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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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THE OLD WAX NOSE.

II.—THE BIBLE CANON.

THE first chapter of Dean Farrar's book deals with the Bible canon. After another slap at the poor, benighted Christians who still hold that every word of Scripture is "supernaturally dictated and infallibly true," Dr. Farrar remarks that the Bible is "not a single nor even a homogeneous book." Strictly speaking, it is not a book, but a library; and, as is pointed out later on, it is the remains of a much larger collection which has mostly perished. The Canon of the Old Testament was "arrived at by slow and uncertain degrees." The common assertion, that it was fixed by Ezra and the so-called Great Synagogue, in the fifth century before Christ, is in direct opposition to the facts. It was not really settled until seventy years after the birth of Christ, when the Rabbis met at Jamnia, and decided in favor of our present thirty-nine books. According to Dr. Farrar, there was no special influence from heaven in the determination of the Canon. It was a work which God left to "the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost." Let us see then how those influences operated on the last and most critical occasion. "The gathering at Jamnia," says Dr. Farrar, "was a tumultuous assemblage, and in the faction fights of the Rabbinic parties blood was shed by their scholars. Hence the decision was regarded as irrevocable and sealed by blood." Such are the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost. Its extraordinary influences may be easily imagined. Their history is written in blood and fire in every country in Christendom.

Dr. Farrar allows that the Canon of the New Testament was formed "in the same gradual and tentative way." Many Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypses were "quoted in the 'first two centuries.'" Some of them were "quoted as sacred books" and read aloud in Christian churches. Seven, at least, of the books which are now canonical were then "disputed"—namely, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of St. John, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, and the Book of Revelation. The Canon was "formally and officially settled" by the Council of Laodicea (A. D. 363), and the two Councils of Carthage (A. D. 397 and 419), the decrees of which were sanctioned by the Trullian Council (A. D. 692), nearly seven hundred years after Christ. Dr. Farrar holds, however, that these Councils merely registered the general agreement of the Christian Church. The real test of canonicity is not the decision of Councils, which may and do err, but "the verifying faculty of the Christian consciousness." Dr. Farrar's argument, if it means anything at all, implies that while Councils may err, consisting as they do of fallible men, this "Christian consciousness" is really infallible. But as this Christian consciousness only exists, after all, in individual Christians, however numerous they may be, or through how many centuries they may be continued, it is difficult to see how the greatest multitude of fallibilities can make up one infallibility. And unless it can, it is also difficult to see how Dr. Farrar can have an infallible Canon. He disclaims the authority of the Church, on which Catholics rely; indeed, he says it can hardly be said that the "whole Church" has pronounced any opinion on the Canon at all. What really happened is perhaps unconsciously admitted by Dr. Farrar in a rather simple foot-

note. "Books were judged," he says, "by the congruity of their contents with the general Christian conviction." Precisely so; the books did not decide the doctrine, but the doctrine decided the fate of the books. And how was the doctrine decided? By fierce controversy, by forgery and sophistication, by partisan struggles, and finally, after the adhesion of Constantine, by faction fights that involved the loss of myriads (some say millions) of lives.

Not the slightest attempt is made by Dr. Farrar to meet the difficulty of his position; indeed, he seems unaware that the difficulty exists. All he sees is the difficulty of the positions taken up by the Catholics and the early Protestants. It never occurs to him that he has only shifted from one difficulty to another. The Catholics rely upon the living voice of God in the Church. That covers everything, like the sky; and is perfectly satisfactory, if you can only accept it. The early Protestants repudiated the authority of the Church, at least as represented by the Pope and Councils; but they acknowledged the authority of the primitive Church. They were shrewd enough to see that what cannot possibly rest on mere reason must rest somewhere on authority; so they admitted as much as was sufficient to cover the Scriptures and the Creeds, and refused to go a step farther. Dr. Farrar breaks away from both parties, and what is the result? He talks about the Canon of the New Testament being formed "by the exercise of enlightened reason," but he lays down no criterion by which reason can decide whether a book is inspired or not, or so specially inspired as to require a place in the Canon. The "verifying faculty of the Christian consciousness" is one of those comfortable phrases, like the blessed word Mesopotamia, that are designed to save the pains of accuracy and the trouble of definite thought. What light does it really shed upon the following questions? Why is the Protestant Canon different from the Catholic Canon? Is it owing to some inexplicable difference in the "verifying faculty of the Christian consciousness" in the two cases; and by what test shall we decide when the Christian consciousness delivers two contradictory verdicts? Why is the book of Ecclesiastes in the Canon, while the book of Ecclesiasticus is (by the Protestants) relegated to the Apocrypha? Why is the book of Esther in the Canon, and the book of Judith in the Apocrypha? Why is the book of Jonah in the Canon, and the book of Tobit in the Apocrypha? Why is the book of Proverbs in the Canon, and the book of the Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha? These are questions which the early Protestants answered in their way, but we defy Dr. Farrar to answer them at all.

Let us follow Dr. Farrar into his second chapter. He states, truly enough, that both the Old and the New Testaments represent "the selected and fragmentary remains of an extensive literature." Many books referred to in the Old Testament are lost. Some of the canonical books are anonymous; we do not know who wrote them. Others bear the names of men "by whom they could not have been composed." The Pentateuch is "a work of composite structure," which has been "edited and re-edited several times." The Psalms are a collection of sacred poems in "five separate books of very various antiquity." The Proverbs consist of "four or five different collections." The New Testament is a selection from the voluminous Christian literature of the earliest centuries. Many Gospels were already in existence when St. Luke prepared his own. "It is all but certain," Dr. Farrar says, "that St. Paul, and probable that the other Apostles, must have written

many letters which are no longer preserved." That is to say, some letters actually written by St. Paul were allowed to perish, while others not written by him were allowed to bear his name, and were placed as his in the New Testament Canon! There are passages in the Gospels that are known to be interpolations; for instance, the story of the Woman taken in Adultery. This story is "exquisite and supremely valuable," but it is bracketed in the Revised Version as of "doubtful genuineness." Such passages are eliminated because they do not "meet the standard of modern critical requirements." *O sancta simplicitas!* Is there any reason, in the natural sense of that word, for believing that John the Apostle wrote the rest of the Fourth Gospel, any more than he wrote this rejected story? Dr. Farrar strains at gnats and swallows camels, and prides himself on his discrimination.

His references to Justin Martyr and Papias seem less than ingenuous. It is not true that Justin Martyr "freely uses the Gospels." Dr. Farrar admits that he "does not name them." Saying that he "used" them is quietly assuming that they existed. All that Justin Martyr does, as a matter of fact, is to cite sayings ascribed to Jesus, but not in one single case does he cite a saying of Jesus in exactly the form in which it appears in the four Gospels. Supposing that he wrote freely, and had ever so bad a memory, and never took the trouble to refer to the originals, it is simply inconceivable that he should never be right. Now and then he must have deviated into accuracy. And the fact that he never does proves that he had not our Gospels before him. Nor does Papias mention "the Gospels." He mentions only two, Matthew and Mark, and he says that Matthew was written in *Hebrew*. Now, the earliest date at which Papias can be fixed is A.D. 140. This is chosen by Dr. Farrar, and we will let it pass unchallenged. And what follows? Why this, that no Christian writer before A.D. 140 betrays that he has so much as heard of *any* Gospel, and even then but *two* are known instead of *four*, and one of these is most certainly *not* the Gospel which opens the New Testament.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

SIXTY YEARS OF FREETHOUGHT.

AT the beginning of the present record reign Freethought was yet in an inchoate condition. The two most prominent pioneers of the century, Richard Carlile and Robert Taylor, had retired—the first to politics, the second to France. Julian Hibbert, the most generous patron of the movement, was dead. His legacies to Watson and Hetherington were yet to be productive. Mother Church had improved her position by resigning untenable territory. Dissent was appeased by the Act permitting civil marriage and the Tithes Commutation Bill. The only works of a Freethought character published in 1837 were the *Principles of Toleration*, of the then lately deceased James Mill, the remarkable father of a distinguished son, and *Serious Thoughts Generated by Perusing Lord Brougham's Discourse of Natural Theology, with a few Broad Hints on Education and Politics*, by a Student of Realities, published by John Brooks, 421 Oxford-street. The Student of Realities, as one might guess from his title, was a foreigner. His name was André Vieusseux—a friend of Ensor and Raspail. His book is strongly anti-clerical, and proclaims that real education is the fulcrum whereon turns the welfare of mankind, and that to reform schools you must first reform faith. But, though Mr. Holyoake justly calls the author "a notable writer of those days," it seems to have made no particular mark. Signs, however, were not wanting of intellectual progress. Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, issued 1830-33, was being discussed by Mechanics' Institutions, fostered by Freethinkers and Socialists. This book marked the beginning of the evolutionary impulse. Darwin had just returned from his voyage in the "Beagle," and was cautiously meditating his observations. Biology and anthropology as yet were not; yet the foundations of the science of comparative religion, laid in part by Sir William Jones, Sir William Drummond, and Godfrey Higgins, were in this very year, 1837, aided by the publication of Colebrooke's *Miscellaneous Essays*.

The following year saw the publication of Hennell's

extremely fair and convincing *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*—a work which made "George Eliot" a Freethinker, and a translation of which was introduced to German readers by D. F. Strauss. It reached a second edition in 1841. A Freethought work of remarkable ability also emanated from Scotland. This was the *Refutation of the Argument a priori for the Being and Attributes of God*, by Antitheos; printed and published by H. Robinson & Co., 7 Brunswick-place, for the Glasgow Zetetic Society. It was written in answer to a challenge by W. H. Gillespie to meet his *Argument a priori*. The writer's name was Simpson—I have been told George; but I fancy "Antitheos" may be identical with James Henry Simpson, who published, a little previously, an able pamphlet on *Prayer*. "Antitheos" was a keen dialectician, with Scotch metaphysical skill. Gillespie considered him the ablest of all his opponents. "Antitheos" deftly pricked the skilfully-blown theistic bubble. James Henry Simpson was certainly a remarkable man. He was, I suspect, the James Simpson who contributed to the *Phrenological Journal* with G. Combe; and he had been in the Peninsular War and lost an arm. He died about 1844. His grave is in the High Churchyard of Glasgow, and on it the pessimistic phrase from *Hamlet*:—

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.

The Zetetic Society of Glasgow appears to have been the only organization for the free discussion of religion, though among the Owenites there was a body known as Rational Religionists. The *New Moral World*, the principal publication of the Socialists, under G. Fleming, endeavored to avoid exciting Christian opposition. A party of Owen's followers, however, saw that priestly domination must be overthrown ere Socialism could have fair play. Of these Dr. F. Hollick, C. J. Haslam, Charles Southwell, Robert Buchanan (père), J. N. Bailey, and Robert Cooper deserve mention. Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy*, began in 1838, put the absurdities of their creeds in plain fashion before the people, and this was followed by the republication at Leeds, in 1839, of J. Clarke's bold and bitter *Critical Review of the Life, Character, and Miracles of Jesus*. Robert Cooper's *Holy Scriptures Analyzed* was another powerful attack on bibliolatry. The clergy got alarmed, and Owenism was publicly denounced by Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, in the House of Lords on Jan. 24, 1840. Great excitement ensued. The Vicar Society was reformed, the clergy and dissenting ministers joining in starting prosecutions. John Cleave, of *Cleave's Gazette*, a Chartist publication, was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a fine of £20 for selling Haslam's *Letters*. Hetherington, who, after Carlile, did most for a free press of any man in England by his publication of *The Poor Man's Guardian*, was also prosecuted for blasphemy in issuing the *Letters to the Clergy*. The Freethinkers were roused. They resolved to test if the law could touch high-class game, and commenced a prosecution against Moxon, Frazer, Richardson, and Saunders for selling Shelley's *Queen Mab*. The dodge succeeded. In Hetherington's case Lord Denman laid down the law more liberally than it had been stated by any previous judge, and gave the mildest sentence then recorded for blasphemous libel—four months' imprisonment, Dec. 8, 1840. Cleave was released after five weeks, and a prosecution against Abel Heywood, of Manchester, was abandoned. Freethought again had won a step, and an impetus was given to free publication. James Watson, Hetherington's lifelong friend, issued Dr. T. Cooper's *Rights of Free Discussion*, R. D. Owen's *Address on Free Inquiry*, Owen and Bachelor's *Discussion on the Authenticity of the Bible*, Voltaire's *Important Examination*, the lectures of Frances Wright, and other works; and Hetherington, when released, published *The Existence of Christ Disproved*, by a German Jew; *A Few Hundred Bible Contradictions*, by J. P. Y. (Peter Lecount), and a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*.

