show that, regarded as divine revelation, it must be declared a miracle of impossibilities and follies.

JOSEPH SYMES.

—*Liberator*.

MIRACULOUS CHRISTIANITY.

MIRACULOUS Christianity involves anti-scientific ideas of the world. It assumes that the earth is the centre of the universe, with the heaven, which is the abode of the Deity, stretched above it, and Hades sunk beneath it. The angels and the mystic dove descend from the skies, and the risen Christ ascends to them. When Satan shows Christ all the kingdoms of the earth from a high mountain, the writer seems to take the globe for a plane. The theological geocentricism, which makes our planet the centre of all interest, the especial care of the Divinity, and the sole field of divine action, appears in the Johannine doctrine of the Trinity. It might be possible to imagine deity stooping from a limited heaven to redeem the inhabitants of earth. It would have been hardly possible to imagine a Being, who fills eternity and infinity, becoming, for the redemption of one speck in the universe, an embryo in the womb of a Jewish maiden. For this stupendous doctrine our principal evidence is the anonymous work of a mystic writer.

The Incarnation, it will be observed, is the centre of this whole circle of miracles. Without it they can be hardly said to have a purpose or a meaning. But since our rejection of the authenticity and authority of the book of Genesis, the purpose and meaning of the Incarnation itself have been withdrawn. If there was no Fall of Man, there can be no need of the Redemption. If there was no need of the Redemption, there can have been no motive for the Incarnation. The whole ecclesiastical scheme of

salvation, with all its miraculous appurtenances, apparently falls to the ground. This is a vital point.

In the story of the Star of the Nativity primitive astronomy and astrology are involved. It is useless to attempt scientific explanations, such as a remarkable conjunction of the planets, or the temporary appearance and sudden extinction of a star. The Magi, as astrologers, recognise the star of Christ; it moves before them as a guide, regardless of the general march of planets or the sidereal system, and stops over the cradle in which the child of destiny lies.

There is one class of the miraculous evidences respecting which we have undoubtedly the means of forming our own judgment. We can tell whether there was really a miraculous fulfilment of Hebrew prophecies in the history of Jesus. To the alleged prophecy, that Christ should be called a Nazarene, there is nothing whatsoever corresponding in the Old Testament. Apologists, after trying such expedients as the identification of Nazarene with Nazarite, which, even if it were feasible, would help them but little, Christ having fulfilled none of the conditions of a Nazarite, are fain to give up the problem in despair. But once more it must be said that we cannot pick and choose. Our assurance of the miraculous fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy in this and the other cases is the same, while it is impossible to think that the Holy Spirit would either purposely misquote or lapse into involuntary misquotation. In Matthew xxi. 5-7 the supposed fulfilment of the prophecy is founded upon a literary error, into which a writer acquainted with Hebrew literature could hardly have fallen. The "ass," and the "colt, the foal of an ass," are in the Hebrew not two things, but two expressions for the same thing; and we have before us not only a misconstruction, but, as it is hardly possible that Jesus could have ridden at once upon the ass and upon the foal, a probable adaptation of the history to the fulfilment of the supposed prophecy. The same may be said with regard to the alleged fulfilment of the scripture in John xix. 24, where the words of the Psalm, "They parted my garment among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots," are taken as denoting two actions, when they are a double expression, after the manner of Hebrew poetry, for one. "I called my son out of Egypt," as it stands in Hosea xi. 1, can by no ingenuity be referred to anything but the Exodus, not to mention the strong suspicion which here again is raised of a story framed to correspond with the supposed prophecy. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," in Isaiah vii. 14, is evidently a sign given by the prophet in relation to a crisis of contemporary history, and has plainly not the remotest connection with the immaculate conception of Jesus. Messianic predictions, such as "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be," not only were not fulfilled, but were contradicted by the history of Jesus, who was not a temporal ruler or deliverer, and was therefore not recognised as the Messiah by the Jews. None, in short, of the so-called prophecies will be found to be more than applications, and many of them as applications are far-fetched. This is true even of the most remarkable of the number, the description of the oppressed and sorrowing servant of Jehovah in Isaiah liii. 3, the author of which cannot be said to have distinctly foretold anything in the history of Jesus, even if we take Jesus to have been so pre-eminently a man of sorrows. In no single case can Jesus, or any event of his life, be said to have been present to the mental eye of the prophet. In fact, divines of the more rationalistic school are retiring from the ground of miraculous prophecy to that of ethical application, a movement parallel to that which they are performing in the case of the miracles by substituting natural causes, as far as they can, for divine interruption of the course of nature. But applications, even if they are apposite, are not prophecies. A similar set might probably be framed for almost any marked character of history in a nation possessed of an ancient literature. On this question, as on that of miracles, orthodoxy retreats, covering its movement with language which, while it renounces inspiration, clings without any definite reason to the belief in something which is not human, but divine.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

Every thinker is his own priest.

ANECDOTE OF DAVID HUME.

THE Rev. Dr. Carlyle, in his "Autobiography," tells the following story of Hume, with whom he was personally and intimately acquainted, and whom he declares to have been "of a social and benevolent temper, and truly the best-natured man in the world":—

"When Mr. Robert Adam, the celebrated architect, and his brother, lived in Edinburgh with their mother (an aunt of Dr. Robertson's, and a very respectable woman), she said to her son: 'I shall be glad to see any of your companions to dinner, but I hope you will never bring the old Atheist Hume here to disturb my peace.' But Robert soon fell on a method to reconcile her to him, for he introduced him under another name, or concealed it from her.

"When the company parted she said to her son: 'I must confess that you bring very agreeable companions about you; but the large, jolly man who sat next to me is the most agreeable of them all.' 'This was the very Atheist,' said he, 'mother, that you were so much afraid of.' 'Well,' says she, 'you may bring him here as much as you please, for he is the most innocent, agreeable, facetious man I ever met with.'

"This was truly the case with him; for, though he had much learning and fine taste, and was professedly a sceptic, he had the greatest simplicity of mind and manners, with the utmost facility and benevolence of temper, of any man I ever saw. His conversation was truly irresistible."

ACID DROPS.

ALLAH has beaten Christ all along the line. Everywhere the soldiers of the Cross have given way before the soldiers of the Crescent. Here and there the Greeks have fought bravely, but they have never stood up to the Turks in real earnest. They fled from Larissa, fled from Pharsala, and fled from Domokos. Each place was strongly fortified, and might have been used by determined soldiers and able generals to keep the enemy at bay for weeks, if not for months. The Turks are said to be astonished at the cheapness of their victories.

An American correspondent, quoted in the *Daily News*, writes thus of the Turkish soldiers: "They are the most docile, tractable, and easily-governed men imaginable; yet brave to the last degree, and utterly indifferent to death." The *Daily News* itself, in one of last Tuesday's leaders, admits that "the average Turkish soldier, drawn from the peasantry, is perfectly amenable to discipline, and is in many ways a better man than many of his Christian antagonists." The moral of all this is that the "massacres" we hear so much about, and which have no doubt been immensely exaggerated, are the work of fanatics stirred up for the purpose, and given a free swing, by the detestable government of the Sultan.

John Davidson sings, in the *Saturday Review*, "The Hymn of Abdul Hamid." Here are two verses:—

Though priests in every Church
Prayed God to shield the right,
God left them in the lurch—
They were afraid to fight.

Grasping a shadow, lo,
The Dog has lost his bone—
The Christian Dog! Even so!
Allah is God alone.

The *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, observes: "The prayers and sympathies of the entire Christian world have been with the Greeks in their attempt to steal Crete from the Turks, and despoil the Ottoman Empire. The preachers almost universally have urged appeals to the Throne of Grace in behalf of those fighting to crush Islamism. Even on the floors of Congress, in disregard of national treaties, resolutions were offered expressing sympathy for those Christian people who were warring to extend their empire. But the naughty Turks had the advantage. They prayed five times a day, used no intoxicants; and, best of all, it would seem from the result, had the ear of God turned to them, hence they were victors. Moral.—Always be sure you are in the right and have the strongest battalions when asking God to assist in a fight."

