

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## THE OLD WAX NOSE.

### VIII.—INSPIRATION.

THE Higher Criticism, as expounded by Dr. Farrar, admits nearly all the Bible difficulties that have been advanced by "infidels." Let us recapitulate the most important. The Bible is hopelessly at variance with science. It sometimes contradicts well-established history. Many of its stories, taken literally, are obviously absurd. Some of the actions it records with apparent approval are wicked or disgusting. A good deal of its language sins against common decency. Several books were not written by the authors whose names they bear. Others are, and must for ever remain, anonymous. The dates of composition of the various books are not what has been generally supposed. Occasionally the true chronology differs from the received chronology by many centuries. To the great majority of readers the Bible has never been known, and never can be known, except in translations. No translation can possibly be perfect. Every translation of the Bible is known to contain grave and numerous errors. Even in the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts there are thousands of various readings. In some cases the text is uncertain, in some cases interpolated, and in others irrecoverably impaired. The vowel points by which Hebrew is now read are demonstrably a modern invention. Even the discourses of Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, are not reported with accuracy. The New Testament writers seldom quote from the Old Testament exactly, but generally rely upon the Greek translation called the Septuagint. Sometimes they quote passages which are not in Scripture at all. "Out of 288 passages quoted from the Old Testament in the New," says Dr. Farrar, "there are but 53 which agree accurately with the original Hebrew. In 76 the New Testament differs both from the Greek and the Hebrew; and in 99 the New Testament, the Greek, and the Hebrew are all variant."

On the face of it, then, the Bible is doomed. A book of which all these things can be said, without the slightest fear of contradiction, must sooner or later be dropped as the Word of God. It will be recognised as a human composition.

Meanwhile, those who live by the Bible, and are professionally interested in its "supremacy," as Dr. Farrar calls it, cast about for a means of giving it a fresh reputation. The old conception of it is fatally discredited; a new one may give it a fresh lease of life.

Evidently there is only one direction open to the theological trimmers. They must start another theory of inspiration—one that will conserve the "sacred" character of the Bible in spite of every difficulty that has been, or can be, discovered.

The Bible is no longer to be called *the* Word of God. Ruskin says, and Dr. Farrar seems to quote it approvingly, that "it is a grave heresy (or wilful source of division) to call any book, or collection of books, the Word of God." Ten pages later, however, we are told that the Bible, as a whole, may be spoken of as the Word of God, because it "contains words and messages of God to the human soul." This word "contains" is the magical spell by which Dr. Farrar seeks to dissipate all difficulties. He finds the expression in the Church Articles, in the Book of Homilies, and in the Shorter Catechism. But in order to see how illegitimate is Dr. Farrar's use of these authorities, let us

take his extract from the last of them: "The Word of God which is *contained* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament is the only rule to direct us how we may enjoy and glorify Him." Is it not clear that the word "*contained*" is used here in its primary meaning? Did not the writers mean that the Word of God is included or comprehended in the Old and New Testament only, and is not to be found elsewhere? Would they not have been shocked to hear a clergyman of the Church of England say that some parts of the Bible were *not* the Word of God? If so, their use of the word "*contain*" lends no countenance to the use made of it by Dr. Farrar. And is it not a shallow trick upon our intelligence to argue that different persons, using the same word, necessarily mean the same thing? Words are the money of fools, as Hobbes said, but only the counters of wise men. We must get at the actual value of the thing which is symbolized. And the moment we do this, we see that Dr. Farrar's theory of the Word of God is *not* the same as that of the gentlemen who drew up the Shorter Catechism. They would indeed have laughed at his "*contains*," and excommunicated and imprisoned him, and perhaps burnt him at the stake. It is not by torturing one poor word ten thousand ways that such wide differences can be reconciled.

Passing by this ridiculous legerdemain, let us take Dr. Farrar's theory for what it is worth. The Bible *contains* the Word of God. But how are we to find it? What is the criterion by which we are to separate God's word from man's word? Dr. Farrar bids us use "the ordinary means of criticism and spiritual discernment." But such a vague generality is nothing but verbiage. What we want is the *criterion*. Now the nearest approach to it in all Dr. Farrar's pages is the following:—

"Is it not a plain and simple rule that anything in the Bible which teaches, or is misinterpreted to teach, anything which is not in accordance with the love, the gentleness, the truthfulness of Christ's Gospel, is *not* God's word to us, however clearly it stands on the page of Scripture?"