But the days of storm and struggle were not over. The first distinctive Freethought periodical, the *Oracle of Reason*, was started by the sprightly and audacious Charles Southwell at Bristol on Nov. 6, 1841, with the inscription, "Faith's empire is the world; its monarch, God; its ministers, the priests; its slaves, the people." Southwell took as his own motto the lines:—

The stupid cant, "He went too far," despise—
And know that to be bold is to be wise.

Before a month was over he was arrested for an article on

"The Jew Book," which appeared in No. 4. It said: "It is a book which contains passages so outrageously disgusting and scandalously indecent that, were it not called the Word of God, no modest woman would suffer it to be read in her house." His trial for blasphemy before Sir Charles Wetherall occupied two days, January 14 and 15, 1842. He aggravated his crime by a lengthy defence, in which he vindicated his right to the free expression of his thoughts. "My opinions," said he, "are antagonistic to all religions, and I think that mere morality is all-sufficient for human purposes." He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £100. George Jacob Holyoake, who had written an eloquent pamphlet against persecution, entitled *The Spirit of Bonner*, now stepped forward as second priest of the *Oracle*, which in no wise ceased its policy of anti-supernaturalism. Soon after he delivered a lecture at Cheltenham on "Home Colonies," at the conclusion of which, in answering a question put to him, he remarked that he would place the deity on half-pay; meaning that, in view of existing distress, he would reduce the sums devoted to religion. For this he was arrested without a warrant, treated with much harshness, and on August 15, 1842, brought to trial before Justice Erskine at Gloucester, convicted, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Mr. Holyoake's defence—temperate, judicious, yet unswerving—occupied nine hours in delivery. *The Last Trial by Jury for Atheism* contains particulars of his circumstances and treatment, written with manly pathos. Richard Carlile, the lion-hearted upholder of Freethought, who had himself sustained nine years of imprisonment, whose wife and sister had each received two years, and twenty of whose shopmen had divided among them forty years of imprisonment, was present at that trial. He declared: "I heard Wooler and Hone defend themselves successfully in 1817, but I would prefer to be declared guilty with Holyoake to being acquitted on the ground of Wooler and Hone." Upon Holyoake's conviction, the editorship of the *Oracle of Reason* was taken up by Thomas Paterson, a man of coarser stamp. He was aided by M. Q. Ryall and W. Chilton. The last-named contributed to the *Oracle* a long series of articles on "The Theory of Regular Gradation," which popularized the doctrine of development before Robert Chambers had issued anonymously his *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844). These trials much helped the cause. An Anti-Persecution Union was formed, of which Ryall was secretary and Watson treasurer, and a branch was established at Leicester under W. H. Holyoake and Josiah Gimson, who was president of a Leicester Rational Society. W. J. Birch, Esq., M.A., a barrister, was a generous supporter, as he remained to the end. So was Arthur Trevelyan. W. J. Linton, the poet artist, who had just written a *Life of Paine*, contributed to the *Oracle*; and Emma Martin, a lady of culture and character, came out as an advocate of Freethought, meeting oft with rough usage at the hands of the mob. The *Oracle* continued to speak with no uncertain voice until Mr. Holyoake, with Ryall, commenced the *Movement* as the organ of the Anti-Persecution Union, and carried it on almost until the establishment of his *Reasoner*.

Paterson, third priest of the *Oracle*, shared the fate of his predecessors. He was summoned to Bow-street for exhibiting profane placards. His defence, published under the title *God v. Paterson*, was astounding in its audacity. He considered God as the plaintiff, and adduced evidence from the Bible of the plaintiff's bad character. Paper prepared for his defence was taken from him, and his pocket-Bible impounded by order of the court to prevent his reading texts "damaging to religion." He was, without being sent to a higher court, summarily sentenced on January 27, 1843, to three months' imprisonment, with hard labor, in Tothill Fields. Meanwhile, in Edinburgh, Messrs. Robinson and Finlay had been arrested for selling works "calculated to bring the Christian religion into contempt." Bulldog Paterson, on his release, went to Edinburgh to defy the law. He was arrested and tried on November 8, 1843, and ably defended his opinions and his right to publish them. He was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment; Robinson received twelve months', and Finlay sixty days'. Then stepped into the breach a Freethought heroine, Matilda Roalfe. As the agent of the Union, she went from London to Edinburgh, took a shop at 106 Nicholson-street, and issued a circular wherein she stated: "I neither hope nor fear anything from authority, and am resolved to supply the public with works of a con-

troversial and philosophical character, whether such works do or do not bring into contempt the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion." She in turn had her shop ransacked, and was arrested for selling *The Age of Reason* and *The Oracle of Reason*. By her temperate and courageous defence, in which she declared her determination to continue in her course immediately upon her release, she enlisted much sympathy. She was sentenced to two months' imprisonment on January 23, 1844. On her liberation she went back to her shop, which had been taken charge of by Mr. Baker, "of the united order of blasphemers." She issued a pamphlet, *Law-Breaking Justified*, and continued the sale of heretical works for over a twelvemonth without further molestation. The hydra of persecution was forced to recoil by the persistent courage of the "blasphemers." J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

CONDUCT SUPERIOR TO CREED.

If there is one fact which appears to the Secularists as being superior to all others, it is that what a man does should be deemed of greater concern than what he believes. It has been frequently observed that there is no error fraught with so many evils as that of founding conduct on mysteries and creeds, instead of upon the real nature and requirements of the human race. Of course, the influence of degrading beliefs upon human actions cannot be ignored. We are amazed sometimes when we read the records of the many follies and crimes that have been committed by men who have accepted beliefs thought to have been based upon the supposed will of God. Such beliefs, instead of elevating men, have too often rendered them as ferocious as wild beasts, destroying within them all sense of justice and every feeling of humanity. Buckle has shown the fatal and demoralizing results of men holding barbarous and erroneous beliefs, more particularly when such men had the power and desire to enforce their creeds upon others. And, unfortunately, the more sincere such persons were, and the more they regarded it as a pious duty to spread their theological conceptions, the more disastrous were the consequences to those over whom the power was exercised. John Stuart Mill has very clearly pointed out that even rulers, who were destitute of moral character, were actually less mischievous to the community than were other men of a higher ethical standing, but whose conduct was marred through their great concern to secure uniformity of belief. Still, it appears to us that, while creeds have an important bearing upon personal conduct, and a certain amount of influence either for good or for evil upon general society, the conduct of individuals is of far greater importance to the whole of the community. Thus, from a Secular standpoint, conduct must always be considered as being superior to creed.

This view is substantiated by what frequently takes place in our law courts. There it is often seen that believers, who cite their creeds as a justification for strange conduct, are overruled by the judge or magistrate, who declines to accept the plea that wrong actions can be excused because they are based upon creeds. There is a growing tendency in the public mind to discourage theological domination in matters that affect the general welfare. Freethought advocacy and the dissemination of Secular literature tend to make men and women more generous and just towards others. Such educational agencies are the means of imparting to the general masses true ideas as to the duty of man, and, at the same time, of inspiring within them a peace of mind that discordant creeds cannot disturb. As Lord Bacon says, "unlearned times have been most subject to tumults, seditions, and changes," while the same author observes: "Atheism did never perturb States; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no farther, and we see the times inclined to Atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many States." Hence, we find from history and observation that wherever the profession of creeds abounds conduct is proportionately destitute of those higher qualities which make it of practical value in the moral and intellectual advancement of a nation. It was so during the "Dark Ages," and it is the same to-day in Spain, and also in our own country among those religious sects where

religious creeds predominate. The recent revolt in theological circles against orthodoxy is a healthy protest against those creeds, and in favor of correct conduct. This is one of the most striking indications of the Freethought trend of the age, inasmuch as theological creeds have always fettered progress, while conduct, regulated by modern requirements, has ever tended to consolidate human improvement. The one favors intellectual apathy, and the other stimulates ethical activity. Truly did Dr. Arnold observe that "the cause of all the evils in the world may be traced to that natural, but most deadly, error of human indolence and corruption, that it is our duty to preserve and not to improve." Herein lies the superiority of Secular conduct to theological creed.

Seeing that beliefs or creeds are derived from various sources—such as custom, habit, imperfect information, and prejudice—it becomes more and more obvious that what is required is the application to human conduct of the principle of equity, and that men should be judged by their acts, and commended so far as those acts are found to be in harmony with the good of all who come under their influence. Love may be useful, or hatred be dangerous; hence the necessity for endeavoring to secure the goodwill of all members of the community. This, as experience shows, is likely to be more effectually accomplished by the practice of good conduct than by fostering creeds, which have been, and still are, the cause of disputes and divisions that call into play the worst passions of our nature. It is easier to create a new view of human life than it is to amend an old one. Thus the attempt to improve the old orthodox doctrines, and to bring them into touch with present-day thought, has proved a failure; therefore, the leading lights of the Church are now active in expounding what is termed a new form of Christianity. The faith said to have been given to the world two thousand years ago by an all-wise God is discovered by the human intellect of the nineteenth century to be so imperfect in its details that it has to be remodelled. That is, good conduct is preferred as being more serviceable to personal and general welfare than speculative creeds. Secularism aims to establish in the duties of daily life a rule of action based upon justice and rational considerations, instead of upon theoretical beliefs, which may, or may not, lead to material progress and to social harmony. Emerson, with all his religious proclivities, came to the final conclusion that "Nothing but rectitude can keep you—rectitude for evermore."

If creeds have the power of producing social justice or moral purity, why, it may be fairly asked, has not that power been manifested in the past? Surely they have been varied enough; and their adherents have been sufficiently numerous, and have possessed every possible advantage necessary to enable them to display the legitimate influence of their creeds. And what has been the nature of creed-influence? To induce thousands of men and women to ignore the dictates of unbiassed reason; to make them cling to old errors; to inspire within them a bitter spirit of persecution; to cause them to mistrust the lessons of science and the authority of intellect. Finally, the acceptance of theological creeds has prevented the realization of the brotherhood of man. The belief in one or many gods has had no beneficial effect upon human conduct. The happiness of mankind can be assured or prevented only by good or bad conduct, and no belief will compensate the world for the performance of wrong actions. Therefore, that which is the greater factor in promoting human felicity and augmenting general peace and comfort must be superior in importance to that which is impotent in the regulation of conduct for good, but which, alas! often influences actions in an evil direction. This truth must be apparent to all who are interested in the welfare of others more than in the perpetuation of creeds and dogmas. So soon as men recognise that conduct is the result of their own capacities and surroundings, and not the outcome of any supernatural authority, they will think of themselves, not as isolated individuals, but as members of one family, whose interests are mutual, and whose permanent welfare depends upon the actions of each and all. It should never be forgotten that moral obligations arise between man and man, and not between man and God; and that the possession of a proper sense of duty in life far transcends in value any belief either in past or future existences.