The Prince of Wales was engaged to "open" the Blackwall Tunnel. But this was not enough. The Bishop of London also figured in the ceremony. After the Prince declared the Tunnel "open for ever"—which is a very large order—the Bishop hurried up with a sort of consecration. This is what he said: "Let us pray: O Lord who madest all things [but not the Blackwall Tunnel], by the word of thy power, bless, we beseech thee, this work undertaken for the use of

thy people [to wit, the East-enders]; and grant that the skill of man which thou hast inspired may have such success that this work may bear witness to future generations of our desire to use thy gifts to thy glory, and to bind men together, that with constant hearts and minds they may praise and magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen." How some of the bystanders (perhaps Lord Rosebery among them) must have smiled, at least inwardly, at this pious nonsense. The fact is, the Bishop wanted a look in, for the sake of his own reputation and that of the Church. It was good of him, perhaps, to say a blessing over other men's labors; but £10,000 a year seems a big price to pay for such foolery.

The *Daily News* remarks anent the refusal of Cambridge to accord University degrees to women: "It is the clergy rather than the laity who have decided that Cambridge would be demoralized by giving degrees to women, and the clergy still have, as they had in Clarendon's time, the worst judgment of human affairs among all those who can write and read."

Mr. F. C. Gould, the cartoonist of the *Westminster Gazette*, drew a clever little picture of parsons hurrying up to Cambridge to defeat the motion in favor of granting University degrees to women. Under the picture was the doggerel:—

Hark! hark! the dogs do bark;
The parsons are coming to town.

"What does it matter," asks the writer of "Our Handbook" in the *Referee*—"What does it matter whether the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. G. W. Foote, General Booth, or the Pope is right? They are all right from their own point of view—the only valid standpoint for them." After this curious utterance, it is somewhat strange to find the writer saying that the right line is the "line prescribed by morality which may be defined as experience tempered by aspiration." This is the standpoint of Secularism, so that Mr. G. W. Foote is right after all. We beg to assure the writer of "Our Handbook," who is said to be Mr. Nesbit, that he is a very good Secularist, whether he chooses to call himself so or not.

From one point of view it matters a good deal "whether the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. G. W. Foote, General Booth, or the Pope is right." Mr. Foote believes in liberty of thought and speech, while the three other gentlemen all believe that heresy is a punishable offence. Give either of them the power, and he would persecute all who differed from him. Believing as they do in salvation by faith, and the responsibility of man for his opinions as well as his conduct, they would be perfectly logical in their policy of persecution.

The *Sun* says: "We have endured the Woman's Bible—from Boston—but the thought of Holy Writ in the Kailyard dialect is too utterly utter. Yet a Glasgow firm is starting with a version of 'The Song of Solomon' in the tongue of Maclaren and Crockett. This specimen shows its terrors: 'Many waters canna slocken luv, neither can the spates droon it; gin a man wad gie a' the haudin's e' his hoose for luv, they wad be ategither scorned.'"

Some twenty years ago the Rev. Hately Waddell began putting the Bible into "the ancient Scots Doric." He published the Psalms, but never got further, for it was found that there were few Scotsmen left who could understand it.

"Little Peter," the child martyr, whose death has just been the subject of judicial investigation in Paris, had a very bad time of it in this world, which is (of course!) under the vigilant supervision of "Providence." Little Peter's father, who is a widower, lived with a woman named Deshayes, and the pair between them made his life a hell. At first the father had some tenderness for the motherless child, but under the influence of his she-devil of a paramour he became a perfect devil himself. Little Peter, not seven years old, was beaten and kicked, prodded with a pointed kitchen knife, burnt on the flat of the hand, soused in scalding water, seated on a hot stove, and made to hold out a hammer until his arm was paralyzed with fatigue. Finally, he was wrapped up in an old shawl and deposited in a quiet street, where he was discovered frozen, but just able to say "Father" and "Mother." He was taken to the Hospital of the Child Jesus (O irony!), where he died in two days. Happily, the he-devil and the she-devil who tortured and murdered him are in the clutches of the law, and will doubtless pay the just penalty of their crime.

Is it really credible, we ask our Christian friends, that "Providence" allowed all those infamies to be inflicted on that poor little boy? If it did, then "Providence" is a devil.

The Rev. J. H. Wolfenden, of Yarmouth, has been giving

a lecture against Agnosticism. It is fully reported in the *Yarmouth Independent*, which, however, gives no word of the opposition from Messrs. Kelf, Headley, Forder, etc., though it made the rev. gentleman declare his disbelief in eternal punishment and his dislike to the Athanasian Creed.

Mr. Wolfenden seems to have been not very successful in tackling Herbert Spencer; but there was one point in his speech with which we can agree. He argued that, "unless we conceive of God as a person, there can be no such thing as religion. We cannot worship a force; we cannot pray to a law; we cannot re-construct our Psalms so as to have them read: 'The stream of tendency is my shepherd, I shall not want,' or 'Out of the depths I cry to thee, O thou unknowable,' or 'My soul bless the Eternal, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness, and all that is within me bless his holy name.'" The only god worth having is one who can help us. Once this god is resigned, a nebulous unknowable isn't worth his salt. But it is a downcome to find Mr. Wolfenden bringing his God down to Palestine "seeking after man." This God is as contemptible as the other is vague.

England is a Christian country, and a warder at Reading Prison has been dismissed for giving a few biscuits to a little boy, in a cell, who was crying for food. Freethinkers would never send children to prison, to begin with; and certainly they would never punish a man for feeding a hungry child in any circumstances.

It has been decided by the Mansion House Committee, having control of the Princess of Wales's dinner-fund for the poor on Jubilee Day, that the "pauper feed" is to be conducted on strictly teetotal lines. A glass of small beer, even, is not to be thought of; and the offer of several pipes of port wine has been declined. Poor people mustn't have their morals corrupted. The port wine will be consumed by their "betters," who can drink it without ethical or spiritual danger. If a pauper wants port, he must go to holy communion and take his sip of the standard Blood of Christ.

Last Sunday at Hitchin the clergy, in full canonicals, attended by the choir, and preceded by a cross-bearer, made a tour of the cornfields and farmyards, and offered up prayers for a blessing on the young crops. It would be interesting to know whether the farmers expect any benefit from this performance, and whether it will enable them to get larger advances from their bankers.

Holy Thursday of the Ascension, forty days after Easter, and Holy Thursday of Corpus Christi, the fourth day after Trinity Sunday, probably symbolize the same solar triumph; the first representing the ascension of the corn, the second its embodiment in bread, the body of Christ, born at Beth Lehem, the place of bread.

The *Church Times* says: "Ascension Day ought to be a general holiday. By civil as well as ecclesiastical law, it is as much as Bank Holidays are. In the face, however, of the terrible desecration of Good Friday, and the popular secularization of Whit Monday, it is doubtful whether it would really tend to a more general religious observance of Ascension Day if we sought to get it recognised as a general holiday."

Ever since the Pope's letter on Anglican orders the once Romanizing *Church Times* has spoken out against the Pope as behind the age. It now says: "A good instance of the way in which the Roman Church suppresses free investigation has come to hand. The Holy Office has forbidden any Roman Catholic to question the authenticity of passages in 1 St. John relating to the 'three heavenly witnesses.' In the face of all that textual criticism has discovered, all that the ancient MSS. when compared together have revealed, every Roman Catholic is henceforth required to accept, without question, a passage which, to say the very least, the most conservative of textual critics would not care to defend. This inveterate obstinacy, this wilful refusal to regard with an open mind matters which only the most patient study and scholarly research can determine, is a characteristic of the Roman Church."

But, after all, the Church is astute in this matter. If it once allows that Scripture has been interpolated, and an important doctrine like that of the Trinity backed up by a forgery, where will the end be? There are many other questionable passages besides 1 John v. 7. The Church is trying to stop the letting out of waters; but, of course, she is too late, and is like Mrs. Partington seeking to mop up the Atlantic Ocean.

Lord Kelvin has announced his intention of treating on the subject of "The Age of the Earth as an Abode Fitted for Life" at the annual meeting of the members of the

Victoria Institute, who will have their work cut out to reconcile it with their fetish book.

The *Church Times* is enraged because dissenters have been asked to read the lessons in the thanksgiving service. It says: "To invite those who are perpetuating schism to act as though in full communion with the Church is a practical denial of the guilt of schism. Anything in worse taste, regarded from within or without the Church, we cannot well imagine. We can only attribute it to a desire to do something novel and striking, by way of making the Queen's great Jubilee different from other occasions of rejoicing." The Church wanted to have the monopoly in the show of patronizing God.