This is at best a *negative* criterion; and, on close examination, it turns out to be no criterion at all. The criterion, to be valid, must be *external* to the book itself. Dr. Farrar's criterion is *internal*. He picks out one part of the Bible as the standard for judging all the rest. This is entirely arbitrary. Moreover, it would soon be found impossible in practice. Dr. Farrar's criterion may be "plain," but it is not so "simple," except in the uncomplimentary sense of the word. For "Christ's Gospel," by which the rest of the Bible is to be tried, is itself a very composite and self-contradictory thing. Further, if all that agrees with Christ's Gospel is the Word of God, is it not superfluous as being a mere repetition? Dr. Farrar would therefore bring the actual, valid Word of God within the compass of the Four Gospels; dismissing all the rest, like the Arabian Caliph who commanded a whole library to be burnt on the ground that if the books differed from the Koran they were pernicious, and if they agreed with it they were useless. Nor is this all. Dr. Farrar admits that the discourses of Jesus Christ are not reported with accuracy. Therefore, having made the Gospels the criterion of the Word of God in the rest of the Bible, he would be obliged to select some special passages as the criterion of the Word of God in the rest of the Gospels. This is what Shakespeare would call a world-without-end process.

Candidly, it seems to us that if the Bible is not the

Word of God, but only *contains* the Word of God—that is to say, if it is partly God's word and partly man's word—the clergy of all denominations should unite in publishing a Bible with the divine and human parts clearly specified by being printed in different types. And surely, if the Bible is in any sense inspired, it should be possible, by a new and final act of inspiration, to settle this distinction for ever.

Allowing the clergy to meditate this holy enterprise, we proceed to consider Dr. Farrar's theory of inspiration. Of course he discards the old theory of verbal dictation; indeed, he calls it "irreverent," because it attributes to God what modern men of intelligence and good manners would be ashamed to own. He even quarrels with the very term inspiration as "vague," and says it would be "a boon if some less ambiguous word could be adopted." Four theories, he says, have been entertained in the Christian Church. The first is the *mechanical* theory, which implies that the Holy Ghost dictated, and the inspired penmen were merely his amanuenses. The second is the *dynamic*, which recognises "the indefeasible guidance of the Holy Spirit." The third is that of *illumination*, which confines the divine guidance to matters of faith and doctrine. The fourth is that of *general inspiration*, which regards the Holy Spirit as influencing the writers in the same way as it influences "other noble and holy souls." This fourth theory is the one which Dr. Farrar himself affects. Every pure and sweet influence upon the human soul, he says, is a heavenly inspiration. We owe to it "all that is best and greatest in philosophy, eloquence, and song." Haydn said of his grandest chorus in the "Creation":—"Not from me but from above it all has come!" "There is inspiration" says Dr. Farrar, "whenever the spirit of God makes itself heard in the heart of man." Apparently—for we can never be quite sure of Dr. Farrar—the only superiority of the Bible lies in the fact that "the voice of God" speaks to us "far more intensely" out of it than out of "any [other ?] form of human speech."

Such a theory of inspiration is too vague and universal. Sooner than give up inspiration altogether Dr. Farrar is prepared to share it all round. But is not proving too much as bad as proving too little? If the Bible is only inspired—where it is inspired—in the same sense as other books are inspired; if the difference is not one of kind, but simply of degree; then it is really idle to talk about its inspiration any longer.

The word *inspiration* loses all its original meaning. It becomes a poetical expression, implying nothing supernatural, but merely the exaltation of natural powers and faculties. God is then behind the Bible only as God is behind everything; and Christianity, ceasing to be a special revelation, becomes only a certain form of Theism.

This loose theory of *general inspiration* will doubtless serve the present turn of the clergy, who have to face a general and growing dissatisfaction with the Bible. But it cannot live very long in a scientific age. It will be found out in time, like all the Bible theories that preceded it. The first Protestant dogma was the infallibility of Scripture. That was exploded by modern science and textual criticism. Then came the dogma of plenary inspiration, which had a comparatively short-lived existence, as it was only the old dogma of infallibility in disguise. Next came the dogma of illumination, which may be said to have begun with Coleridge and ended with Maurice. Finally, we have the dogma of general inspiration, which began nowhere and ends nowhere, which means anything or nothing, and which is a sort of "heads we win, tails you lose" theory in the hands of the clever expounders of the Higher Criticism.