Those modern theologians who seek to force their creeds

upon the human mind to-day must evidently suppose that we are living in the infancy of civilization. They seem pledged by their office or their previous declarations to maintain, even at the sacrifice of common sense, their old theories. One would suppose that they are conscious that their reputations and interests would be gone if it should be generally known that their creeds were based upon ignorance and credulity. They appear more concerned about existing views, instead of having any desire to find the truth as revealed by the light of experience and by the process of intellectual discrimination. In modelling human life and conduct in harmony with natural laws and the needs of an improved humanity, many of the clergy can see only signs of their declining prestige and the approach of (to them) a dreaded revolution. The time, however, let us hope, is close at hand when these expounders of creeds which are rapidly becoming effete will learn that what they call revolution signifies reform, which they have resisted to the utmost of their power. Undisturbed ignorance and implicit confidence in priestly power are no longer a possible basis of social government. Society is awakening to the fact that it has a paramount interest in the moral and intellectual status of every section of the community. Hence it will insist on the inculcation of teachings that are calculated to produce sound ethical conduct, regardless of any or all creeds. The motto of progressive minds is, "Do the duty nearest hand."

CHARLES WATTS.

CONSTRUCTIVE FREETHOUGHT.

How often do we hear it said that Freethought is but a philosophy of negatives; that it seeks only to pull down, not to build up. Christians are so fond of using this as an argument that we hardly ever talk with one who does not ask, What are you going to give us in the place of religion that you are seeking to destroy? You are trying to pull down our religion, in which we find so much comfort and happiness; but you offer us nothing in the place of it. Your philosophy is destructive, not constructive. This has been repeated so often that some of our conscientious Liberals seem to have accepted it as true, and are urging a change of policy in the conduct of the war against superstition, and trying to formulate some kind of positive creed or system of morals that we may substitute for the old myths that religion has been teaching so long without much moral effect.

Once in a while, some good correspondent of the *Independent Pulpit* airs this thought in a pessimistic article that indicates that he has been too hasty in accepting this stigma upon rational thought, and, without reflecting, has been too early with his lament. If he will stop to think for a moment and recall the history of the conflict of Rationalism against religion for the last four hundred years, he will see that the former, instead of being destructive, or a negative philosophy only, is eminently constructive. In all that it has destroyed it has put something better in its place. It has put fact in the place of fiction, truth in the place of falsehood, and knowledge in the place of faith.

Look over the accumulated knowledge of the world since the close of the Dark Ages, all of it the work of Rationalism, or Freethought, triumphant over the bitter opposition of the Christian religion. Look over the school books that your children are studying in the schools to-day, and see if you can find a single study that they do not owe to the Freethought and scientific work of those who had to destroy some long-settled dogma of religion in the place of which to establish it.

What but Infidelity looked up into space, tore down the solid firmament upon which God sat, and discovered the universe of suns and worlds, among which our earth is one of the smallest and most insignificant?

Religion claimed that this little earth was much the largest part of the geocentric system; a flat parallelogram with four corners, and that the sun, moon, and all the planets were only lamps hung up by God to give light to man, for whose use and comfort the whole had been constructed; and all men were required to believe this under penalty of a painful death here and eternal torture hereafter—the fate of all Infidels who had sense enough

to know better. In spite of this religious pressure, Infidelity destroyed the whole system, and astronomy, as it is now taught and universally admitted to be true, took its place.

Again, it was Infidels who dug down into the earth and discovered its structure, thus proving the falsity of the Bible account of its creation; and so geology was born, in spite of the utmost efforts of Christian priests to prevent it, and the denunciation as Infidels of all men who taught it.

I might go through the whole list of sciences and show that every one of them has grown out of doubt and unbelief of the Bible and Christian teaching. Christians will now claim that many of these discoveries were made by professed Christians, and no doubt they were, before those discoveries were made; but, so far as they contradicted the theories and dogmas of the Church and the teachings of God's revelation—the Bible—they were Infidels, and the Church denounced them as such as soon as they made their discoveries known.

Let the mind run back through the history of the last few hundred years, and recall the advancement of the human race during that time; all that we now know, that was unknown and heretical when Christianity governed the thought of the world, and the Bible was absolute authority for what men might be allowed to believe—and the conclusion is irresistible that all the knowledge we have acquired, that has gone to make up the improvement we call civilization, is due to the doubt and unbelief that all Christian Churches stigmatize as Infidelity.

All this constitutes the constructive work of Infidelity, or Liberalism, or, as I prefer to call it, Rationalism. Not that it is building up an organization like the Church, or the formulating of a creed, or of dogmas that we are to subscribe to and believe by faith; but it is a growth—a development due to the demolition of old religious theories that had to be cleared away before something better could be found to put in their place. We need not worry ourselves about what we shall build up, nor what institutions we shall establish; our object should be to destroy the old errors that superstition has woven into the minds of ignorant people; knowing that, when that is done, there will be no vacancy in those minds, that there is no danger of their laying fallow; truth enters as error is cast out, and evolution brings about the better institutions as soon as the soil is cleared to give room for their growth. Civilization, with all that the word implies of mental culture, moral and legal improvement, is not an institution constructed by a class, party, or church organization, founded for the purpose of building it up; it is the result of growth and social environment, when left free to act without any restraint from the shackles imposed by religious creeds or party organizations. It needs no fostering hand of Church or State to build it up; all it asks is a free field and the removal of the barriers that superstitions and prejudices have built to oppose its progress; and when these barriers are swept away, civilization came, by a natural process of evolution, to fill the place of the restraints imposed by ignorance and enforced by law.

All this talk of building up an organization by Liberals, to formulate a creed or platform to take the place of religion and its creeds, recalls to my memory an old settler, at whose house I spent a night many years ago, when riding over the hills and prairies of Texas. The old man said he came to Texas a young man, and selected this spot to build his house on account of its proximity to a fine spring of pure water. He showed me the spring, which he said had gone nearly dry, and the water was no longer good; and, he suspected, was unhealthy, and perhaps poisonous. I inspected the spring with a fence rail; I found it had been left open to the cattle, and they had trampled the soil into a murky swamp around it; the pool was full of mud, and the end of the rail disturbed a community of moccasin snakes that had made their home in the mud and ooze of the spring that was so pure and sweet forty years ago. My advice to the old man was to clear out the spring, to drive out the moccasins, and dig out the mud; to clear everything out down to the hard gravelly bottom. He said he had thought of that, but the water was so scanty and so poor that it was hardly worth the trouble. I thought that if the moccasins could talk they would probably want to know why I proposed to destroy their comfortable

social institution, in which they had found so much comfort and happiness; and no doubt they would have pronounced me an iconoclast and a dangerous man who ought to be restrained; or, perhaps, they would demand that I should put something in the place of the institution I was trying to destroy. A month later I stopped again with the old man. He had taken my advice. The snakes were killed, the mud had been dug out and removed, and an abundant supply of pure cool water was gushing up through the clean gravel, and the old man said it was as good as ever it was.

In this case the water came by a natural law as soon as the impediments were removed. And so, when ignorance and superstition, or their correlative, religion, shall be cleaned out, natural development will put something better in its place. We may not be able to say exactly what it will be, because we cannot realize the conditions until they environ us; but we know that it will be in the natural line of evolution, and the fittest to meet the occasion. At present the duty that lays before the Liberal is to clean out that muddy old spring—the Church—drive out the snakes that live so cosily by keeping up the mud, and give the pure water of reason a chance to wash out religious faith, and by scientific methods seek truth and knowledge.

The Church as a social institution will last for many years yet; I, for one, have no desire to destroy it, if it can be reformed and purified, and placed on the level of the best moral and intellectual thought of the age. Let it lay aside its inheritance of old dogmas that have been handed down from ignorance and barbarism, and accept the knowledge that science is so rapidly developing in these later years; let it cease to invoke the law to silence opposition, and welcome freedom of thought and expression as the best method of arriving at truth; and then every Liberal in the civilized world will be eager to enrol himself as a member, and help to support it. This is what the Church is tending to, in this last decade of the nineteenth century. It will take many years to bring the full fruition foreshadowed in the editorial in the *March Pulpit*; but if we do our duty by showing up the absurdity, the unreasonableness, and falseness of the old superstitions to which they are still clinging, they will be driven to an early reformation. Use all arguments, rough and smooth; those are best that cut the deepest. Reason with those who care to think; ridicule everything that is ridiculous, and pit the unvarying laws of nature against supernaturalism. As I said before, put science against superstition, knowledge against faith, fact against fiction, and truth against falsehood; and the old black banner of priestly fraud and pious ignorance will soon cease to flaunt the air in the face of a civilized world.

Austin, Texas.

J. P. RICHARDSON.

—*The Independent Pulpit.*

ACID DROPS.

WHAT a funny world this is! The Irish Parliamentary party has issued a solemn declaration that it cannot participate in the Jubilee celebration; yet sixty-three of its seventy-one members (excluding the Parnellites) have applied for seats to view the procession from the stand on Speaker's Green.

So important a public entertainment as the Jubilee "divine" service outside St. Paul's Cathedral ought to be carried through without a hitch. It would be a serious thing to annoy the Queen and God Almighty, to say nothing of the spectators. We are not astonished, therefore, to hear that there is to be a rehearsal of the service outside St. Paul's on June 14. Of course the Queen will not be present. Whether God Almighty will must be left to the prophets. Those who are curious to know should write to "Captain Coe," or some other gentleman in the "finals" business.

The Strand and Fleet-street churches are making a fine thing out of the Jubilee, being right on the line of the procession. St. Clement Danes receives £5,000 from Messrs. Whiteley for the use of the churchyard, where a lot of high-priced seats are being erected. It is said that the money will be devoted to the restoration of the fabric, which, by the way, although it is undeniably handsome, is a terrible obstruction to the circulation in London's principal artery.

The *Church Times* reminds its readers that Paul, who "lived under one of the worst rulers that the world ever

saw"—Nero, to wit—exhorted the Romans to submit to the powers that be, for they were ordained of God. How, then, ought the Church to celebrate the rule of so good a monarch as Her Majesty? Well, according to the *C. T.*, there is one thing which must not be done by the clergy—they must not use either the service for June 20 that is in the Prayer Book, or the form of Prayer and Thanksgiving got up for the occasion.

The *Church Times* says: "It must be remembered that the Service for June 20, commonly printed and bound up with the Book of Common Prayer, really forms no part of it. It was not contained in the MS. copy submitted to Convocation; it is not to be found in the sealed copies; it never had any recognition either by Convocation or Parliament. It was put out solely by the authority of the Privy Council, and is alike an invasion of the rights of Parliament and Convocation, as it is an attempted breach of the concordat practically agreed upon by the authorities in Church and State at the Reformation."

It continues: "The form which has been sent to all incumbents by Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode in virtue of an Order in Council made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord President of the Council, the Bishop of London, and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, is exactly on the same footing as the form wrongly bound up with the Prayer Book, and is equally without authority. The Prelates were not acting as bishops, but as members of the Privy Council; they have no episcopal authority except in their own dioceses, and even in their own dioceses they have no authority to supersede the Book of Common Prayer. To use this form, then, would be an act of disobedience, and a breach of the solemn promise made by every incumbent at his Institution." That is to say, the most popular organ of the clergy counsels them to celebrate Her Majesty's Jubilee by giving a rebuff to Her Majesty's Privy Council.

Some choice hymns have been got up for the Jubilee. Here is one printed in the *Church Times* :—

Our island home in history
First dawns a wild abode
Of fierce, free, fighting Britons;
But over them was God.

God left them, by the way, as little better than savages, ruthlessly slaughtered by invaders.