A proof that we were justified in saying that some Spiritists will back up any impostors is given by a letter from Mr. Brian Hodgson to the *Two Worlds*. At a *séance* at Manchester Mr. Craddock was caught almost nude playing ghost outside the cabinet. Upon the facts being made public he placed his case in the hands of Mr. B. Hodgson, who exculpates him. Some of Mr. Hodgson's statements are very rich. Thus he says: "A heat of from 90 to 100 degrees would account for the removal of clothing by the guides—i.e., spirit guides." As to his being caught, Mr. Hodgson says this is nothing. What is done to the spirit reacts on the mejum. "I have a case recorded in my journal of a medium I am intimate with, in which, on the materialized hand being painted with aniline dye and a light struck, the dye was found on the hands of the medium, though they had been secured for the experiment." We believe you.

We notice, too, that the members of the South London Spiritualist Mission strongly protest against the inaction of the National Spiritualists' Federation Executive in the case of Mr. Thomas Wild, of Camberwell, who also was convicted of imposture.

Another item from the *Two Worlds*. "I was disgusted," writes an old Spiritualist, who attended a meeting recently in London. "The room was almost dark, and nothing but fortune-telling went on, mixed with hymn-singing, opened with prayer. This is called a *spiritual* meeting. It would be surpassed in any gipsy-van for sixpence. I am sorry I have lived to witness such proceedings in the name of Spiritualism. I left at 9.20; I could stand it no longer, and several others left at the same time. I was very glad to get away, and hope never to get into such a pickle again."

"General" Booth has been cast in damages at the Shore-ditch County-court. The plaintiff, Mrs. Sams, let him a certain house, No. 9 Clarence-road, Clapton, for the use of one of his "brigadiers" and his family; but the place had been used for Brass Band services, and reduced to a shocking condition. The walls were broken, the paper torn off, the kitchen grate ruined, and "Army" bills stuck all over the interior. Mr. Richards, the "brigadier," denied the Brass Band services, and said the noise was made by his three children, who were learning to play three different brass instruments—which the magistrate considered worse than a band. Mrs. Sams will be in no hurry to take another Salvation Army tenant.

It happens that Commander Booth-Tucker is also on trial in New York for keeping a disorderly house and disturbing the residents near the Salvation Army headquarters by maintaining a public nuisance. The court, it seems, was kept in roars of laughter as the witnesses for the prosecution described the all-night meetings, and told how the Devil was burned to the accompaniment of five discordant bands. Sectarian prejudice is said to be at the bottom of the prosecution.

An envelope comes addressed to us with "The Message of Jesus" in large letters outside. Inside was a printed circular addressed "To the sons and daughters of men and women upon earth called Christians." It begins in the true Nazarene style, with the words, "Ye blind fools," and complains how Jesus is insulted by his worshippers. It concludes: "How ye mock me! Me ye entitle the Savior, the Christ, and yet me ye make use of to stagnate and crush out the lives of men. Avault then!, if I am indeed to be your Savior and regenerate you, with this man-worship; let me be understood at last, and know ye that my message to you when on earth, and my message to you even now, is that ye be neither idolaters nor man-worshippers."

A note says: "This is the message of Jesus, which I, the writer, am called upon to deliver, and I am called upon to deliver it not because I am great or exceedingly good (for I am of the least known of men, and am not quite without sin), but because I, too, have tried to work for the good of the world, and have a spirit akin to that of all those who have tried to benefit their fellows, and who have a desire that their work shall continue; and because I have some-

times soared outside my own personality, and have felt that, could I arise some centuries hence, nothing would be more repugnant to me than to find myself being worshipped, and that for which I worked ignored and set aside for this worship of me." The circular is obtainable from A. Bonner, 1, Took's-court, price 1d., post free.

"A Socialist Schoolmaster" writes to the *Weekly Times and Echo* on "Religious Instruction in Elementary Schools." He says: "Much of it has an immoral tendency. I have before me, as I write, a recently-issued diocesan syllabus of religious instruction for use in elementary schools. In the list of lessons on the Commandments the story of David and Bathsheba is selected to elucidate the seventh. Now, it is out of the question for any teacher to explain to a class of boys or girls what is meant by adultery. Usually it is explained away as the love of one man for another's wife. But this euphemistic explanation does not satisfy the average child. I myself have been asked by a boy of twelve years why God inflicted such a heavy punishment on David for so light an offence—as it seemed to him. In most schools it is the custom every morning to read passages from the Bible. One day the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis may be read—a favorite chapter, I may add. The next morning chapter thirty-eight is passed over in silence, unread, and its existence ignored. Thus special attention is called to it with its unsavory stories of Onan, Tamar, and Judah, and the birth of Pharez and Zarah. I was recently told of a case where a child went home and asked her father the meaning of the dowry which Saul demanded of David on marrying Michal."

He continues: "The story of the Creation, the Fall, the Tower of Babel, and much else that is mere fable, are taught as having actually occurred. Even when we get on to the times of David and Saul, and later history of Israel, we are but teaching secular history; and surely school life is too short to be spent on the remote history of another nation when that of our own country is often crowded out of the time-table. The child's mind, too, is filled with the idea of an anthropomorphic, jealous, bloodthirsty God, rejoicing in the death and mutilation of men, and the dishonoring of women. The next day the little ones are told of the infinite love and justice of God, 'who loves mercy and not sacrifice.' But the most ridiculous part of the whole affair is the diocesan examination. Imagine the Master himself asking those little ones He blessed so lovingly such questions, and receiving such answers, as these: How many gods are there? There is one God. How many persons are there in God? There are three persons in God. What do we call this three in one? The Blessed Trinity. Who is the first Person? And so on. Yet those are the identical questions the inspector led off with at the last inspection of the Board-school in which I teach."

Dr. Lyman Abbott's organ, the *Outlook*, holds up Professor Goldwin Smith as a sad but salutary example of the infidelity fostered by an unspiritual theology. Professor Goldwin Smith replies, in the *New York Sun*, that Dr. Abbott "has put Christianity on rollers," and is moving it about from one spot to another, where it is less exposed to danger from science.

At the Central Conference of American Rabbis, presided over by Rabbi I. M. Wise, author of *The Origin of Christianity*, Professor Gotthard Deutsch read a paper on "The Theory of Oral Tradition," in which he showed how little real substratum there was for Jewish tradition when critically sifted. This applies as much to the Bible as to the Talmud and other Rabbinical literature.

"Infidelity" is not to have all its own way inside the American Churches. There are ministers who still stand up for the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible—not even common sense. Dr. John Hall, whose income is several thousands a year, says it is "a poor policy to question the word of God." Rev. A. C. Dixon declares: "Christ said that Jonah was inside the whale for three days, and I believe it." Mr. Dixon does not even express pity for the whale. That animal must have suffered a terrible martyrdom, and all in the cause of orthodoxy; yet no one suggests that it will receive its reward in heaven. Asses go there, but not whales.

"My grandmother's religion," says Mr. Dixon, "is good enough for me." Evidently.

New York ministers are protesting against Moody's campaign. They say he fills Carnegie Hall and empties their churches all around. They invite him to go into the slums. Moody will not accept the invitation. There are no millionaires in the slums, and Moody can't live on conversions.

According to a clergyman who writes in the *New York Evening Post*, the American market is glutted with minis-

ters and would-be men of God. He says there never was a time when a bright, clean, self-respecting, talented, and absolutely fearless young man undertook a greater personal risk in committing himself to the restless sea of ministerial supply and demand. There are so many seminaries for turning out full-fledged theologians that a good proportion are sure to turn anti-theologians, if only to attract attention by their heresy.

According to a Central News telegram, Mr. Richard Scruggs, a millionaire philanthropist, has been arrested at New York, with his private secretary, for smuggling. It is said that the smuggled articles, brought over from England, consisted of jewellery, watches, and lace, to the value of £3,000, and were "intended" as presents to Sunday-school workers at St. Louis.

A despatch from Perry, Oklohama, tells of the ante-mortem tribulations of the Rev. James Romine, Baptist minister, of Jennings, who was tarred and feathered last Friday night by some sheep of his flock, who did not approve of his turning his sick wife out of doors and taking in another woman. His preaching was all right, but a line had to be drawn at his practice in carrying out the Old Testament divorce law.

Gin Pon was hanged for murder at Spokane, Washington, on May 1. He professed the Christian faith, and was assisted to heaven from the gallows by two Christian ministers. It was probably too heavy a job for one.—Rev. C. O. Brown, who had to leave his church at San Francisco for lechery and perjury, has had a call to preach the gospel at Chicago. The *San Francisco Star* says that Brown's character is so beastly that "he would profane a brothel."