Behind the last, as well as the first, of all these theories of inspiration stands the fatal objection of Thomas Paine, that inspiration, to be real, must be personal. A man may be sure that God speaks to him, but how can he be sure that God has spoken to another man? He may think it possible or probable, but he can never be certain. What is revelation at first-hand, said Paine, is only hearsay at second-hand. Real inspiration, therefore, eventuates in mysticism. The inner light shines, the inner voice speaks. God holds personal communication with the individual soul. Each believer carries what the author of *Hudibras* calls "the dark lantern of the spirit," which "none see by but those who bear it."

G. W. FOOTE.

## THE SAYINGS OF JESUS.\*

THERE have been many important discoveries concerning early Christianity of late years. To mention only a few of the most notable, there was *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, unearthed by Bishop Bryennios at Constantinople in 1883, which had been quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Miscellanies*, i. 20) as "Scripture." Then we had *The Revelation of Peter*, and the still more important *Gospel of Peter*, referred to by Origen and Eusebius, discovered in a grave in Upper Egypt in 1886—works which have run the gauntlet of criticism, the latter having a probably earlier and certainly less elaborate account of a crucifixion, in which "the Lord cried out, saying, My power, my power, thou hast forsaken me!" Then followed the providential discovery of the Diatessaron of Tatian the Syrian, a much more dubious document, for which we are indebted to the learning of Signor Ciasca, of the Vatican, who, unfortunately, gives it from the Arabic instead of the Syriac. Then was recovered the important *Apology of Aristides*, preserved in the history of Barlaam and Josaphat—a Buddhist story; and *Commentaries on John and Matthew*, attributed to Origen. The discovery by Mrs. Lewes of parts of a gospel at Mount Sinai, which declared that "Joseph begat Jesus," was thought to be the climax of heterodox discovery; but now Messrs. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, of the Egypt Exploration Fund, come forward with twenty-three boxes of papyri from Oxyrhynchus, including fragments of new sayings of Jesus, a translation of which they have just given to the world.

A word of criticism must first be passed upon the title. This is given as ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ: Sayings of Our Lord. There is nothing about "Our Lord" in the fragment, and the words should not appear even on the cover. It may be said, indeed, that, although the fragment is of some interest and value, the same remark can hardly be applied to the comments of the editors, who show a natural tendency to assimilate the document to the canonical gospels. If their find had been *The Sayings of Jabers*, no one would have made much fuss about it.

The subject of date being of first importance, on this I cite their words:—

"The document was found in a mound which produced a great number of papyri belonging to the first three centuries of our era, those in the immediate vicinity of our fragment belonging to the second and third centuries. This fact, together with the evidence of the handwriting, which has a characteristically Roman aspect, fixed with certainty 300 A.D. as the lowest limit for the date at which the papyrus was written. The general probabilities of the case, the presence of the usual contractions found in biblical MSS., and the fact that the papyrus was in book, not roll, form, put the first century out of the question, and make the first half of the second unlikely. The date, therefore, probably falls within the period 150-300 A.D."

On this I will only here say that those who have the most knowledge of paleography are the most diffident in assigning anything like exact dates to ancient writings. Finders, too usually suppose an antiquity higher than the evidence warrants. Evidence that the fragment is of high antiquity and complete independence of the Gospels is found in the document itself, which I will now briefly examine.

The first logion found on the fragment is, "And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." This ending clearly is the same as Luke vi. 42, and if it stood alone might have been ascribed to a Gospel source. The second saying runs: "Jesus saith, Except ye fast to the world, ye shall in no wise find the kingdom of God; and except ye keep the Sabbath ye shall not see the Father." This has no parallel in the Gospels, and the second clause breathes a far more Jewish spirit than the saying in Mark ii. 27, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The idea of renouncing the world is clear in the New Testament, but that of fasting to the world seems to bear impress of the doctrine of non-marriage found in the Gospel according to the Egyptians.