And God brought to our island
The Northmen from the sea,
The Angles, Saxons, Normans—
All fighting men, and free.

(God being the great patron of fighting men and freebooters.)

To taste the might of Empire,
In time to come to be
The first among earth's sailors,
The People of the Sea.

(The might of empire depending rather on ironclads than hymns.)

And now for thy true servant,
Who over us has been
For twice a generation,
For sixty years a Queen;
The Mother of her people,
Right royal, yet tender still;
We raise our thankful voices,
And wait Thy sovereign Will.

This looks like a hint as to Her Majesty's exit. The last verse runs :—

Then come, O unknown future—
Joy's laugh, affliction's rod—
Our strength is stronger than the strong,
Our strength is in our God.

Not a word about Maxim guns.

Our High Church contemporary is wild with the Dean of Norwich for inviting a Dissenter to read the lessons in the Cathedral on June 20. It says: "Eccentricities which are unpardonable in simple parish priests are still more irritating in a high dignitary, because they give offence to a wider circle of people than the inhabitants of a single parish. The Dean of Norwich cannot pretend that the Church of England, any more to-day than when the Queen began her reign, recognises the Dissenting preachers of Norwich as ordained ministers; and, therefore, his invitation on this particular occasion amounts to nothing more than the expression of his own peculiar views, and emphasizes their disagreement with the law and practice of the Church. We trust that the Churchmen of the diocese of Norwich will not allow this affair to pass without an energetic protest."

The Bishop of Wakefield's hymn written for the Jubilee, which is for use as part of the special service authorized for June 22, is about as wooden and mechanical as can be imagined. It is all common-place tum-tum, see-saw. Look

at the last verse, where the poet's genius (we beg the reader's pardon for using such extravagant language) should rise to its climax of power and fervor :—

Lead on, O Lord, thy people still,
New grace and wisdom giving
To larger love, and purer will,
And nobler heights of living.
And, while of all thy love below
They chant the gracious story,
Oh teach them first thy Christ to know,
And magnify his glory.

This sort of composition could be turned out by the mile by any man accustomed to writing, and with a good knowledge of hymns. There is not the faintest inspiration in it. Further, the "while" and the "first," in the fifth and seventh lines, involve a bad confusion in chronology.

Old Nick is dead. He was a retired builder, named Charles Nicholls, residing at Clapton Park. He was very fond of rum hot—of course; and, falling down one day, he broke his leg, of which accident he died in the Hackney workhouse. At the coroner's inquest the officer said that he was known as Old Nick. "Then," said the coroner, "we had better settle him." And they did. Some clergyman ought to write to the papers on behalf of his profession, and warn the public that this is not *their* Old Nick.

Gottfried Krueger—no relation, we presume, of the cute old gentleman at Pretoria—was a millionaire brewer at Newark, New Jersey. His present whereabouts is unknown. His body is to be laid in a mighty fine mausoleum, which will cost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The massive structure will seriously impede his movements on the morning of the resurrection. Perhaps the gentleman knew he was booked for the wrong place, and wanted a chance of being left behind in the sorting.

Mr. Gladstone's epistolary style has lost none of its vigor—whatever else it may have lost. In his letter to Colonel Hanna he says that "the blood of 100,000 Christians has drenched the soil of Armenia." Not men and women, observe, but *Christians*. A very pretty instance of religious fanaticism working under the guise of common humanity.

For our part, while detesting the Sultan for his deliberate cruelty to the Armenians, we venture to doubt the arithmetic of these massacres. Look what lies have been telegraphed from Greece of late, often to be categorically denied and sometimes thoroughly disproved within twenty-four hours. The fact is, you cannot believe Christians when they write about the professors of another faith. What Herbert Spencer calls "the religious bias" makes it impossible for them to be accurate. Now all the reports of the Armenian massacres come to us from Christian sources and through Christian channels. At one time the number of victims was run up to a quarter of a million. Now it has dropped down to a hundred thousand, and as that is a good round figure we dare say it will stop there. But it seems to us a fancy figure, after all; and probably we shall never know the truth.

Writing on the question of Crete, a *Daily News* special correspondent says: "The greatest difficulty is how to protect the Mohammedan minority against the Christians, who, as the behavior of the insurgents has sufficiently shown, are by no means imbued with the views of civilized nations about right and justice. They kill, rob, and pillage, exactly as the Mohammedans did." Civilization has to exclaim, "A plague o' both your houses!"

An anonymous writer in the *Sunday Companion* contributes a leader on the hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesu's Name," in the course of which he curiously introduces the name of the editor of the *Freethinker*. Here is the passage: "One of the most remarkable instances of the use of this hymn came under the writer's personal notice at Bristol. There was a great debate on, in one of the halls of the city, between the Rev. J. Moffat Logan and Mr. G. W. Foote, the Atheist lecturer. The subject was, 'Did Christ Rise from the Dead?' The debate lasted two nights, and the great hall was crowded. Under the hands of Mr. Logan, who is a skilled disputant, Mr. Foote was faring very badly, as his own press admitted. Then came the closing scene. Mr. Logan wound up the debate in a reply. When he finished he had so profoundly moved his audience that, almost to a man, they sprang to their feet and sang, in loud, triumphant tones, 'All Hail the Power of Jesu's Name.' The hymn completed the rout of the infidel forces."

This writer has some memory and more imagination. It is true that Mr. Foote did debate the Resurrection with Mr. Logan at Bristol. But the question discussed was not "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?" Mr. Logan declined to discuss that plain question, and said that he would be a fool to do so. It is also true that the debate lasted two nights, and

that the hall was crowded. No doubt the Christians thought their own champion was victorious; that is generally the case in such debates. But what does the writer mean by the statement that "Mr. Foote was faring badly, as his own press admitted"? We invite the writer to say what press he refers to. We ask him to name the Freethought paper which said that Mr. Foote was beaten, or any words to that effect. Unless he does so, we shall be obliged to recognize in the expression, "as his own press admitted," one of those lively efforts of Christian originality with which Freethinkers are only too familiar.

It is true that Mr. Logan's followers, or a part of them—for some looked ashamed of the proceeding—struck up a hymn at the finish. But they did not "spring to their feet and sing" at the finish of his last speech. The incident occurred after the chairman's closing remarks, and as the audience was rising to disperse. One fanatic started the hymn, and others joined in. It was a disorderly proceeding, in the worst possible taste. Naturally the scratch choir provoked the Freethinkers into roars of laughter.

We have this to say in conclusion. That debate, in which Mr. Foote "fared so badly," resuscitated the Freethought movement in Bristol. It resulted in the conversion of more than one Christian to Secularism. Can a single Freethinker be named who was converted to Christianity? We pause for a reply.

The *Vegetarian* offered a prize of £10 for "ten best Biblical texts." The matter has drawn an excellent letter from Mr. H. S. Salt to its number for May 29. After criticizing the texts as doing "more harm than good" to the vegetarian cause when quoted in support of it, Mr. Salt says: "As Bible-quoting flesh-eaters have from time immemorial bombarded us with 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat,' and similar passages, I suppose it is natural that vegetarians should wish to retaliate, and, so to speak, to hoist them with their own petard. I confess, however, I think we get much the worst of the encounter, and had far better recognize the fact (for it is a fact) that the Jews were a flesh-eating people, and that the Jewish Scriptures contain no idea of vegetarianism in the modern sense of the word—that is, a deliberate and permanent disuse of flesh-food, for moral or hygienic reasons. This is not in any way a blow to vegetarianism, for surely no rational person, even among the orthodox, now looks to the literal text of the ancient Scriptures as a guide in the newer problems of modern life."

Mr. Salt continues: "I go still further than this, and hold that we do a positive wrong to the principle of vegetarianism when, in order to enlist the support of those who are more moved by a text (even an irrelevant one!) than by an unanswerable argument, we base our appeal on the extremely dangerous ground of arbitrary quotation, instead of on the broad, sure ground of clear reasoning and humane instinct." We shall see if the vegetarians are wise enough to take the hint, or if they are going to put forward, as their Jubilee menu, the very indigestible pabulum of chopped-up Bible texts.

"Zionism" is a peculiar mania, which, under the stimulus of "prophecy," still afflicts some Jews. A conference of the chosen race is to be held at Munich in August to consider the propriety of re-establishing the kingdom of Israel, whether as a theocracy or a Republic, with Jerusalem as its capital. Since the persecutions in Russia in 1882 a great number of the circumcized have flocked to Palestine, and they see that in these days of travel money is to be made by exploiting the pilgrims with bogus articles of bigotry and virtue. If they had the country all to themselves, they have sufficient enterprise to set up a panorama of the Passion in the alleged Garden of Gethsemane.

The rich Jews could easily buy up Palestine if they desired, even if the Sultan put a fancy price on land which is holy to Moslems as well as Jews. There is, in fact, far more affinity between the followers of Moses and Mohammed than between either of them and Christians. But the trouble is, the rich Jews don't want to go to Palestine. Only the distressed long for Zion. One of the Rothschilds, when asked what he would do if the kingdom of Judah were restored, answered: "Apply for the post of ambassador to Paris."

A great religious ceremony, apparently connected with the canonization of the batch of new saints, took place on Saturday, May 29, in the famous Cathedral of Pisa, which was illuminated by eight thousand wax candles. One of the hangings blew against a candle and took fire. The flame was immediately extinguished, but the cry of "fire!" rang through the building, and the crowd of worshippers, being extremely reluctant to leave Pisa for Heaven, made a terrible rush for the doors. Women and children were trampled upon, and at the finish of the stampede it was found that six women and one man were dead, and eleven

women seriously injured, besides several who were able to return home. Two children have since died. Such is the serene contempt of death which is engendered by religion!

M. Hompes says in the *Vegetarian Messenger*: "Dr. Orlando tells us that in the country districts of Japan true fraternity exists. He never found any poor in the villages who were not well cared for by their fellows, and this in a manner which was not made dishonorable or distasteful to them. They receive their tithe out of a common treasury, or, rather, store, into which the rest pour their gifts of rice and other articles of food. So far from the recipients losing their civil rights and being looked down upon, as they are in Christian lands, they frequently occupy in a Japanese village positions of the highest public trust and dignity, on account of their age and experience. During bad weather a whole family will help to gather the crops of a neighbor, though their own fields call for similar attention. Should a few years of poor crops visit the neighborhood, the wise Japanese, like Joseph of old, carefully gathers what he can into a common granary, whence it is judiciously distributed. If any member of the community has been unable to contribute, he is not, therefore, left out of benefit, but he is called upon during years of plenty for repayment." Yet the sky-pilots would have us believe there are no morals outside their own divinely-revealed religion.

A despatch from Elba, Alabama, says that Oscar Williams, a colored Baptist preacher, residing in the negro settlement three miles from that town, went daft lately over the story of Abraham and Isaac, which was his favorite text, and which he held as his pattern of faith. The negroes thought little of his idiosyncrasy, which developed into his having visions, in which he said he had been commissioned from on high to repeat Abraham's testimonial of obedience.

When the old man started into the woods one morning with his two-year-old son, whose name, Isaac, helped to carry out the crazy man's conception, no one suspected anything wrong. In a half-hour's time terrific screams were heard, and neighbors rushed to the woods. In the heart of a thicket they discovered the boy strapped to a log, and the old man standing over him with a bloody knife in his hand. The boy died soon after the neighbors arrived, the old man having cut his throat. The old man said he had obeyed the Lord, who had commanded the sacrifice, and did not interrupt it. Another instance of the effects of taking religion at its full strength.