William Cowley, a farm laborer, aged sixty-six years, committed suicide very strangely at Kingston-on-Thames. He was discovered hanging inside the top of a chimney-shaft sixty feet high. For seventeen days he had been in that curious position, yet the body was remarkably sound, probably owing to the smoke. When it dropped it would have fallen into the furnace and been consumed. The poor fellow had told his wife that he was condemned to be burned, and that the pit was ready for him. It seems to be another case of religious madness. The jury returned a verdict of temporary insanity. No doubt some of them believe in hell; if so, they are insane to that extent, only their madness has not reached the acute stage.

The total value of Church property in New York city, according to the *Truthseeker*, is 54,670,600 dollars, which is more than ten million pounds of English money. The value of all the ecclesiastical property in the United States is 800,000,000 dollars. Every bit of it is exempt from taxation.

The *Crescent*, referring to President Alfaro's expulsion of the priests from Ecuador, says: "If Christian priests try to upset the established government of a country professing their own faith, how much more dangerous are they in Muslim countries, where they think they are doing a meritorious and religious act by plotting against the powers that be! We unhesitatingly declare it to be our firm conviction that the Christian missionaries were at the bottom of all the troubles in Armenia."

Is Talmage an Atheist? Rabbi A. Moses, of Louisville, says he is. Here are his words: "The irreverend Dr. Talmage is an Atheist, though Sunday after Sunday he cuts capers in his pulpit, and calls himself the servant of God. The God of truth and justice is not in his heart, else he could not call a tyrant (the Czar) a benefactor of his people." We can understand the learned Rabbi not wishing to include Talmage among his fellow Theists. But really the Atheists cannot consent to have him at any price. He preaches for the deicolists, and they must stick to him.

Some time ago it was reported that the Princess Isabelle de Bourbon had outraged her pious family by declaring herself a Materialist. Now the lady is dead, there has been a dispute as to whether she should be buried by the Church, or in accordance with her own wish, without any religious ceremony whatever.

The papers drew attention to "a remarkable scene" at St. Alphega, Southwark, where some "bona fide" working folk attended. The remarkable scene is, however, perhaps to be explained by the fact that a breakfast was announced for the occasion.

The Religious Tract Society boasts of having circulated last year over sixty millions of publications, making a total of 3,215,015,110 copies since the Society was started. The figures are large, but the amount of influence is far from proportionate.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. C. WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—May 30, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road. June 6, Leicester, Conference of the N. S. S.; 13, Bristol-street Board School, Birmingham; 15, Aston; 16, Handsworth. August 15, New Brompton.—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.

SYDNEY SMITH.—You will find a good deal of matter, with ample references, in Mr. Foot's pamphlet entitled *A Virgin Mother* (price twopence). The "three that bear witness" text was settled for ever by Porson. It is admitted to be an interpolation in the Revised Version of the New Testament; and, of course, an interpolation is a mild name for a forgery.

T. MARTIN.—See "Sugar Plums." We wish the Pontypridd friends all success in their gallant enterprise.

E. PINDER (Leicester).—Thanks for the directions, which are inserted in "Sugar Plums."

E. T. H.—(1) The lower the organism, of course, the less its capacity for pain or pleasure; but it is nonsense to say that the lower animals do not suffer because they do not feel as much as the higher ones. There are vast differences in sentience even among men themselves. (2) When design is seen in the spider's web, the fly's side of the case is ignored.

G. DIXON.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

ENQUIRER.—John Stuart Mill's overstrained, and even ridiculous, eulogy of Jesus Christ is thoroughly examined in Mr. Foot's pamphlet entitled *What was Christ?* The eulogy occurs in Mill's *Essay on Theism*, which he did not revise for publication. Any one who reads Professor Bain's monograph on John Stuart Mill can see that he did not exactly know what he was writing about on that occasion. He was very poorly read in New Testament criticism. This renders his opinion of very little value, except to the Christian Evidence people, who live on the weak or careless admissions of eminent sceptics.

E. PACK.—Your engagement list is inserted up to the end of June. Dates beyond that will be inserted in due course.

S. GORE.—Our opinion of Mohammed was given in our recent articles on the Bible and the Koran. In his virtues and his failings he was a *man*—which is more than can be said of the Jesus of the Four Gospels.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: W. McLean, 5s.

G. J. WARREN.—Your postcard reaches us as we are going to press. Much pleased to hear that you are re-elected on the Mile End Vestry, being second on the poll. We are sure you will do good work in any position. Glad to know also that the Branch's open-air work is being carried on energetically.

G. BRADY, sending 10s., his monthly subscription to Mr. Foot's Lecture Scheme, hopes money is coming in freely for such a deserving enterprise. No more is received than is publicly acknowledged. It is quite inadequate to the work.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Secular Thought—Blackpool Gazette—Sydney Bulletin—Adult—Literary Guide—Echo—Two Worlds—Weekly Times—Progressive Thinker—Western Morning News—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker—Liberty—Lucifer—Crescent—New York Public Opinion—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel.

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

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

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

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

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- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
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- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
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SUGAR PLUMS.

DELEGATES and individual members attending the Whit-Sunday Conference of the National Secular Society are desired to observe the following directions on arriving at the Midland Station, Leicester. Going out of the station, they should turn to the right and go down London-road as far as the Clock Tower; then turn sharp to the right again, and go down Humberstone-gate until they reach the Secular Hall, which is situated on the right side. The whole walk from the station occupies barely ten minutes. Once at the Secular Hall, visitors will find themselves in good hands, and be directed to suitable lodgings, either at private houses or at hotels, temperance or otherwise, as may be desired.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday evening in the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, upon "The New Religious Revival." Mr. Bater occupied the chair. The audience was not so large as usual, in consequence, no doubt, of the exceedingly fine evening; but all present evidently enjoyed the lecture, which was, we understand, one of Mr. Watts's best. The applause was frequent and enthusiastic.

This evening (Sunday, May 30) Mr. Watts will again lecture at the Athenæum Hall, taking for his subject "The Jubilee and its Revelations." This is an attractive topic just now, and should secure a good audience.

Mr. Boorman reports that the New Brompton Secular-school anniversary was a grand success, and the rendering of the cantata, *Daisy Dell*, by the children delightful. Mr. W. B. Thompson presented the prizes to the scholars, and the members of the Reading Circle received certificates from the Council of the National Home Reading Union.

The Pontypridd Branch means business. Mr. J. W. Cox delivered an able and eloquent address for it last Sunday at Porth, his subject being "The God of Creation and the God of the Bible." A large open-air assembly gathered to hear "the infidel," but they kept good order, and often cheered his utterances. Several questions were asked, and satisfactorily answered. The people wanted to know when the next lecture might be expected. The Pontypridd friends mean to work the whole of the Rhondda valleys, and are trying to obtain a hall for lectures by speakers from London.

Mr. A. B. Moss addressed large open-air meetings on Sunday at Camberwell and Peckham Rye. In the evening he lectured to a fair audience in the Camberwell Secular Hall. A good day's work now the sun is beginning to shine in earnest.

The Humanitarian League will issue in the autumn the third volume of its publications. It will contain six papers, including "Public Control of Hospitals," by Harry Roberts; "The Shadow of the Sword," by G. W. Foot; "What it Costs to be Vaccinated," by Joseph Collinson; and "The Gallows and the Lash," by Hypatia Bradlaugh-Bonner. One of the early forthcoming pamphlets of the League will be on the English Game Laws.

We are glad to see that the Humanitarian League is taking up the subject of the ill-treatment of horses in the streets of London. One of its suggested reforms is certainly desirable. There ought to be fixed stopping-places on 'bus and tram routes. It is shocking to see horses pulled up sharply, sometimes while going up a hill, for a single penny passenger, and then starting afresh with a terrible strain on every part of their anatomy. Now and then you see a thoughtless woman stopping the 'bus to get down only a few yards from the spot where someone else has just alighted. We wish the Humanitarian League all success in its campaign of mercy.

They are going to have Sunday music at Berwick-on-Tweed. The Volunteer Artillery band offered to play on the Ramparts on Sunday afternoon, and to take up a collection on behalf of local charities. Of course the offer was opposed by the Sabbatarians. One said it would help to empty the churches, another thought it would draw the children away from Sunday-school, and another waxed eloquent over our good old friends, "the thin end of the wedge" and "a Continental Sunday." However, the Sabbatarians could only muster six at the voting, and as there were eleven on the other side, including the Mayor, the Artillery Band will discourse sweet music on Sunday afternoons. It is to be all "sacred," of course; but other music will no doubt follow in good time. Perhaps that speaker was right, after all, about the thin end of the wedge. We hope he was.