The third logion runs: "Jesus saith, I stood in the

\* *Logia Iesou*: Sayings of Our Lord. From an Early Greek Papyrus. Discovered and edited, with Translation and Commentary, by Bernard P. Grenfell, M.A., and A. S. Hunt, M.A. With two plates. Published for the Egypt Exploration Fund by Henry Frowde, Amen-corner, London.

midst of the world, and in the flesh was I seen of them; and I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst among them, and my soul grieveth over the sons of men because they are blind in their heart." This recalls the passage of John, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." But the question arises why, if John knew these words of Christ, he did not quote them verbally. That Jesus found all men drunken must surely have been said after the miracle at Cana in Galilee. The fourth logion is undecipherable, a Greek word for "beggary," which is not found in the canonical gospels.

The fifth saying is by far the most important. It runs thus, the gaps indicating words obliterated: "Jesus saith, Wherever there are.....and there is one.....alone I am with him. *Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I.*" It has been suggested that the first gap may be filled with *atheoi*, so that it may read, "Wherever there are Atheists, and there is one believer alone, I am with him," and be thus brought in a line with Matthew xviii. 20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But it is possible that the second blank may be filled with *atheos*, so that the blessed Savior may declare that where there is but one Atheist, there he is with him.

Some critics, aware that these sayings have fully better claims to be considered authentic than those in the Gospels, have already been gushing over the divine beauty and sublime profundity of the words I have italicized. The truth is, the pantheistic philosophy of the immanence of the same soul in all things is very early and widespread. It is found in the Hindu Upanishads. In the Bhagvat Gita the man-god Krishna proclaims himself the odor of the earth, the light of the flame, etc.

The *Pymanter* of Hermes Trismegistus, which gives the Egyptian doctrine of about the Christian era, expressly lays it down that "from one Soul of the universe are all those souls which are in the world." "It is his essence to be pregnant, or great with all things." "This is he that is secret; this is he that is most manifest." "I am in heaven, in the earth, in the water, in the air; I am in living creatures, in plants, in the womb, everywhere." "For there is nothing which is not the image of God." "For there is nothing dead, that either hath been, or is, or shall be in the world."\*

We may be pretty sure that no actual living sane man ever said: "Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I." If such an utterance was ever made, it was by a teacher in his symbolical and representative capacity; as a priestly personator of the sun-god or spirit of vegetative life might say, "This bread is my body, this wine my blood." No sane man would use such utterances literally, and this fragment corroborates the idea of a mystical gospel lying behind the so-called historical ones.

The sixth lection is: "Jesus saith, A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither doth a physician work cures upon them that know him." We have a parallel to the first clause in Luke iv. 24. The second shows a strong spirit of satire on the part of the Great Physician. I should think it was more true in his day than in this that physicians cured only those who knew them not. The seventh reads: "Jesus saith, A city built upon the top of a high hill, and stablished can neither fall nor be hid." This is certainly akin to Matt. v. 14, and to the parable of the wise man who built his house upon a rock. The eighth and last saying is nearly all obliterated, but the editors say: "The Logion appears to be new."

On the general question of the significance of these sayings I think the safest conclusion may be expressed in the words of the editors:—

"Even if the prevailing judgment of these sayings should be that they were preserved in Gnostic circles, and themselves show some traces of the tendencies out of which Gnosticism developed, it does not follow that they are, therefore, inventions. And, whether free or not from Gnostic influences, the genuine ring of what is new in this fragment, and the primitive cast of the whole, are all in favor of its independence of our Gospels in their present shape."

\* These quotations are taken from Dr. Everard's translation of *The Divine Pymanter* (1650; reprinted 1884); but the student should consult the French translation by M. Louis Monard, and read his *Etude sur l'origine des livres Hermétiques*