Twenty-five bodies of self-immolated Raskolniki have been found buried alive at Ternefka, near Tirespol, Russia. Fedor Kovaleff, the man who confessed to walling up in a cellar nine persons, including his wife and two young children, has now further admitted the burying alive of the other six persons in a specially-excavated pit some eight feet deep. He avows that they were voluntary victims, who entered the pit prepared for them of their own accord. In the neighboring garden of Matvei Sukula the bodies of four persons were discovered in a pit in which they had been buried alive, and, according to Sukula's statement, at their own request.

In former times some of these Christians believed in the awful doctrine of "the baptism of fire," by which they burnt themselves voluntarily to death in great holocausts of hundreds at a time, seeking that same crown of martyrdom for which their latter-day descendants have in the present case, it seems, gone willingly to so awful an end.

God Almighty's plan of punishing his own son for other people's sins is improved on by a teacher at Oamaru, New Zealand. He had the old-fashioned process of thrashing boys till he had hardened their hearts as well as their hides, and then it struck him that if he failed to break their obstinacy by inflicting pain on the culprits he might reach their sensibilities by the infliction of pain on a substitute. He did not offer an only begotten son, perhaps because he had not got one, perhaps because this would only have amused the other juveniles.

He offered himself as the victim. He insisted that the youth who deserved to be thrashed should suffer the misery of applying the rod to his teacher; and the teacher, it is asserted, bore the infliction like a man. The departure has been found to have a beneficent effect upon the boys. They have turned over a new moral leaf, and will do anything rather than incur the painful necessity of spanking their preceptor. The plan may be commended to the preachers of the Solomonic precept to "spare not the rod for his crying."

The Christian Life, a Unitarian organ, says that at one of Dean Fremantle's recent meetings a representative working-class speaker described the Secularist movement as a wreck and a fraud. The name of this speaker is not given. Perhaps he is a Christian Evidence advocate. However that

may be, our Unitarian contemporary chuckles over the "fact," and congratulates itself on having prophesied it twenty years ago, "when many of our advanced ministers were so eager to advertise their sympathy with it and its leaders." Highty, toighty! What airs some of these Unitarians give themselves! We beg to assure them that the Secular movement does not particularly want their sympathy. When it does it will let them know.

A clergyman named Evans applied in the Queen's Bench on Tuesday for a writ of prohibition against the Bishop of Durham, to prevent him deposing the applicant from his office. The clergyman had been found "Guilty" of immoral and drunken acts, and sentence of deprivation was passed. The Court supported the Bishop's action, and dismissed the application with costs.

The Rev. Mr. Robinson, of Kilmun on the Holy Loch, has at last been superseded by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on account of his heresy in his book entitled *The Savior in the New Light*.

The trial of Mr. Booth Tucker for keeping a disorderly house has ended in a conviction at the New York Court of General Sessions. The case arose out of complaints by neighbors of the noises caused by the night services at the Salvation Army headquarters. Sentence is postponed till June 8. Probably it will take the form of a fine. We have always held that the Salvation Army ought not to be allowed to make itself such an abominable nuisance to the general public, and we are glad to see that in New York, if not in London, somebody has the courage to take action in the matter. The ears of citizens, who pay rates and taxes to live in peace, ought to be protected against the assaults of religious fanatics. Howling dervishes ought not, perhaps, to be exterminated, but they should be compelled to carry on their exercises in the desert. We have seen and heard many Salvationist howlers who ought to be transported to the Soudan.

Mrs. Besant has been lecturing at San Francisco, and declaring that she finds the people out West more receptive to Theosophy than the New Yorkers. She attributes this to the "nervy" influence of their climate. Before long the Theosophists will publish a spiritual map of the world, indicating the spots that are most favorable to astral development.

The *York Herald* reprints from Charlton's *History of Whitby* the terrible curse pronounced by the Pope towards the close of the sixteenth century on Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas Chaloner for having infringed His Holiness's profitable monopoly of alum-making, by introducing it in England. By the authority of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and the Virgin Mary—who all seemed to take a deep interest in alum-making—the Pope cursed his trade rival from every point of the compass. Nearly every part of his anatomy is the subject of a special malediction. His very eyebrows and jawbones are specified, and even parts that are usually unmentionable. The Pope concluded by calling upon the Son of God to rise up and damn the wretch unless he repents and makes satisfaction for his crime—which probably meant forsaking the alum trade and leaving the Pope his old monopoly. It is not recorded that any of these curses took effect.

The writer of "A Woman's Letter" in the *Sydney Bulletin* (April 17) amusingly describes a lecture on "Marriage" by an American lecturer, Dr. Emily Rider. She says: "Most of the women put their best ear forward to catch the promised information, 'How to be a painless mother!' The theory is that, by much exercise and a vegetable diet, a woman can produce such a soft-boned baby that the whole proceeding is a pastime, and the curse bestowed upon Eve becomes a dead letter. Oseous matter in the form of lime-water can be poured into the new arrival after birth. This is briefly the American science of Tokology, which, by the way, is strongly opposed by many sections of the medical press in that land of wonders. However, it sounds soothing."

In condemning the fashion of keeping girls in a state of alleged innocence, Dr. Emily Rider quoted the opinions of a number of European celebrities, all in favor of full revelations, save one man, who said: "Let the girls study the Old Testament, and no more information can be given them!" At which the members of the W.C.T.U. simply turned up their eyes and said "Blasphemous!"

A number of reverend business men, who run shops with pews in them, waited upon railway-manager Mathieson, in Melbourne, the other day, to raise a chorus of howls over the running of Sunday trains; but when their complaint was definitely stated, it was found to arise from the circumstance that the trains were timed to arrive either after church was in, or too late to enable people to rush round and be in time for the collection. It is a favorite super-

stition among parsons that people are perfectly wild to go to church most of the time, and they think the universe ought to be run on special lines to provide men with every facility for getting to the temple early and often; and yet it is a melancholy fact that the parson spends his time during business hours delivering stirring exhortations to empty benches. Commissioner Mathieson could not alter all the trains, and it did not occur to him to advise the clergy to run their churches in accordance with the railway time-table, which strikes the *Bulletin* as the reasonable course.

God Almighty having afflicted New South Wales with a prolonged drought, the Government set apart a day for humiliation and prayer to induce the omniscient to alter his apparent purposes. The *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, in an article on "Prayer and Self-help," suggests the Government might do better to provide water-storage. It does not deny prayer—oh dear no—but says: "There are, undoubtedly, thousands of thoughtful, well-meaning men and women among us who will in all sincerity look upon the means suggested by some of the churches for seeking mitigation of the drought as useless, and even irreverent. It would be idle to deny that the trend of the most enlightened opinion all the world over puts the emphasis on the latter part of the proverb, which inculcated the necessity of trusting in Divine Providence, and, at the same time, keeping one's powder dry." If Providence availed, there would be no necessity for looking after the dryness of the powder.

Mr. Price Hughes, of Atheist Shoemaker notoriety, preached lately at Maldon, and said that "if the Evangelical Churches stood together they would have the destinies of England in their hands." Supposing this to be true, it is fortunate that the Evangelical Churches do not, and are never likely to, stand together. While they keep at loggerheads with each other there is some hope for the destinies of England.

The newspapers report the death of Dr. F. R. Lees, the veteran Bible Temperance leader, at the ripe age of eighty-three. Dr. Lees reprinted in his Temperance journal the whole of Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *Bible and Beer*, to show the Christians what weapons they placed in the hands of "infidels" by not accepting the "two wine" theory, by means of which Dr. Lees tried to prove that all the wine that was recommended in the Bible was unfermented and perfectly harmless. Dr. Lees, however, did not venture upon the task of a direct answer to Mr. Foote's pamphlet, which we believe is really unanswerable. No one who reads it with an open mind can help seeing that the Bible is not a teetotal book.

Cardinal Moran tried to get elected to the Federal Convention, but was rejected by the voters in New South Wales. He feels the "insult" very deeply. One of his supporters says that the voters have rejected God. Joseph Symes, in his *Liberator*, takes note of this nonsense, and replies (1) that God did not stand, and (2) that foreigners have no status there until they become naturalized and pay taxes.

Mr. J. D. Jones, of 33 Waterloo-road, Runcorn, in the May 27 number of *Joyful News*, speaks of Methodist "circuits under the control of the beer-barrel," and adds that "piety and pubs will never do." But why not? They have done very well together for ages. Where churches are thickest there you find the most pubs, and the greatest amount of drunkenness and prostitution to the square yard. Mr. Jones seems to be a man who would exclude Jesus Christ from the Methodist Church unless he left off turning water into wine and drinking with publicans and sinners.

Lady Isabel Burton did her best to draw Sir Richard to Catholicism by way of occultism. He read a paper to the Spiritists once on "Oriental Occultism," which rather astonished than satisfied them. As to their evocations, his sentiments may be judged from some lines addressed to pseudo-visitors from Kingdom-come:—

If in your now estate you cannot rest,
But must return—oh! grant us this request:
Come with a noble and celestial air,
And prove your titles to the name you bear.
Give some clear token of your heavenly birth;
Write as good English as you wrote on earth;
And, what was once superfluous to advise,
Don't tell, I beg you, such stupendous lies!

It was early in the present reign that Sir John Cowan, Lord Mayor of London, rebuked a girl who had attempted to drown herself, with the remark: "Do you know, young woman, that in throwing yourself off the top of London Bridge you were infringing a very important branch of the prerogative of the Supreme Being?" He was asked often after this as to how he knew that pitching unfortunates over London Bridge was God's prerogative,

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 6, Leicester, N. S. S. Conference; 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.

W. HARWELL.—Mr. Forder still has copies left of Büchner's admirable *Force and Matter*. The price is 2s. 6d. The same writer's work on Man, from the Darwinian standpoint, is also valuable. We had the pleasure of meeting Büchner, the best part of twenty years ago, at an International Freethought Congress. He looked a very compact man, both in body and mind, and bore out the impression of him that we had formed from his writings.

J. NASH.—Thomas Hardy's novels are all worth reading. His freethought and intense pre-occupation with the higher social questions are most apparent in his later books, such as *Tess* and *Jude*.

W. GOODBOURN.—Thanks for the cutting. See "Acid Drops."

E. T. H.—(1) We do not know anything of T. Woods, and referred to Dr. Bithell's article at the time. (2) Do you seriously think we should take notice of the other person you mention?

W. SELWYN.—Dr. Gardiner's new volume of lectures on Cromwell would probably meet your want. It is written with knowledge, sympathy, and even enthusiasm. Of course Carlyle's *Cromwell* is indispensable to a right understanding of the great Protector, as it contains his letters, speeches, and proclamations, in chronological order. Whether *Sartor Resartus* will live is open to some doubt, but Carlyle was lucky in hitching himself on to Cromwell, whose place in English history is assured.

J. D. MCGON.—Thanks. Better late than never—sometimes much better.

ESS JAY BEE.—Received with thanks.

A. J. H. thanks Mr. Wheeler for the recent visit to the British Museum, and hopes to enjoy another in the near future.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—R. B., 1s.; S. Burgon, 5s.; J. D. McGon, 4s.

OLD BRADLAUGHITE.—What you report does not surprise us. The conspiracy against the N. S. S. has been carried on with amazing malignance. The particular calumny to which you refer—namely, that Mr. Foote systematically belittles the memory of the late Charles Bradlaugh—is too absurd to impose on any regular (and attentive) reader of the *Freethinker*—to say nothing of his pamphlet entitled *Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh*, in which his view of that great man's intellect and character is carefully expressed. Only a few weeks ago Mr. Foote accidentally met an old admirer of Bradlaugh's, who had subscribed to the bust of him placed in a London club. This gentleman was told by the person who took his subscription how bitter Mr. Foote was against Bradlaugh. He was not a reader of the *Freethinker*, except casually, and was astonished to learn how egregiously he had been deceived.