The *Literary Guide* makes a capital introduction to the advanced literature of the day. The June number, just

issued, reviews at length Dean Farrar's "New Bible," Professor Karl Pearson's *Chances of Death*, C. Douglas's *Ethics of John Stuart Mill*, Jaeger on *Problems of Nature*, and, what is probably the most notable book of the day, the *History of Intellectual Development*, by J. B. Crozier. Under the title of "The Freethought Valhalla," a kindly notice is given of Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, which is described as "a monument of labor and research, and forms a most useful, indeed indispensable, addition to the Rationalist's library." There are, as usual in the *Literary Guide*, a number of well-written "Short Notices," and an account of "Rationalism in the Magazines."

M. Brisson's speech, in which he publicly declared that he would rather have no God than such an one as described by Pere Ollivier in the famous Notre Dame sermon on the Paris fire, has been placarded throughout France and given general satisfaction.

Daylight, our bright Norwich contemporary, has a strong article on Father Ollivier's brutal sermon on the Charity Bazaar catastrophe in Paris. "The placarding throughout France of President Brisson's spirited and enlightened reply will," it says, "do much to open the eyes even of the dullest of the French people. It will discredit the black-coated brigade generally, who arrogantly presume to speak with the simulated voice of God."

Judge Carpenter, at Detroit, Michigan, has given judgment in favor of Conrad Pleiffer, who petitioned against the "Bible Readings" in the public school which his son attended. Counsel on the other side contended that it was the duty of every School Board to teach the Christian religion. Judge Carpenter's comment on this was as follows: "If this position is sound, not only should the Bible be taught, but all other forms of Christian religious instruction should be given in the schools. The Constitution prohibits all religious teaching in the public schools, or it prohibits none. The provisions against compelling a person to pay taxes for the support of a teacher of religion either forbids the proposed use of readings from the Bible, or it forbids nothing. It seems to me clear that such teacher is a teacher of religion towards whose support persons are compelled to pay taxes, and therefore the Constitution in explicit language forbids such proposed use."

The *Blackpool Gazette* gives an account of an interview with the Rev. W. Binns, the Unitarian pastor there. Mr. Binns seems to be a very fair-minded man, and no doubt his broad Unitarianism makes a decent "feather-bed" for a falling Christian, as the elder Darwin said. Mr. Binns makes it clear that he does not regard the Bible as peculiarly inspired. He said: "We cannot be quite sure of what Jesus Christ actually said. He wrote nothing Himself: in this respect He was like Socrates. We only know what He said from other people who have given imperfect reports; and many of these reports bear on the face of them the evidence of unreality. As a matter of fact, you can prove religion of many sorts out of the Bible. You can prove Polytheism. You can prove Henotheism, as Max Müller calls it. You can prove Dualism; and you can prove Unitarianism, which is a form of Monotheism. Indeed, you can prove almost everything except Trinitarianism; and, so far as I have been able to see, no Biblical author plainly asserts that."

Ten years ago a Secular Society was for the first time started at Silverton, Oregon. Now they have a paper of their own, the *Torch of Reason*, and the number before us gives a picture of the handsome Liberal—i.e., Freethought—University which it is proposed to erect there, and for which over a thousand dollars have already been pledged. Our American friends are indeed go-a-head, and in this laudable enterprise we wish them all success.

Freethought v. Theology.

Theology of the old stamp, so far from encouraging us to love nature, teaches us that it is under a curse. It teaches us to look upon the animal creation with shuddering disgust; upon the whole race of man outside our narrow sect as delivered over to the Devil; and upon the laws of nature at large as a temporary mechanism, in which we have been caught, but from which we are to expect a joyful deliverance. It is science, not theology, which has changed all this; it is the Atheists, infidels, and Rationalists, as they are kindly called, who have taught us to take fresh interest in our poor fellow denizens of the world, and not to despise them because Almighty benevolence could not be expected to admit them to heaven.—Leslie Stephen, "Essays on Freethinking and Plain-speaking," p. 354.

SCIENCE AND IMAGINATION.

It is not uncommon for those who know very little or nothing of science to put science and imagination in opposition to each other, as though one were inconsistent with the other. It is said of such a one, he is a man of science; of another, he is a man of imagination. The fact is, science and imagination are not only compatible, but there can be no really great scientific man who is deficient in imagination. Science does not consist merely in collecting facts. It does not consist in enumerating things that have been observed. It consists rather in the observation and collection of facts, in their classification and the discovery of the principles which underlie them. The popular idea, that a man who brings together a basket of bones or a box of shells is a scientist, is a very great error. The man of science is the one who can distinguish between the different bones, can put those of the same genera species of variety together, and reconstruct the frame of the creatures to which they belong. He is the one who can take those shells, separate them, and describe the creatures which live in them, and their relations with one another. In the higher sense, the man of science is one who, from the observation of facts, has the ability to arrange them in order and to explain their meaning, as Newton explained the cause of the fall of the apple, when he, by the power of imagination, conceived that the same force which brought the apple to the ground was that which held the planets in their orbits.

No great discovery is made without the use of the imagination. It enables the man of science to think beyond what has been actually discovered; then, by the use of the scientific method, he can verify what he has conceived as possible. Imagination is to the scientist what the lamp is on the cap of the miner; it enables him to see a little beyond his present position. Men like Humboldt, Huxley, Tyndall, are those in whom imagination is strong and vivid. Darwin and Wallace never could have discovered the principle of natural selection without imagination to enable them to look beyond the popular theory, as well as the scientific knowledge to see that the popular theory was untenable.

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

Anecdote of Thomas Paine.

One day Thomas Jefferson invited a number of choice friends to dinner. Almost at the last moment he was distressed to find that he inadvertently overlooked Thomas Paine. He at once dispatched a favorite servant in all haste to Paine's lodgings, with an emphatic apology for his neglect to send an invitation at the proper time, and an urgent entreaty that he would overlook the fault, and come at once to meet a party of congenial friends, adding that it would be a grief to himself and to them if the hero of two hemispheres was not present at the dinner. Paine at once began to make preparation to attend.

"Will your honor allow me to assist you in getting ready?" the servant asked.

"It is not necessary," responded Paine; "I shall be ready in a moment."

"I thought that perhaps I might brush your honor's coat," persisted the servant.

"Oh," said Paine, "if it is only my clothes you want, I can put them in a bundle for you, and I can stay at home."

The Futility of Prayer.

He is a lazy ingrate who asks another to do that which he should perform with his own hands. Even a God should be exempt from constant teasing for personal favors. And praises, telling him how good and great he is, smack of the adulation of the courtier to his king, or the savage magnifying the powers of his idol, hoping to gain favors by flattery. The wise man who grasps the mighty problems of nature, and is awed with wonder as he witnesses the magnificent display of infinite power, will not cringe like a whipped cur in its presence, but, gazing aloft and around him, declare: "I, too, am a product of that same unfathomable Energy which called the imperishable whole into being, and it has no need of my prayers or praises."—*Progressive Thinker*.

Obituary.

I REGRET to have to notify the death of the son of Mr. C. Harwood, the secretary of the Edmonton Branch of the N.S.S. He died on the 17th inst., and was interred at the Tottenham Cemetery, Mr. Cohen officiating.—ARTHUR WINNER.

MARTHA AND MARY.

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, 'Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me.' And Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.'"—LUKE x. 38-42.

DEARLY BELOVED SISTREN,—The scripture moveth us at sundry times and in divers places to express indignation at its doctrines, and, in the case of the narrative before us, although it is frequently extolled as a touching example of the beautiful teaching of our Divine Exemplar, I confess I see rather the slimy trail of the priest than the path of a true moral teacher. The picture rises before me. The wandering ex-carpenter and preacher, who, according to his own account, had not where to lay his head, is hospitably received by the good Martha into her home. She, anxious for the credit of her house, and having no servants, is "cumbered about much serving." She knows wandering preachers have good appetites, and possibly has to cook and serve not only for Jesus, but also for his hungry disciples. She knows the work of a house, and of a hostess without servants. She has experienced, too, that, while wandering preachers may find many rich women to minister of their substance, a poor woman's work is never done. And there is her younger sister (for it is Martha's house) fascinated by, and fascinating, the young teacher, sitting at his feet, letting her hair fall on his knees, because (artful minx!) she knows how attractive are a girl's eyes when gazing upwards. She has always been petted and spoiled. Her good sister, though much needing her help, will not reprove her for idleness before company. She will consult the guest. She thinks first of him, and attributes to him a share in her own thoughtful regard, which he does not possess. For what does the divine teacher answer? Does he show any sympathy with her toil and care on his behalf? Not a jot. He ignores her self-denial for his sake; rebukes her for being careful and troubled, and will not allow her idle sister to help. The one thing needful is to loll and listen to him. I fancy this is but a priestly tale, and that no man ever was so rude and mean as to act thus, or so arrogant as to declare that "a greater than Solomon is here"; and "all that ever came before me were thieves and robbers"; or so insane as to say: "Take, eat; this is my body and blood." 'Tis but a story. Yet a story hath lessons, though they are not always those the writer intended.