I surmise that the fragment is the product of the monkish school of Therapeuts in Egypt who regarded their mythical head as "the Savior" *Ἰησοῦς*. In essence it may well be anterior to the Christian Church. The passage, "Except ye fast to the world, ye shall in nowise find the kingdom of God," seems to assimilate it to the Gospel of the Egyptians, one of those heretical compositions which are no longer extant, being either suppressed or allowed to fall into oblivion. This gospel enjoyed a reputation in the first and second centuries, for it is quoted by Clement of Rome, said to have been the companion of Paul referred to in Phil. iv. 3, and also by Clement of Alexandria, who, in his *Miscellanies* (bk. iii., chaps. 9 and 13), quotes considerably from it. It is said to have been used by the Encratites, who followed Jesus in discarding marriage, and the Sabelians, who regarded him as the one only God. Another gospel with which this fragment may have affinity is the Gospel of Eve, referred to by Epiphanius (*Hæres* xxvi. 2). It is to be hoped that in the other papyri, recently discovered by Professor Flinders Petrie and others, there will be found some serving to throw further light on the Sayings of Jesus, for these discoveries certainly tend to diminish the idolatry of the Gospels.

J. M. WHEELER.

## THE STORY OF THE RESURRECTION.

(Concluded from page 452.)

Of course, the strongest proof (if we may use that term) that can be produced in favor of the theory of the resurrection is contained in the New Testament—in fact, apart from this source, as we have endeavored to show, there is really no trustworthy evidence at all. And the testimony there given, be it observed, is of such a doubtful nature that it would not be received to-day as evidence in any English court of law. This testimony is divided under three heads—namely, Jesus's alleged prediction of his resurrection, the Gospel narratives of the event, and St. Paul's references to it.

Christ's prediction is to be found in Matthew xii. 39, 40, and reads thus: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of a whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The time that Christ was to remain in the tomb is here stated with great clearness. Quite as plainly, however, the Gospel accounts show that the prediction was falsified, for, instead of being "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," Jesus, at the very most, was not entombed more than two nights and one day. Besides, he was not in "the heart of the earth" at all, but in a sepulchre ("hewn out of a rock," Mark xv. 46) in Joseph's garden. Further, supposing the events occurred as related, the resurrection was no sign to the Scribes and Pharisees, for to them it is not stated that Christ presented himself after he had risen. He only appeared to his disciples and followers, and in such a manner that they were so sceptical as to his appearance that he had to reprove them for their unbelief; and when the apostles were told that Christ had left the tomb, they believed it not, but thought it "idle tales" (Luke xxiv. 11).

A curious feature in connection with this part of the subject is, that if the words ascribed to St. Matthew be true, what Christ said to his friends appears to have made little or no impression upon them. For instance, we read: "And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Matthew xx. 17, 18, 19). One may naturally suppose that the persons to whom these words were uttered would have expected to have seen their Master alive on the third day. But evidently they did not, for when they were told that he had risen, they did not believe it (Mark xvi. 11). When he appeared to his disciples in Galilee "some doubted" (Matthew xxviii. 17), while others supposed him to be a spirit (Luke xxiv. 37). Even Mary Magdalene thought

he was the gardener (John xx. 15). The women, it appears, who probably were the special friends of Jesus, had no expectation that he would rise on the third day, for we read that they brought sweet spices and ointments that they might anoint his body (Mark xvi. 1; Luke xxiii. 56). It is not reasonable that such a process would have been contemplated by anyone who thought to see the "risen Jesus" alive again in a few hours. How these incidents can be reconciled with the allegation, in other portions of the Gospels, that his resurrection was expected, we leave Christians to decide.

The accounts of this event, as given in the Gospels, are so contradictory that they are of no evidential value. The questions which the Gospels should answer are these: Who discovered that Christ had risen? At what time was the discovery made? What was seen and felt at the discovery? And who announced that the resurrection had occurred? The answers in the New Testament are so conflicting that the whole of them cannot be correct, and no evidence exists to prove that even one is true.

Let us see what the answers really amount to. Matthew states that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre; Mark says that Salome accompanied the two women. Luke speaks of several women going there, and John mentions only Mary Magdalene. Matthew says that they went at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn; Mark says the Sabbath was past, at the rising of the sun; but John says that Mary went there while it was yet dark. Matthew mentions only one angel; Mark speaks of a young man; Luke says there were two men, who were afterwards called angels by the women; while John reports two angels. Matthew says that the angel was outside, sitting on the stone which he had rolled from the door; Mark says the young man was inside of the sepulchre; Luke tells us that the two men stood by them; but John declares that the two angels were sitting. According to Matthew, the two women met Jesus as they were returning from the sepulchre. Mark says that he was seen first by Mary Magdalene, but does not say how or where! John says that Mary Magdalene saw neither Jesus nor angels till her second visit to the sepulchre. But Luke will not admit that he was seen at all by her; for he says positively that the women saw him not, but his first appearance was made to Cleopas and another, on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Matthew says that when the two women saw him they held him by the feet; John says that Jesus would not be touched. According to Luke, it appears that Peter went by himself to the sepulchre, after the angels were gone, into which he only stooped down, and saw the clothes lying; but John says that another disciple ran with him, and they both went into the sepulchre before the angel came. Now, with all this manifest confusion and contradiction in their several reports, which and what are we to believe?