T. ANDERSON.—Swinburne's most heretical poems will be found in his *Songs before Sunrise*. The "Hymn of Man," for instance, is frankly and even jubilantly Atheistic. In the "Prelude" he writes:—

Because man's soul is man's God still,
What wind soever waft his will.

Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led.

The poem, "Before a Crucifix," contains some very mordant lines, which were quoted by Mr. Foote during his trial for "blasphemy." Miss Marie Corelli, the pious and gushing novelist, has a diatribe against the poems of Mr. Swinburne in her *Sorrows of Satan*. Evidently the lady, if she only commanded the army or even the police, would make short work of her literary betters if they happened, as is extremely probable, to look down upon her sentimentalisms.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—The Croydon Advertiser—Lahore Harbinger—The Dominion Review—University Magazine—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Firebrand—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Echo—L'Etoile Socialiste—Anglo-Russian—The Christian Life—Freethought Ideal—London Argue—Oxford Times—Southern Echo—Cheltenham Free Press—Midland Counties Express—War Cry—Yarmouth Independent—Daylight—Secular Thought. The National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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.

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

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. Sidney Gimson, the president of the Leicester Secular Society, has promised to be one of the list of speakers at the public meeting in the evening; but as his letter did not arrive in time his name is not included on the posters, much to the regret of the officers of the N. S. S., who had the bills printed in London, and were obliged to get them done by a certain date so as to leave no room for untoward accidents.

The Leicester friends are organizing a tea in the Secular Hall to-day (June 6) after the second sitting of the National Secular Society's Conference. Those who intend to participate in this repast should communicate at once with Mr. E. Pinder, at the hall, so that he may know as nearly as possible how many to provide for.

Mr. E. Pinder, secretary of the Leicester Secular Society, who is very kindly and attentively looking after the local arrangements for the Conference, has engaged four-house brakes for the drive on Monday through a portion of Charnwood Forest. There will be a kind of picnic lunch, and a special tea in a "Private Tent" engaged for the purpose. A five shilling ticket will cover everything. Some Leicester friends will "bike" the journey, and the tea-ticket for them will be one-and-six. About seventy are expected in the party, and visitors who mean to join it should let Mr. Pinder know as soon as they arrive at Leicester.

Mr. Pinder does not undertake to guarantee fine weather. Visitors must bring that with them, if they can. What he offers for certain is this. Every member of the N. S. S. attending the Conference will be presented with a ticket of honorary membership of the Secular Club for one week from the date of application. This is a kindness that will be appreciated.

London friends going to the Conference can, if they wish, take advantage of the Midland excursions from St. Pancras Station. The return fare from Saturday till Monday or Thursday is 8s. 6d. A convenient train leaves St. Pancras on Saturday afternoon at 3 40, arriving at Leicester at 6.25.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured at the Athenæum Hall upon "The Jubilee and its Revelations." The audience, which was much larger, despite the severe thunderstorm, than the one of the previous Sunday, was enthusiastic in its applause. At the close a gentleman publicly suggested that Mr. Watts should print this lecture and "circulate it in thousands throughout the country." The entire audience endorsed this suggestion by hearty applause.

June 6 being Whit-Sunday, there will be no lecture at the Athenæum Hall. The meetings will be resumed on the following Sunday evening, June 13.

We are always glad to receive, among our exchanges, our gallant Freethought contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, which is so ably conducted by Eugene and George Macdonald. We note that the editor's appeal for financial aid is meeting with a hearty response. Mr. Putnam's death was a great blow, but a still greater blow would be the loss of the *Truthseeker*. We are happy to believe that its future is assured.

The National Secular Society's Executive has decided to offer through the *Freethinker* a certain number of seats at its office windows, 377 Strand, to view the Jubilee procession on June 22. Application for seats should be made immediately to Miss Vance at this address. We do not suppose that many Freethinkers are Jubilee-mad, but some of them might like to see an incomparable show, and the most "advanced" ladies have often a lingering taste for these exhibitions. We daresay, therefore, that the windows at 377 Strand (second floor) will be snapped up, and the rent of seats will help to pay the rent of the office, and thus be an advantage to the Society.

The Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. sends us a copy of its Annual Report and Balance-sheet for 1896-97, from which we are pleased to see that the membership has "increased considerably." "The outstanding feature of the Session," the report says, "has been the amount of really good 'missionary' work accomplished under the auspices of Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme." Last year the Glasgow Committee organized twenty lectures under the Scheme; this year the number amounts to twenty-three. "Your Committee," the report says, "feel justly proud at this record, and desire to thank the members and friends who, from time to time, co-operated with them, and gave their material, as well as their moral, support to the work of propaganda." The report speaks contemptuously of the action of a late member who tried to induce the Branch to secede from the N. S. S., and ends this section by saying: "The Freethought party has too long been split by internal dissension. Fratricidal strife is suicide. Our quarrel is rather with the ever-vigilant foe of Progress and Liberty—Superstition." There are many interesting features in this report, and Branches might read it with advantage. We dare say copies could be obtained from the corresponding secretary, Mr. Thomas MacLeish, 594 Eglinton-street, Glasgow.

By a narrow majority of 479, the Toronto people have decided in favor of Sunday street-cars. The churches have fought vigorously against this desecration, and they are considerably depressed by the triumph of unrighteousness. It looks as though the Lord God of Sabaoth were deserting his friends all along the line. However, as the *New York Journal* points out, the Sabbatarians of Toronto can still keep the Sabbath holy. All they have to do is not to patronize the cars. But in all probability they will take advantage of the convenience, and chance accidents here and hell hereafter.

The Harbinger, of Lahore, reprints Colonel Ingersoll's letter against vivisection. It prints also "Pearls of Truth." We select one: "You may try to reform the Church as you will. The trail of the serpent is over it still."

The University Magazine and Free Review has a good list of contents in its June number. Mr. J. M. Robertson opens with "Nietzsche's Indictment of Christianity," pointing out that the true criticism is that Christianity has not promoted sympathy. Under the title, "An Ethical Excursion," the recent works of Dr. Goldwin Smith and Professor A. Seth are noticed by Mr. Cecil Duane Williams writes on "The Teachings of Thomas Hardy." Under the title, "The Tory Professor," *Saintsbury's History of Nineteenth-Century Literature* is very severely handled. J. Greevz Fisher writes on "Usury and Thrift," and A. Goldwin on "The Legitimation League." There are two tales or sketches—one, "In Extremis," by Allan Laidlaw, written with painful realism; the other, "Nancy," by Ernest Newman, is a lengthy sketch of the love of a girl of seventeen and the contemptible egotistic flirtation of a man of twenty-seven, *amourette pour lui passion pour elle*. The story is well told, but its moral seems to be an unintended justification of "conventionalism."

The May number of the *Dominion Review*, of Toronto, concludes Professor Goldwin Smith's reasons for rejecting "The Miraculous Element in Christianity." Rabbi Elzas gives a liberal Jewish view of "The Conflict between Science and Religion." B. F. Underwood continues his history of Utilitarian Ethics. A. Harvey has an instructive paper on "Aerolites and Religion." The veteran G. J. Holyoake writes on "Commercial Morality," making a lecture by Augustine Birrell the theme of his discourse; and there are also some good extracts entitled "The Gospel According to Ingersoll."

When Mr. Foote visited Boston, during his American visit, he made the acquaintance of Mr. Herbert N. Casson, a bright and interesting young man, who conducts a Labor Church there with a considerable degree of success. Mr. Casson works on Freethought and Socialist lines, as a pioneer of the bright day "when there shall be no business but friendship, and no religion but love." He has just written to inform us that he will be in England from July 15 to September, and during his stay here he will be happy to lecture for any organization of Secularists. His address in London will be 15 Amberley-grove, Croydon.

The Glasgow Branch intend having a trip to Greenock, and thence a ramble to Loch Thom, on Sunday, June 13. Train from St. Enoch's station at 7.50 a.m. Mr. A. G. Nostock, F.G.S., will accompany the party and explain the geology of the district. Arrangements have been made for serving tea during the day, but those intending to take part in the excursion are requested to bring their own provisions. Should the morning be wet, the trip will be abandoned until a future date.

The Huddersfield Branch sends us its balance-sheet from October 1 to May 11. There is a small balance due to the

treasurer, and the committee wish to commence the next season's propaganda with a "clean sheet." Mr. W. H. Spivey, honorary secretary, will be glad to receive any subscriptions. His address is 49 Union-street. We hope this paragraph will meet the eye of some Secular friend able and willing to assist a brave Branch, which has had to struggle against many difficulties.

Mr. C. Cohen is lecturing every Wednesday evening in June on Mile-end Waste at 8 o'clock. Our readers in the locality should rally round the platform and support this able and earnest lecturer by their presence. By giving him a good audience to begin with they will ensure his addressing a large crowd afterwards.

Dr. Gordon Stables, writing in the *London Echo*, expresses a preference for woods and wilds to stuffy stone-built churches. Referring to the burial-place of his favorite dogs, he says to the reader: "If they have no souls, neither have you, my friend." Certainly it seems strange that a heaven which holds murderers who repented in sight of the gallows has no room for dogs who were brave, honest, and faithful.

The English Mechanic is always full of useful information. In its last number, while declining to re-discuss Genesis and geology, it says: "One thing is certain, and that is, that no one who accepts evolution can believe the story of the Fall." The letters of "A Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society" are always bright and up to date, and we look forward to his pronouncement on the proposed remodelling of Easter.

Ingersoll's splendid lecture on Shakespeare, one of his very best efforts, is being reprinted, and will be shortly on sale at our publishing office. It will be well printed on good paper, and stitched in a neat cover. It runs to fifty pages, and the price will be sixpence. Orders can be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

THE SORROWS OF SHADDAI.

I HAVE been much vexed to find so many people occupying themselves with *The Sorrows of Satan*. Satan himself, let me tell them, is laughing in his sleeve at their being beguiled by such trash. What are his alleged sorrows to mine? I put in six days' hard labor to make your world as comfortable as I could, and he at once put in his serpentine form to spoil it. I had previously given him a choice place in heaven, but had to kick him out for insubordination. I made Adam as well as I knew how out of mud, and Eve from his rib; but they deserted and disobeyed me at the first temptation, and had to hide from my sight. Satan again had got the victory. No wonder I got in a rage and cursed the ground and the earth as well as Adam and Eve. Though I had pronounced everything good, my sons soon after saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and played the deuce with them; so that it repented me at my heart that I had made them. I had to drown the whole blessed lot except Noah's family. No sooner was he safe on land again than he got into a state of beastly intoxication. I kept my eyes on a particular part of the new race, snipped off a portion of their persons so that I should know them, and blessed if this peculiar people did not turn out the worst of the whole batch. My own chosen race were continually deserting me for other gods. They derided my prophets, and, when at last I sent my only begotten son—ahem!—to them, they actually had the audacity to put him to death.

This was not all. Satan contrived to establish a church in which my teachings and those of my Son were altered and set at defiance for the benefit of a crew of scoundrelly priests. My own particular people, the Jews, were hounded down and persecuted in whatever country they took refuge. Pretending humility, these priestly rascals got hold of the best billets everywhere, and continue to live on the fat of the land. And all this has been done in my name.

Verily, Satan's sorrows are nothing like mine. He has not to complain of the lip-honors of his servitors. They rarely mention his name, but they serve him heart and soul. Me they continually praise to my face, but not one of my pretended followers ever thinks of obeying my commands. What are the sorrows of Satan to those of

SHADDAI

The ideas of justice on which our laws rest are opposed to those of the Bible; they are opposed on the one hand to the law of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, burning for burning"; and, on the other, to the reactionary principle of giving one's cheek to the smiter, and one's clothes to the thief.—*M. D. Conway.*

PRAYER.