I like this poor Martha, plain and rough though she be, compared to her plump and pleasant sister. It is such as she with toil-hardened hands, anxious brow, and tear-furrowed cheeks who, "cumbered about with much serving" by taking thought for the morrow, have made the world worth living in by man. Mary is the girl to go to church with when you know Martha is at home preparing the dinner. It may be very nice singing hymns with Mary in the parlor, but when I want a wife to share my home I will look for Martha in the kitchen.

It is the excellent foppery of the world that it cares more for those who minister to its vanity than for those who work for its welfare. I have seen it often, dear sistren, the diligent and industrious person working from morn till night that the idle one may loll about and be happy in her laziness. And I have seen, too, the male admirer petting the petted one, disparaging the worker, and encouraging the idler in her idleness. But I have never seen it without disgust, and the reflection that, while such is human nature, we shall ever have the many toiling for the few.

Napoleon Bonaparte was a cruel "man of destiny." In warfare he had less regard for human life than a tiger. But he had one trait which commands my respect. He recognised the utility of work, and the importance of all that served the needs of the world. When a laden woman came on his path he stepped aside, and made his officers do likewise. "Respect the burden, messieurs," said Napoleon. The saying does him more credit than all his fine utterances. But Jesus, the incarnate God, the divine example, does not respect the burden. He is a guest without regard for the household needs of his hostess. In all his utterances there is not one word in praise of

industry. Even those who are performing the last sad offices of respect for the departed must leave all to follow him, and "let the dead bury the dead."

What, then, is the moral of the story? Evidently, my dear sisters, it was intended for you. You are in your proper place when sitting at the feet of some religious teacher. You must look after your own precious souls, and not after the bodies of others. Worldly duties are incompatible with the religious life, and those who love the world have not the love of the Father in them. This seems to be the intended moral; but the true one is far different. It is that priests have in all ages taught what suits their own purposes; that they have disparaged the secular work of the world, and placed religion above domestic duty. This gospel is better fitted for the mendicant monks who first propagated it than for the nineteenth century. UNCLE BEN.

BRAZIL'S JOAN OF ARC.

A MODERN Joan of Arc has appeared in Brazil. About a couple of months ago, while the inhabitants of a small village near Bom Jardim were assembled for public worship, they were startled by a piercing shriek. A half-breed girl, young and good-looking, was found to be writhing on the ground in agony. When she recovered she said she had seen a vision from heaven. A dim figure had appeared before her, and had commanded her to lead the people against the enemies of the Church. The worshippers became greatly excited. The priests tried to calm them, and maintained that the girl was suffering from a hallucination. They said that the girl had been preparing to enter a convent, and that constant praying had unsettled her mind.

What happened after that reads like a page from the history of the Middle Ages. The next morning the townspeople gathered at the house of Maria and prayed. Their prayers took the form of wild invocations to the Deity to destroy the enemies of the Church. Soon the worshippers had prayed themselves into a state of frenzy, and then it was suggested that Maria Barbosa lead them on to the town of Bom Jardim. A shout of delight hailed this idea. The girl, seizing a crucifix, held it aloft, and called on all who loved the Church to follow her. A moment more and 800 frantic men and women, with this young amazon at their head, were moving rapidly along the road.

Maria spends much of her time in fasting and prayer, and is said to have had a number of visions pointing to the overthrow of the Republic and her own triumphant entry into Rio Janeiro as the deliverer and champion of the Church. She is believed to be preparing for the rôle of a Joan of Arc, and the authorities regard her as one of the most dangerous figures in the fanatical insurrection. Several weeks ago an expedition started for Carinhenha to surprise and capture her, but it has not made much progress owing to the disturbed condition of the country. Meantime every effort is being made to prevent the insurrection from spreading.

—Westminster Gazette.

QUATRAINS.

PESSIMIST AND OPTIMIST.

THIS one sits shivering in Fortune's smile,
Taking his joy with bated, doubtful breath.
This other, gnawed by hunger, all the while
Laughs in the teeth of Death.

MASKS.

Black Tragedy lets slip her grim disguise,
And shows you laughing lips and roguish eyes;
But when, unmasked, gay Comedy appears,
'Tis ten to one you find the girl in tears.

COQUETTE.

Or light or dark, or short or tall,
She sets a springe to snare them all;
All one to her—above her fan
She'd make sweet eyes at Caliban.

EPITAPHS.

Honest Iago! When his breath was fled
Doubtless these words were carven at his head
Such lying epitaphs are like a rose
That in unlovely earth takes root and grows.

FAME.

Of all the thousand verses you have writ,
If Time spare none, you will not care at all;
If Time spare one, you will not know of it:
Nor shame nor fame can scale a churchyard wall.
THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

JEWISH HISTORY RECONSTRUCTED.

ALTHOUGH early Roman or early Maori history may be safely set down as mythical, it must be allowed that the legends cast some light on the facts of historical evolution. So with the Bible. Its early heroes are probably all fabulous, yet they nonetheless throw light on facts. Lost history cannot be recovered save by the discovery of historical monuments; but plausible suggestions may be thrown out as to what was the basis of the old traditions.

As an illustration, take the story of Cain and Abel. It is consonant with what we know of other Semitic peoples that these names represent eponymous ancestors of different tribes; the one having attained to the animal totem stage, while the other remained plant totemists. The natural advantages of the former would find itself expressed by the statement that God preferred the offering of the former, while the wandering character of nomads and marauders would lead settled peoples to regard them as fugitives from justice. The story of Noah and the Flood, too, though ridiculous in its details, may point to some catastrophic inundation which enabled only a boat-owner to escape. The story of Abraham may point to the original Chaldean home of the Palestinian tribes, and the incident of the substitution of the ram for Isaac to a time when animal sacrifices took the place of human ones. The story of Agar and Ishmael indicates a knowledge that the Bedouin Arabs were of the same stock as the settled Beni Israel. Of course, the Arabic tradition makes Ishmael the first-born also legitimate. In the tale of the marriage of Isaac with Rebekah perhaps we may trace the amity and alliance of Judea and Syria; while the story of Jacob and Esau expresses how the warlike hair-clad hunters of Edom were supplanted by the superior mental resource of the settled Jews. The story of Joseph may be taken as a mythical explanation of the falling of the tribes under the sway of Egypt, whom we know, from the Tell-el-Amarna tablets, ruled in Palestine, and who probably took some captives to Egypt. Their delivery from bondage and the conquest of Palestine are summed up in the stories of Moses and Joshua; but the amount of historical truth connected with these heroes is largely conjectural. To Moses has been applied an ancient story told of Sargon of Babylon, and a code of laws which could never have been promulgated while wandering in a wilderness, but are evidently the outcome of a well-defined priestly organization. From the books of Samuel onward we seem to be dealing with something like real history, though the wealth of David and Solomon and the powers of Israel and Judah have doubtless been largely exaggerated. The whole stories probably did not appear in anything like their present shape until after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity.