It is equally uncertain where Christ first met his disciples after his alleged resurrection. According to Matthew, it was by appointment at a mountain in Galilee; whereas Luke asserts that it was at Jerusalem, where the eleven were gathered together, and whence, after he had partaken of fish and honeycomb, Christ was carried up into heaven. It is true, against this supposition we read that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians xv. 50); and, if Matthew and Luke can be relied on, Jesus promised not to eat and drink any more till he reached his Father's kingdom. Besides these difficulties, we are at a loss to know who the "eleven gathered at Jerusalem" were. Thomas, says St. John, was not present; Judas had hung himself, and Matthias was not yet chosen.

The testimony of St. Paul is utterly worthless as proving the accuracy of the story of the resurrection. As we have already intimated, his belief in this event was based upon faith and tradition, not upon knowledge and investigation (Gal. i. 11, 12; 1 Cor. xv. 3). Moreover, his belief in the then speedy end of the world has proved to be wrong, which shows that he was by no means to be explicitly relied upon in his statements; while his reasoning in favor of the doctrine, as contained in 1 Corinthians xv., is fallacious in the extreme, opposed as it is to experience and the facts of science. This is too self-evident to require any comment. St. Paul says: "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (verse 8). Here, then, it is supposed that we are confronted with real testimony. First, it must be observed that the alleged seeing of Jesus

by Paul occurred in a vision. But what is a vision? It is, of course, something seen; but the word is used in the New Testament to convey the impression of a something, otherwise imperceptible to human eyesight, rendered visible by the exercise of some supernatural power or influence. It is differentiated from a dream, in so far as the latter is only a mental concept, or series of conceptions, engendered in a state of semi-somnolency. To understand the mental character of St. Paul, it will be well to refer to the incidents of his conversion. Outside the city of Damascus, Saul, the persecutor, was stricken to the ground by what some writers have termed a sun-stroke. This occurrence happened "about noon" (Acts xxii. 6), as he declared to the multitude after his arrest in Jerusalem, when the sun was on the meridian, and when it is dangerous in the extreme to travel in Oriental climes. By consulting neurological works it will be found that singing in the ears, imaginary voices, etc., are frequently the accompaniments of a sudden rush of blood to the head. In nearly all such cases there are visions; sights are beheld and sounds heard which have no other than an imaginary, subjective, or phantasmal reality. This explains what is called the "conversion of St. Paul"; but there still remains his claim to have seen Jesus subsequently, "when he was come again to Jerusalem, even while he prayed in the temple" (*ibid.*, verse 17). The Apostle himself tells us that he "was in a trance" when Jesus appeared to him. Thus, Paul's personal testimony, of which so much capital has been made by apologists, is really of no more moment than that which refers to Christ having been seen by "above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. xv. 6), but of whom, however, we find absolutely no traces whatever either in narrative or tradition. As to his statement that Jesus was "seen of Cephas," if we turn to the Epistles of Peter, we find he is silent on the matter. Again, the "twelve" is a most unsatisfactory reference, since we have no possible means of arriving at the knowledge of either what they saw or did not see. Besides, it would be interesting to learn who the "twelve" were, as Judas was dead, and Matthias was not chosen till after the ascension (see Matthew xxvii. 3, 4, 5; also Acts i. 26); and as to the five hundred brethren, we have no evidence from them that they saw the risen Jesus, but we are told that even after the ascension the number of disciples was about "a hundred and twenty."

We have now, in six articles, noticed the principal recorded incidents associated with the alleged crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. There is much more to be said upon the reports of these events, but we have no further space at present to devote to the subjects. In our opinion, they are simply forms of ancient myths, and have no foundation in fact.