THE *Sydney Bulletin* used to bid me drop my attacks upon theology, for it was merely kicking a dead horse. Now, under its very nose, that journal has the edification of seeing the performances of savage rain-makers, under Government orders too! There in Sydney the highest officials in the State believe in pills for drought, and the same pills for too much rain, to be administered alternately to God, the weather king, just as they find him in a dropsical or feverish condition of health. For many months the old scarecrow who sends New South Wales weather has been down in a fever, and seems not to have a particle of water left in him; although our Victorian weather-God has been tapping himself for dropsy so much that we have had little else but rain—at least, that is the case with our sea-board God of the weather. It must be an edifying spectacle to the *Bulletin* to see the old dead horse of theology rising and kicking and sprawling and rearing and flinging so, after being reckoned dead for so many years.

Piety and other epidemic diseases are much alike in their course and behavior. For years and years there are only a few cases, which the holy quacks nourish and tend with the utmost care and solicitude. Then all at once there comes a general outbreak of the disease, thousands are smitten by it; and all who are caught feel that they must do something extremely absurd or ferocious in order to relieve themselves. There seems an epidemic of piety just now in New South Wales—or—ah! is that it? The elections are drawing near, you say? Ah! then that will account for the official piety just now advertised in the papers. This day of humiliation is likely to lead to the exaltation of the official rogues who have proclaimed it. They have been feeling the pulse of the constituencies, have they, and find a bit of piety just the thing for fools, and not likely to offend the indifferent; and so they embrace the Gospel sharps and assist at their holy theatricals, and proclaim a godly pantomime in order to get a change of weather.

What have science and truth and education done for a community that can still believe in the efficacy of the prayer quackery? Nothing. Those people might just as well have lived in the Middle Ages, never have been taught to read and write, never have heard the name of science. There is nothing to prevent the New South Wales government going farther and ordering a day of humiliation against the next Solar or Lunar eclipse, the conjunction of planets, the transit of Mercury, the occultation of stars by the Moon, or the precession of the Equinoxes. Every well-instructed believer knows that a proper application of prayer, if advertised duly in the papers, will change and reverse the phases of the moon, prevent sun-spots (as well as summer molds or freckles), shooting-stars, eclipses, comets, unfavorable "aspects" of the planets, old age, gout, rheumatism, twins and triplets, burglaries, and all other evils whatsoever. The said believer also knows that where prayer is properly used no evils occur, locusts never visit, and not so much as a cabbage is injured by a grub or caterpillar. Only pray, and you need never till the ground; the crops will grow of their own accord and ripen, no matter what the weather may be; only pray, and the minerals and metals will rise out of the ground as fast as hailstones descend from the clouds; only pray, and the banks will never break, and depression of trade will never trouble us again. People are mad to work and slave and care and worry, when a pinch or two of prayer from a packet bearing a Government stamp, or a few spoonfulls of holy water from the Vatican laboratory, would bring them all they need, and much more. Some Parliamentary friend of humanity should bring in a Bill compelling all to pray and to do nothing else, for "men ought always to pray," you know, and the women may if they choose to. This having been done, we can all live a life of jolly idleness and pleasure here, and be blest for ever and ever and ever and ever, etc., hereafter. A church or a community that will consent to suffer anything at all, when they have such a simple panacea as prayer always at hand, and warranted by the manufacturers never to fail, deserve to suffer, most especially if they are industriously following the dictates of common sense, and struggling to keep the wolf from the door.

Why, as everyone knows, it was prayer—patent, authorized, Government-stamped prayer—that invented our steam

engines and developed them, gave us our electric lights, the triangles and the gallows, the cat-o'-nine-tails, the totalizator, reconstructing banks, coffin-ships, parsons and priests, nuns and virgins (male and female), sheep and wool, the frozen meat trade, and all other good and evil things we enjoy. There is nothing prayer did not give us; we owe our very being to it, for no kind of animals are ever fruitful if they do not pray. Even tape-worms never breed without prayer, and fleas are notorious for getting upon other people's knees, if not their own. Beasts, birds, and reptiles of prey (especially the clergy) are most noted for pious exercises and pious moods; and they live and flourish upon them. There is nothing prayer cannot do. Properly applied, it moves both mountains and valleys, and turns the one into the other and back again in the twinkling of an eye. It turns the sea to solid land, and the reverse; cuts rivers in twain and divides families, sects, and nations; makes rain, and makes blood flow in streams and rivers; and enables creatures who couldn't get bread at honest work to roll in riches, to keep harems, convents, etc., and to lord it over millions of the most patient beasts of burden in the world.

Prayer is the cadger's vital breath,
The sharper's native air;
If you'd escape a pauper's death
And die a millionaire,
Just weep and whine, and steal and cheat,
And give yourself to prayer!

J. SYMES.

A JUBILEE HYMN.

THE Society post of the *Sydney Bulletin* perpetrates the following:—

We sing a joyful glee in this year of Jubilee,
Though we scarcely know the reason why so joyful we should be.
Our Sovereign grows old; this world is hard and cold;
And the years are very heavy as their weary tale's unrolled.
But we sing because our Queen still totters on serene,
And a toothless age comes on her, and the earth's no longer green
In her dull and filmy eyes, looking on a world of sighs,
Where every bad thing lingers and every good thing flies.
Very old she is, and feeble, and near the grave, so we
Have a loyal celebration and a pleasant Jubilee.

We sing a joyful glee. Beside the Jasper Sea
There are palaces of gold and garish gems and porphyry.
They are pleasanter by far than this speck whereon we are,
And their bowers of asphodel are laid beyond the furthest star—
(So the holy preachers say); and in these realms of day
All is fair and bright and youthful (youth that never fades away).
So we bang the tinkling bell, so the raucous hymn we swell,
Because our Queen is not among these fields of asphodel;
But in this vale of tears she spends the long-drawn years,
Instead of being young again among the starry spheres.
Still she safely dodges Zion with its gates of porphyry,
And that's why her Christian empire has its present Jubilee.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S EXECUTIVE.

LIST OF ATTENDANCES.—APRIL, 1896, to APRIL, 1897.

Summoned to 13.	Attended.	Summoned to 13.	Attended.
<i>President:—</i>		J. M. Wheeler ...	13
*G. W. Foote ...	11	G. J. Warren ...	8
<i>Vice-Presidents:—</i>		<i>Delegates from Branches:—</i>	
E. Bater ...	12	Hanley ...	5
C. Cohen ...	8	Battersea ...	2
R. Forder ...	4	Camberwell ...	12
T. Gorniot ...	9	East London ...	11
W. Heaford ...	13	Finsbury ...	13
S. Hartmann ...	9	Finsbury Park ...	2
A. B. Moss ...	10	Islington ...	4
V. Roger ...	2	West London ...	6
J. Samson ...	2	Bethnal Green ...	3
F. Schaller ...	9	Lewisham ...	—
H. J. Stace ...	10	Edmonton ...	2
E. Truelove ...	1	Lambeth ...	—
*C. Watts ...	11	North-west London	6

* Absent in America two months.

A SAILOR ON SKY-PILOTS.

ALFRED SPOONER, a ship's carpenter, lately arrived from New Zealand, committed suicide at Charlton by swallowing aconite, and the jury, at the coroner's inquest, returned the usual verdict of temporary insanity. Deceased had lost his wife, and was under the delusion that she was continually beckoning him to come to her. The following letter, addressed to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Radford, of No. 1 John's-place, Lansdowne-road, Charlton, was found in his desk:—"I have made a good many long voyages. I have now signed articles for the longest voyage of all, and one that we shall all have to make. But, although I know my port of departure, I have not the least idea of the port of destination. It may be a very short distance, or it may take millions of years. But I cannot believe one of the self-constituted pilots, though they all tell us they have been appointed by the High Admiral. There are millions of them scattered over this molehill of ours, and they all differ as to the course, and say: 'If you don't obey my instructions, you will be lost'; but as I find that not one of them out of one hundred thousand act up to the orders they give to others, I have made up my mind not to depend upon any of them, but to follow my own course; so I have sailed as straight a course as I could. Still, I am afraid that if a chart could be made of the one I have followed these last sixty-four years, it would be found to be rather crooked, as I have had to beat against head-winds pretty often; but still it is better to study the chart and use your own judgment than depend upon those frauds of pilots who are one and all craving and working for the same thing—viz., lucre. Now I must give you my reason for sailing so suddenly. As you know, my mate left me just six months ago, since which time I have done nothing but go to leeward. All the time that mate was with me, which was fifty-eight out of the sixty-four years, we always managed to work to windward, and to whom must be given the whole of the credit, for if it had not been for her I should often have gone a few points off the course, and very likely have got stranded; but she was always at her post, and never grumbled at me when she found me a point or two off as to character. She was as near perfection as it is possible to be—loving, kind, industrious, truthful, and patient. She was respected and loved by every person that ever knew her in every part of this world, and yet, for all this, one of these pilots (pirates) had the audacity, and only within four hours after she had left, to say he was certain she was lost, because she did not follow the course he was laying down; the consequence was that he found himself lying down in the gutter quicker than he expected, and I standing over him and advising him to look after his own vessel, and not interfere with others. And now this long voyage that I have mentioned is a voyage of discovery. I have told you several times that this good mate of mine has appeared to me a number of times, and each time has signalled me to come; and as I have always been accustomed to obey orders, I am going to try and meet her."

THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

THEY are the offspring of a childlike fancy in a totally uncritical age. They are a halo which naturally grew round the head of the adored Teacher and Founder, as it grew round the head of every mediæval saint. That world teemed with miracle, both divine and diabolical. Jesus himself is represented as recognising miracles of both kinds. He challenges his opponents to say, if he by Beelzebub casts out devils, by whom do their sons cast them out? Instead of a disposition to criticise, there was a dominant predisposition to accept. If, in the country of Descartes, highly-educated men could believe in the miracles wrought at the tomb of the saintly Deacon Paris, how much more easily could Galilean peasants, or simple-minded disciples of whatever race, believe in the miracles ascribed, perhaps long after his death, to Jesus. Dr. Arnold asked whether it was possible that there should be myths in the age of Tacitus? The age of Tacitus was, but not the country; though even in the country of Tacitus miraculous signs attended the births or deaths of Cæars, and Tacitus himself records miracles reported to have been performed by Vespasian, in which, however, nobody believes. The Jews were further prepared for the acceptance of fresh miracles by their traditional acceptance of those of the Old Testament. So devoid were they of any conception of natural law, or of anything except a direct action of Deity, that with them a miracle would hardly be miraculous.—*Goldwin Smith.*

The Church runs many an honest man, but few honest men run the Church,

BOOK CHAT.

Of the great German pessimist, whose works Mr. T. B. Saunders is bringing before the English public, the *Sydney Bulletin* says: "Schopenhauer was an acute, common-sense philosopher, who did not argue to pet theories, but took things as they came, and made the best or the worst of them just as the case appeared to demand. If he brings Ahriman on top nine times out of ten, it is only because Ahriman is on top nine times out of ten. And Schopenhauer was a very human animal—extenuating nothing, and setting down a great deal in malice."

The same paper says: "When Hobart High School was established fifty years ago the head mastership was offered to James Anthony Froude, and accepted; but ere he started for Tasmania he published his *Nemesis of Faith*, and the committee cancelled the engagement. Then Dr. Poulett Harris got the post. The High School went bung years ago, and now 'the old rector,' who was burnt out at Peppermint Bay a few months ago, is getting a bag of sovereigns for his services to education."

In Strauss's *Letters (Ausgewahlte Briefe)* is mentioned the interesting fact that when but twenty he wrote a prize essay, to prove the resurrection of the dead, by all sorts of arguments and with complete sincerity. But no sooner had he laid down the pen than the unreality of the whole thing became clear to him. Forty years later he wrote: "We philosophers have been always struggling against the idea of creation, but Darwin was the first to liberate us from it."