The only external references to Jewish history point to them as ever but tributary tribes under Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Macedon, Syria, or Rome. From the position Palestine occupies as the key to the Mediterranean and the road between Africa and Asia, it never could have been long a truly independent kingdom, in face of the vast monarchies above mentioned. It is doubtful whether the Israelites were in Palestine at the time of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets in the fifteenth century B.C. But even in the tenth century, shortly after the alleged glories of Solomon, Sheshonk, King of Egypt, was master of Israel, Moab, and Edom. From the time of Shalmaneser II. Assyria becomes sovereign over Palestine. During Egyptian bondage the tribes of Israel showed some independence, and Joseph was looked up to as their ancestor. Under Assyrian rule the Southern tribes of Judah, as furthest from the seat of government, showed signs of self-rule, and the brigand David, of Judah, became the national hero. The Messiah, who was to deliver them from foreign yoke, was to be a son of David. But from Azariah to Ahaz tribute was paid to Assyria, and Jerusalem was captured by Sargon. Hezekiah, though sheltering under Egypt, was subdued by Sennacherib, and Manasseh paid tribute to Assurbanipal. It was in the attempt to preserve the integrity of their kingdom and of their religion that the reformers arose known as prophets. Their personal utterances were influential, but Judaism lacked organization. This was gained when the narrow limits of independent territory comprised but fifty miles around Jerusalem. The Levites, hitherto scattered at local shrines, were made a distinct class of attendants at the temple, and in the time of Josiah we find the ancient rites completely expelled by the Jahvists, and a Book of the Law found, ascribed to Moses, and fervent in its denunciations of idolatry. But it was not long before Nebuchadnezzar overran the country, and carried the king, with his chief officers and men, captive to Babylon. Here their thoughts were still on Zion, and when Cyrus was master at Babylon a prophecy was found and ascribed to old Isaiah, that he, the Lord's anointed, should restore the Jews to their own land. The prophecy fulfilled its purpose. The Jews returned (556 B.C. to 458 B.C.). The break-up of Babylon, followed by that of Lydia and the rise of Macedon and Rome, was a time of intellectual ferment. Great teachers arose; Pythagoras in Greece, Buddha in India, Lao-tse and

Confucius in far-off China. Ezra and Nehemiah promulgated the law, and the scribes became a power in the land. At first only the Torah was considered sacred, as we can see from it alone being accepted by the Samaritans, who built a rival temple and kept up ancient sacred rites on Mount Gerizim. As Persia fell before Alexandria, Palestine became subject first to Macedonian rule, then to the Greek Ptolemies established in Egypt, and then under Seleucus IV., passing under Syrian sway.

The attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to crush the nation evoked the denunciations of pseudo-Daniel, and the Maccabean struggle ensued, which brought a temporary independence. But quarrels arose eventually. Pompey stepped in, making Hyrcanus high priest. Antony crucified Antigonus, the last king of the Jews, and Herod took his place. Herod built the third temple, and did much to improve the country, only to be hated as a usurper. His son, Archelaus, was deposed by Augustus, and Judea became part of a Roman province, with Syria, its procurator, residing not at Jerusalem, but at Cesarea. Many vain attempts were made to throw off the Roman yoke, first by Judas, a Messiah of Galilee, then by Theudas and others. Prophets arose predicting woe, and calling for repentance, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Finally, after revolt on revolt, Jerusalem was taken by Titus, and the temple burned to the ground on August 10, 70 A.D.

In two generations the Jews gathered up strength for for one more heroic conflict, led by the Messiah, Bar Cocheba, the Son of a Star. Again they were hopelessly crushed, shattered, and scattered. But the Jews' sufferings were not yet over. Meantime a new spirit had arisen. Greek culture, Roman dominion, and the spread of Buddhism westward had taught some lessons. A party of reformers arose, declaring that the Messiah's kingdom was not of this world, that the Christ taught peace and submission, and that he himself had been a sufferer. As the later Isaiah had said of Israel, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." These followers of the suffering Messiah made the Jews endure more than all their other oppressors put together.

LUCIANUS.

BOOK CHAT.

The Book of the Secrets of Enoch is an apocryphal work, hitherto unknown to Christian Europe save in Russia, having been preserved in Slavonic, as its companion, *The Book of Enoch*, had been preserved in its entirety only in Ethiopic, in which it remained till the time of Archbishop Lawrence. Mr. R. H. Charles, who some few years since brought out a new edition of the Abyssinian book, now, with the assistance of Mr. Morfil, who translates the Slavonic text, has made the Russian work accessible. It appears to have been written in Greek, certain portions being found in Hebrew originals. Some striking similarities to the language of the New Testament are found, as, for instance: "In the world to come there are many mansions prepared for men, good for the good, evil for the evil" (lxi. 2). Mr. Charles thinks the original must be referred to the pre-Christian period, for the portions which have a Hebrew background are found quoted in *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

* * *

Quaritch, the publisher of Major-General Forlong's great work on ancient religions entitled *Rivers of Life*, announces a new work of great learning and research by the same well-known Orientalist. It is entitled *Short Studies in the Science of Comparative Religions*, and will deal mainly with the Asiatic ones, Jainism and Buddhism, Trans-Indian religion, Zoroastrianism, Brahmanism and Hinduism, Lao-tse and Taoism, Confucius and his Faith, the Elohim of the Hebrews, the Jahveh of the Hebrews, Islam and the Sacred Books of the West. The volume closes with an anthology of short texts of Faiths and Philosophies, culled from the various religions.

* * *

The Athenæum (May 22) publishes some notes by Coleridge on Spinoza, in which he says that "never has a great man been so hardly and inequitably treated by posterity as Spinoza."

* * *

Andrew Lang, whose learning has a strong tinge of superstition, as was evinced by his *Cock-lane and Common Sense*, is putting out a new *Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, in which he pretends to re-examine the evidence. But dreams and ghosts are like witches, there will be always plenty of evidence for them among believers. Believing is seeing, as much as seeing believing.

* * *

Dr. M. Friedländer, of Vienna, has published a work on *Das Judentum in der vorchristlichen Griechischen Welt*—"Judaism in the Pre-Christian Greek World"—in which he shows that the Jews of the dispersion, both in their conservatism and in their liberalism, anticipated much of Chris-

tianity. In the Petrine and Pauline schools we find the two representatives of a conservative Jewish Christianity and a radical Christianity. This was known before, but Dr. Friedländer presents a large array of justificatory evidence. Indeed, the unpolite statement ascribed to Jesus, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves," is sufficient evidence of a movement for enlarging Judaism in pre-Christian times. This saying of the Master, by the way, is now peculiarly applicable to those who seek to convert the Jews to Christianity; for a shadier lot than the converts it would be hard to find.

* * *

According to the author of *'Twiist Greek and Turk*, the Christians of Eastern Europe are animated by mutual hatred and jealousy. The Bulgar's most bitter denunciations are reserved for the Greek, and the Greek expresses with equal heartiness his hatred of the Bulgar—"both agreeing that even Turkish rule is less intolerable than would be that of the accursed rival." Their animosities are religious as well as political. The Greek priesthood detest the Bulgarian National Church. "Greek priests are forced upon Bulgarian villages, Greek schools are multiplied all over the country, and the Zaptieh's aid is enlisted in order to compel the attendance of Bulgarian children who are required to swell Panhellenic statistics."

* * *

Mr. Gladstone has published through Murray, under the title of *Soliloquium and Postscript*, his appeal to the Pope for a verdict on the validity of the Anglican orders, and his dissatisfaction with the answer received. He now says that the Pontificate of Leo XIII. takes its place with that of Pius IX. in the list of reactionary Pontificates. Of the Papal Bulls he says: "Glorification of the Roman See and its prerogatives, touching complaints of the blindness and deadness of mankind to its attractions, assurances of the gushing tenderness with which each successive Pontiff yearns for the day when we are to prostrate ourselves at his feet; all these, of course, untainted by the smallest admission of any error or shortcoming on the side of Rome itself, we have had in abundance; but of appreciation, which need not be the less kindly because justly guarded, of this I have seen never a word." But what else did he expect?

* * *

The discovery in a mound in the Far West of an Aztec manuscript, which is now deposited in the State University of Ohio, reminds us that the Spanish priests at the Conquest destroyed all the art and literature of the people they could lay hands on, thus leaving a most interesting faith in great obscurity. In a similar spirit Christianity acted towards Pagan antiquity, so far as it was able.

* * *

We have received the first number of *The Adult*, a monthly journal, price twopence, issued by the Legitimation League, for "the advancement of freedom in sexual relationships." With the "free love" part of its propaganda we have no sort of sympathy, but those from whom we differ are as much entitled to a hearing, if they can obtain it, as we are. We therefore mention this publication for the benefit of those who are interested in such matters. The question of the legitimation of illegitimate children does not seem to us so simple as it seems to the Legitimation League. More attention to details is necessary on the part of well-intentioned innovators.

* * *

Miss Sylvia Hill has made a translation of Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*, a French classic of which Carlyle and John Morley have spoken highly. *Jacques le Fataliste*, and other works of the great French Freethinker, still remain untranslated.

CORRESPONDENCE.

GOD AND THE QUEEN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

"A present deity they shout around."

—DRYDEN, *Alexander's Feast*.