CHARLES WATTS.

### HAS FREETHOUGHT DECLINED?

I DOUBT whether Mr. William Clarke, in his "Jubilee Review of Sixty Years of Religious Thought," in the *Daily Chronicle*, is quite clear in his mind about the decline of Atheism and Secularism among the working classes. At the same time, one can admit that there may have been such a rapid decline in the acceptance of Atheism and Secularism—I would prefer to say Freethought—as Mr. Clarke states there has been. But such a decline must not—admitting it for the moment just for the purpose of the argument—and does not, mean the rise of any other religion in the ranks of the working classes. If they have, as Mr. Clarke thinks, dropped the natural religion of Atheism on the one hand, and Secularism on the other, it cannot be shown, I believe, that they have picked up any supernatural belief in place of the natural ones which Mr. Clarke thinks they have relinquished.

My own view, which, as a Freethinker, I consider entitled to precedence as against Mr. Clarke's, on this subject is that the working classes do not, except at unusual crises (the most recent of which was the Bradlaugh Free Election crisis), concern themselves seriously about forms of faith either of the natural or supernatural order; in fact, they have not, as a rule, leisure, in England at any rate, for more than an occasional serious incursion into questions concerning religion. To paraphrase Borrow's Jasper Petulengro: "When not engaged in their occupations, they are engaged in their relaxations, and have no time to bother about religion." Nor is this attitude special

to the working classes. It is quite as characteristic of the two other classes, at least so far as the men are concerned; although, in their case, the indifference to religious questions is very often cloaked under an occasional, or even regular, attendance—as a matter of social custom or from business motives—at some place of worship. The working classes are more honest in this matter than the middle classes; while the third class approximates more closely—according to the late Randolph Churchill—to the working class in a frank indifference to religion all along the line.

Indeed, Mr. Clarke, in his summary, seems to me to mean his readers to infer that the reign of belief in the supernatural is about extinguished in England; that Free-thought—or, as Mr. Clarke puts it, *free criticism without reference to any authority outside human reason*—is the prevalent mental attitude of most men who deign to give their attention to speculative beliefs at all. Nothing from the Atheistic or Secularist standpoint could be more sensible, more intelligent, than this general attitude of free criticism; whatever belief, it leads to, whatever conclusion men may arrive at on any subject by a process of free criticism, is necessarily a Rationalistic one. It is not so much the end as the method employed which Freethinkers desiderate; for no man reaching a mental conclusion by a full use of his free reason can well have bigoted or bitter feelings against any other man whose different conclusions have yet been reached by an identical method. We cannot all agree in our conclusions, but there may be an universal agreement—or, at least, so many Freethinkers hold—as to method.

According to James Thomson, we are each one of us, by our nature, pre-elected, as it were, to some particular group of speculative thought, and that, therefore, proselytism is absurd and never succeeds; so, if one does sometimes write as though to persuade others, it is not from any thought that one will succeed, but from the promptings of one's nature.

Believing, as I do, that most Freethinkers, when pressed, hold a very similar view, notwithstanding their sometimes enthusiastic propagandism, I also believe that (assuming Mr. Clarke's summaries, headlined as "The Inner and Spiritual" and "The Decline of Dogma," to be correct in the main), Freethinkers are eminently gratified at the result of the last sixty years, so far as the widespread acceptance of their method of thinking—*i.e.*, of quite free criticism in every department of human thought and speculation—is concerned. Truth and fact invite criticism of the keenest—invite and welcome it joyfully. On y truth's opposite, or its alloy, fears and hates it.

After all, the most important matter to thoughtful men and women is not what this or that class thinks on any subject, but what the greatest men think in every branch of human thought. Surely it is the best intellects of our race who should ultimately lead us; and the best thought, just as in the case with the best art, cannot be made a question of majorities or classes. And the finest minds of our race have always, by example, encouraged the full and uncontrolled exercise of our reasoning faculties; and most of them in England have, from Spenser, the poet's poet, to Herbert Spencer of to-day, strenuously advocated the widest use of those faculties which we term critical, and which every man who really believes that he has "got the truth" cordially embraces. Only infidels to truth can fear the most thorough application of the freest possible criticism to their beliefs.