Personal Rights and Sexual Wrongs, by Oswald Dawson, is published by W. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street, London (1s.). It contains portraits of Ezra Heywood, Moses Harman, Lois Waisbrooker, and Lilian Harman—the last being somewhat curious. Accounts are given of the efforts and sacrifices of these men and women to promote the Free Love cause in America. Mr. Dawson writes a long and half-intelligible and much less interesting report of his difference with Mr. J. H. Levy and the Personal Rights Association. We suggest to Mr. Dawson, who is far from being a fool, and has plenty of leisure, that he should try to tell the public in plain language, unencumbered by disputes and reminiscences, what it is that he and the Legitimation League are really driving at.

The *Anti-Masonic Catechism of Freemasonry*, compiled by the Very Rev. F. M. Wyndham, which was reviewed in our columns by "Di Vaughan" on March 21, is still on sale by the Catholic publishers, although its author, who seeks to show that Freemasonry leads up to Satanism and "favors a return to Paganism with all its attendant social and moral evils," has confessed himself hoaxed in the matter of devil-worship. "Leo Taxil," the hoaxer, has started a paper called *Le Frondeur*, and announces a book, *Voyage au Pays du Diable (Travels to Devil's-Land)*. The French Freethinkers rightly regard him as a mere money-maker, and insist that not only confession, but penance, is necessary before M. Jogand Pagès can receive absolution.

A book entitled *Englishmen, Israelites, Turks, Edomites, Politics, and Prophecy*, by H. Herbert Pain (Banks, Raquet-court), has on its title-page "Second Edition; Tenth Thousand." Unless the work is given away, it is hard to account for the circulation of such rubbish. Mr. Pain is evidently well read in the Bible, but he identifies the English with the Hebrews without even a smattering of ethnology or philology, and relies on Dimpleby for his chronology to show "the new era is at hand." The wide circulation of the Anglo-Israel mania should be an eye-opener as to the effects of Bible-reading in schools.

When His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland was presented by Gibbon with the concluding volume of his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he could find nothing better to say than "What another damned big book, Mr. Gibbon!" We could excuse the expletive had he been presented with the big book entitled *A Critical Dissertation on the Athanasian Creed: its Original Language, Date, Authorship, Titles, Text, Reception, and Use*, by G. D. W. Ommanney, M.A., Prebendary of Wells. That there are people who want to know who forged the rotten rubbish attributed to Athanasius, which dissects the Almighty, and tells us we shall all be damned if we don't believe that he, the Three in One, is not exactly as described, is almost as surprising as to find people believing that Englishmen represent the lost tribes of Israel.

Prebendary Ommanney shows the original was Latin. Of course, had it been by Athanasius, it would have been Greek. He shows there are many coincident expressions in the writings attributed to Augustine and Vincent Lerius, and he

thinks the last-named was the writer of the whole Creed. Here we part company, thinking the Creed evidently a growth and compilation, not of any single man, but of a round table of the Benedictine order—possibly the same lot who inserted 1 John v. 7 to back it up. Ommanney follows Waterland, who, in the last century, held that the Creed was in all probability composed in Gaul, some time between A.D. 426 and 430. We question the date, but not the place. The most learned of the Benedictines, Bernard de Montfaucon, places it among the "spuria" in their edition of Athanasius, and says: "For numerous reasons we consider it has been falsely ascribed to Athanasius, above all for this—namely, that it is mentioned by none of the ancients before the seventh century"—nor then, except in the Canon of Autun, on his own showing. It is no disparagement to say that Montfaucon is a king of critics beside Ommanney. In all ecclesiastical evidences we have the spectacle of one dubious document backing up another.

* * *

The Rev. E. S. Ffoulkes some time ago tried to fix the forgery of the Athanasian Creed in the time of Charlemagne, when the False Decretals were certainly forged. Prebendary Ommanney seeks to upset this by showing that some similar teachings were earlier. But it may be taken for granted that the poetical genius who drew up the Athanasian Creed for the Church would embody previous statements. Prebendary Ommanney has devoted twenty years to proving nothing; but his attempted defence of orthodoxy has well entitled him to his stall in Wells Cathedral.

* * *

The Rise and Development of Religious Beliefs and Systems, Ancient and Modern, by William Oxley, is a little book of a very different character. Here we have an immense subject compressed into fifty-two pages. Mr. Oxley holds that "we know for a fact that the basis of religious beliefs is astronomical." We know nothing of the kind. Tribes who know nothing and care nothing for the stars have yet a religion, which consists mainly of spells and charms to ward off evil spirits. What is correct is, that all civilized religions show traces of a stage in which the two great luminaries and the revolution of the stars attracted worship. But even then it was the influence of moon, sun, and stars on human needs that was of chief importance. Mr. Oxley holds, and with some evidence, that Christianity has developed from the ancient Egyptian religion, a thesis to which Gerald Massey has devoted much attention, and that the Jews were a part of the great Arab nation of the same kith and kin as the Muslims. He largely follows the views expressed by Professor E. Johnson in his *Rise of Christendom* as to the recent date of Christian literature and its monkish origin. He thinks that the Popes really began with Gregory VII. (1227), leaving "a forged and fraudulent list of some 189 Popes who never had an existence other than in the worse than imagination of the compilers." There are no tombs or sepulchres of any of the Popes prior to this date. The little book can be recommended to those who wish to find new views of history placed in brief compass. Gregorius, at page thirty-six, is surely a misprint for Gregorovius.

* * *

Humanity for June deals largely with the Treatment of Horses. It contains a report of the public meeting on the subject at St. Martin's Town Hall, and of the deputation to Scotland Yard. "Lex" writes carefully on Criminal Appeals. *Humanity* is the monthly organ of the Humanitarian League, and is published by Reeves, 185 Fleet-street. It deserves the support of every social reformer.

Atheism is founded on justice, on science, and on truth. To man alone must the Atheist be amenable, and his conduct alone must lead him to honor, to peace, and to happiness, or must render him at once despicable and miserable. He has no dark cloak of hypocrisy to serve as a subterfuge under which vice is sheltered. He admits no mysterious Providence to mislead him, no god who forgives sins, no devils who torture moral innocence, no dogmas to clog his senses, and to forbid the improvement of mind, no imagining of immortal identities to torment his present existence.—"Bible of Reason."

Anyone who looks around may see how thoroughly the parsons and the godly in general have seen through these jokes of Jesus. Look at their public "worship," their glaring advertisements in newspapers and elsewhere, their showy theatricals, their "get-ups" for the holy boards, and their divine pantomimes. Even their public charities, sustained by prayer, are regularly advertised! Yes, when they pray in secret they run up a signal to let the world know they are now in communion with the father.—*J. Symes*.

No belief at all is better than a belief that God is heartless and cruel, and that the smoke of the torment of the great majority is to ascend and cloud the fair heavens for ever and ever.—*Minot J. Savage*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

FREETHOUGHT AND SUCCESS IN LIFE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The individuality which leads us to stand out against the religious lies and superstitions of the time, sometimes—nay, often—stands in the way of our successful combination for mutual ends. We Freethinkers are naturally free-lances, each "on his own hook," and often with our weapons turned against those nearest to us. Subject to boycott and persecution, we ought to have a sound scheme of mutual protection and support. We are too apt to think we are winning, and underrate the importance of the enemy. Look at the Jews. They cater for Christians, but take every opportunity for aiding the circumcised. They have thus gradually got the monopoly of certain businesses, and have become the richest race in the world. Look at the Quakers. By supplying others, but dealing alone with "friends," they have become the wealthiest of Christian sects, having the bulk of the biscuit and cocoa trade of the country in their hands. The boycott of dissent has even made the Methodists enrich themselves by carefully dealing with each other; and it is the fundamental item in the success of William Booth & Co. that every convert to the Salvation Army is a customer at headquarters for the bulk of his or her necessities. Cannot Freethinkers take the hint and deal with known "saints," and those who advertise in Freethought papers? If this were the rule, you would soon see your advertisements increase. I venture to think that an organized system of mutual exchange would give us greater advantages than we know. A start might be made by publishing in your paper a directory of business and wants.

In some respects Freethinkers have the pull of their Christian opponents. They have brains and information. They are, as a rule, temperate, and do not indulge in larger families than they can do justice to. With these qualities they should form a coherent wedge, which should gradually split the old rotten religious systems to pieces. While we lack combination and coherence we shall simply be a wedge of sand, and see others step in to take the fruit of our labors.

J. W.

PROFANE JOKES.

WILLY—"Do animals go to heaven, parson?" Parson Goodman—"No, William, probably not—or, at least, we have no reason to think so." Willy—"Then the milk and honey in heaven must be canned goods, I suppose."

It was a worthy pastor,
Who saw with grief and care
His congregation go to sleep,
Or which was worse—elsewhere.

He pondered long and deeply,
This wise and pious man,
And at last hit on a simple
And most effectual plan.

Next Sunday, of his sermon
The text when he had said,
He slid adown the pulpit stairs
And stood upon his head.

By thousands flocked the people
That preacher great to hear,
And the trustees raised his salary
Five hundred pounds per year.

First Freshie—"What are you going in for?" Second Freshie—"Law. And you?" First F.—"The Church. It's better than law." Second F.—"How so?" First F.—"Because it's easier to preach than to practise."

Maud—"What makes Clara go to church every Sunday?" Mabel—"Because she hasn't got a bicycle."

The saloon on the corner was burnt,
And the ministers prayed next day,
Telling the Lord he was just and right
In moving the pest away.

But the lightning struck the holy church,
And burned it to the ground;
Then the liquor people thanked the Lord
That he passed such things around.

The general mark of advancement appears to be an endeavor to refer the phenomena of nature and society to a rational basis instead of a traditional one, and, by constant interrogation of physical and social facts, to penetrate the secret laws which govern them, and to effect progressive improvements in the position of man in relation to them.—*E. J. Payne, "History of America," i., p. 207.*

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.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, E. A. Webb, "The Fallacies of Socialism"—preceded by vocal and instrumental music. June 5, at 8.30, Smoking Concert. June 9, at 8.30, Complimentary Dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, F. J. Gould, "Guesses at the Riddle of Existence."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): No lecture.
CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): No lecture.
CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch): 11.30, E. White, "Jesus the Christ."
FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand)—Finsbury Park Branch: 8.15, E. Pack, "Come to Jesus or Go to Hell!"
HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S.W.B. station): 7, A lecture.
HARROW-ROAD (corner of Walterton-road): 8.30, A lecture.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.
KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, Stanley Jones.
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Science the Savior of Man."
LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon's Lane): 11.30, E. Pack.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, H. P. Ward; 7, F. Haslam. June 9, at 8, W. J. Ramsey.
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 8.15, H. P. Ward.

COUNTRY.

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 10.30-2.30, N. S. S. Conference; 7.30, Public meeting.
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): No meeting.
OX HILL AND STANLEY (West Stanley Board Schools): June 5, at 6, H. Nicholson, A lecture.
PONTYPRIDD (28 Middle-street, Trallwn): Meetings every Sunday evening. Discussion invited.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Reckingham-street): 7, Lecture, or musical and other recitals, etc.—see Saturday's local papers.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—June 6, Leicester N. S. S. Conference. 18, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

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

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, m., Mile End Waste; e., Edmonton. September 5, Limehouse.

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

H. P. WARD, 9 Leighton-crescent, Leighton-road, N.W.—June 6, m., Mile End Waste; a., Victoria Park. 13, m., New Brompton; e., New Brompton. 20, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., Bradlaugh Club. 27, m., Camberwell Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

POSITIVISM.

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

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

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

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