Sir,—According to my reading, there seems in early days have been but little difference between kings and gods. The spirit of a chieftain, who had successfully led his followers in battle, was supposed even after death to preside over his tribe and help them on to victory. Veneration for leaders in times of war is essential to success. Even at the present day a ruler may be invested with the attributes of deity, like the ancient king priests of Egypt. "Who is your God?" says Mr. Palgrave, in his interesting account of his journey through Arabia, "was asked of an Arab. 'It was Faolce,' answered the man, naming a powerful provincial governor of those lands, lately deceased; 'but, since his death, I really do not know who is god at this present moment.'" No doubt her most gracious Majesty Queen

Victoria is the present deity of a number of folk, exactly as the Czar is in Russia. It is to be hoped her worship will not involve a holocaust like that at the coronation of the Czar at Moscow. Many of the utterances of William of Germany show that he confounds himself with the deity, and a like mistake might conceivably happen with his grandmother.

There is a sect in India who regard the elderly Empress as the supreme God, and address their hymns, praises, prostrations, and prayers solely to her image. This sect seems spreading in England and the Colonies. If we include all who are anxious to have as many copies as possible of her beauteous image—in gold, the sect will be as numerous and devout as any on earth. By the earthly deity bestowing some little patronage on the heavenly one, their worshippers may be able to distinguish between them, neither confounding the persons nor dividing their substance. God has done so much for our multi-millionairess Queen that she can hardly do less than offer him some little show in return. She has done nothing that I know of for science, literature, art, or humanity, but is bound to do a little for religion.

The Queen and God may easily be mistaken. They are much alike in many things. Both have condescended long to reign over us, and they are each mightily extolled for qualities of which it is difficult to obtain evidence. They are both very much advertised, yet are rather symbols than realities. The time when monarchs and gods were actual is almost over. Yet a cult continues round these idols which is cultivated by interested persons. Both God and Queen are figure-heads of shows at which the performers draw large salaries. Both are fountain-heads of corruption upon which their ministers batten. Every sinecurist can point to God and Queen as example. The Queen and God alike awaken compassion, in that they are constantly flattered on the score of qualities they don't possess, by folk who utilize them for their own aggrandisement. There's such divinity doth hedge a queen that she cannot be placed on the same pedestal with common humanity. She is a blue-blooded idol. Incense is offered to her from all pulpits, and nearly all the papers in the land. It is a pregnant saying that man makes his god in his own image. And it is no less true that the worshipper tends to become like that he worships. The childlike love of tinsel, show, and fuss in all this "Jubilee" business is almost pathetic in its imbecility. It is instructive, too, to note how greed, gas, and gaping combine in the cultus.

Some slight differences between God and the Queen are to the benefit of the latter. The Queen is usually invisible, but God is so always. The Queen shows herself but rarely; God never. Her Majesty now and then displays her royal bounty by sending three golden images of herself to some poor woman cursed with triplets. But God Almighty does nothing, or sends the mouths to one house and the meat to another. The Queen will not abdicate, despite age and infirmities; neither will the Deity. Yet doth his only-begotten Son manage to crib most of the prayers and the praises.

I have nothing to say against Her Majesty personally; as a sovereign she is doubtless up to a decent average, but I question if she is worth her cost. The Deity, too, I hear, has none of those terrific traits with which he was credited in the past. He no longer sends one to heaven and ten to hell, "all for his glory," as in days of yore. As gods go, he is getting up to a decent average. None the less, I question if he is worth his keep. If both God and Queen resolved themselves into thin air, they never would be missed by

J. A. NAIGEON.

PROFANE JOKES.

Fuddy—"Things appear to be pretty dull in your church society. No socials and no evening meetings, and on Sunday there is hardly a handful present." Duddy—"I know it. The fact is, since we got our church debt paid off, there has seemed nothing worth struggling for."

"Next Sunday, brethren," said the Rev. Mr. Goodman, beaming benevolently upon his assembled flock, "I shall preach a sermon upon the evidences of Christianity, and I sincerely hope that one of those evidences will be a full house, whether it rains or not."

Nurse (to moribund patient)—"Why won't you take the brandy the doctor ordered? Surely you can lay aside your teetotal scruples at such a time as this." Patient (to parson—faintly)—"Do you think the angels 'll smell it in my breath?"

Warden—"So you got rid of your pastor?" Elder—"Yes; he was a good man, but he was too dry in his preaching—always giving us a history of the Jews. But we don't like our new pastor very much, either." Warden—"What's the matter with him?" Elder—"Well, he preaches with tears in his voice all the time." Warden—"I see. The old pastor was too historical, and the new one is too hysterical."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Jubilee and its Revelations."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, R. Forder, "Christian Persecutions"—preceded by vocal and instrumental music. May 29, at 8.30, Grand Smoking Concert. June 2, at 8.30, Dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, H. P. Ward, "Jesus the Infidel."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7.30, Miss Zona Vallance, "Woman's Responsibilities."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road: 11.15, Sunday School—F. J. Gould, "Habits"; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Religion and the Masses."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Religion and the Masses."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, H. P. Ward, "Christian Evidences: Where are They?"

CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): 3.15, H. P. Ward, "What will you Give us in Place of Christianity?"

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch): 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Futility of Christianity."

EDMONTON (Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Mistakes of Moses."

FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand)—Finsbury Park Branch: 3.15, Harry Snell, "Education and Religion."

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

HARROW-ROAD (corner of Watterton-road): 3.30, Stanley Jones.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Lucretius Keen; 3.30, A. Thomas, "Evolution of Christianity."

KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, H. Snell.

LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon's Lane): 11.30, S. Jones; 7, C. Cohen.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack; 7, W. J. Ramsay. June 2, at 8, C. Cohen.

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, C. Cohen, "The Case Against Christianity."

VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.

COUNTRY.

BARNSELEY (Black-a-moor Head Hotel): 1, Business meeting.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 7, S. Armfield, "Paradise, Heaven, and Hades."

BRISTOL BRANCH (7 Cottage-place, Montague-hill): 7, J. Watts Treasure, "Büchner."

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Entertainment; 8.15, Rev. G. Hitchcock, "The Forces that Tend for Socialism."

DERBY (Pollcott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, A reading.

LEEDS (Crampton's Hotel, Briggate): 7, Entertainment, etc., by Mr. Rogers.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, Mr. Ross, "The Bible and the Child."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Greevz Fisher, "Nationalization of the Land Inconsistent with Freedom."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Members are requested to meet the Secretary at Lockhart's Café, Newbridge-street, on Monday, May 31, at 8 p.m., first floor upstairs.

PONTYPRIDD (23 Middle-street, Trallwn): Meetings every Sunday evening. Discussion invited.

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, Business meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members' and friends' excursion. Meet in front of Victoria Station at 9.45, and leave by train at 9.55 for Birdwell, thence walk round by Wentworth, etc., to Mr. Booker's, Harrold's Croft, Greasbro', for tea, and home by train, leaving Kilnhurst (M.S.L.) at 7.57. Return fare 1s.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, N. S. S. Conference Agenda.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BARNSELEY (May Day Green): W. Dyson—11, "Bible Morality"; 6.30, "The Truth about the Transvaal."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—May 30, m., Wood Green; a., Victoria Park. June 6, Leicester N. S. S. Conference. 13, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—May 30, e., Edmonton. June 6, m., Hyde Park; a., Harrow-road; e., Hammersmith. 13, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. 27, m., Wood Green; e., Edmonton.

H. P. WARD, 9 Leighton-crescent, Leighton-road, N.W.—May 30, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., Camberwell Hall.

J. FAGAN, 48 Popham-road, New North-road, London, N.—June 13, a., Harrow; e., Kilburn. July 11, e., Hammersmith. 18, m., Hyde Park. August 8, a., Harrow; e., Kilburn. September 19, e., Hammersmith. 26, m., Hyde Park.

J. T. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, London, E.—July 4, Mile End Waste; e., Edmonton. September 5, Limehouse.

E. PACK, 90 Camden-street, Camden-road, N.W.—May 30, m., Mile End. June 6, m., Limehouse; a., Finsbury Park; e., Clerkenwell Green. 20, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. 27, m., Limehouse.

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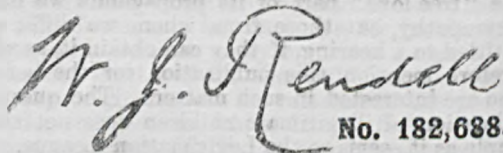
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