PAGANUS.

### CURSING THE FIG-TREE.

OF all the miracles attributed to Jesus Christ this appears to me the least amiable. The casting of devils into two thousand pigs may be defended on the ground that the liberation of one or two men from a legion of devils was worth the sacrifice of pork and the injury to the pig-owner. But the cursing of a fig-tree for not having figs to supply hunger, "when the time of figs, was not yet," seems an act of wanton malevolence such as the low-caste Hindoos attribute to their godlings who are half deities and half demons.

The story as narrated by Mark says:—

"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing a fig-tree afar off,

having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered, and said unto it, 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.' And his disciples heard it. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto him, 'Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.'"

Archbishop Trench, in noticing the circumstance of Jesus being hungry, says:—

"There is something inexpressibly affecting in the idea, that He, who sustains the whole order of created beings, from the feeble insect that lives but a single day, to the immortal seraph that stands day and night in his presence, should, for our sakes, have endured hunger and thirst, and become familiar with want and wretchedness. There is something deeply touching in a humility thus perfect and generous, in the dignity and simplicity with which the Lord of Life 'bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.'"

We find neither humility nor dignity in the story, and simplicity only comes in the sense of stupidity in expecting figs when "the time of figs was not yet." There is an old-world air in this puerile petulance of cursing a tree for not producing fruit when the season for fruit had not arrived, which reminds us of a child striking an inanimate object that hurts him. If we believed in the literal truth of the story, we should take it as evidence of insanity, for, indeed, there is much in the story only to be accounted for by a want of mental balance. The appropriation of the ass and colt on the pretence that the Lord hath need of them, the high-handed scourging of money-changers, the threats of vengeance on the city, and the hell to which he consigned his opponents, combine with this story in giving some countenance to the views of those who said, "He hath a devil, and is mad."

Trench says:—

"This miracle was, indeed, admirably calculated, not only to strengthen the faith of the disciples, but to awaken in their hearts a spirit of holy fear; nor is it less calculated to produce the same effects in all to whom the Gospel of Christ is given."

I should think so. The being who can curse a tree for not having fruit in springtime may indeed make one vessel for honor and another for destruction. He is comparable to Holy Willie's God:—

O Thou, wha in the Heavens dost dwell,  
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,  
Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,  
A' for thy glory,  
And no for onie guid or ill  
They've dono afore thee.

The story of God on earth cursing a tree for his own folly, and employing his almighty power for the purpose of wreaking vengeance on an immediate object, is so childish and repugnant to common sense that one might think even worshippers of the Christian fetish would find satisfaction in the thought that it may not be true. As Thomas Paine wrote of the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram:

All the consolation is,  
The Bible tells a lie.

This consolation is not open to the orthodox Christian; but it is one which the heterodox can accept as "a moral certainty." The story is not only a ridiculous legend; it is one of which we can trace the growth. In Luke we have no such miracle, but we have instead a *parable* (xiii. 6-9) of a fig-tree, which, if it bears no fruit, is to be cut down. This probably refers to the Jewish Church. But miracle-mongering Mark turns the parable into an actual event, and says: "In the morning, when they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up by the roots." Matthew "goes one better," and says: "Immediately [R. V.] the fig-tree withered away." The story caught on with the early Christians, for they were expecting the destruction of the world, which brought forth no fruit, they considered, from God. Happily, the man who could blast the fig-tree did not come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who knew not God, though he was continually expected by the first disciples, and is, indeed, represented as predicting the destruction of the world in the lifetime of his own generation.

UNCLE BEN.

For the structure that we raise  
Time is with materials filled;  
Our to-days and yesterdays  
Are the blocks with which we build.

## ACID DROPS.

OUR only "General" is an enterprising showman. He sends a message of loyal congratulation from the Salvationists to the Queen. Of course Her Majesty replied "from Windsor Castle to 'General' Booth," and the "General" read it out to his Army at the Crystal Palace amid enthusiastic cheers. Both "General" and Sovereign seem to know their book.

England is noted all over the world for three things—Bibles, beer-barrels, and Salvation Army drums. "General" Booth boasts that he follows the flag. He also boasts that his "Army" is subventioned in some parts of the Empire. Evidently he would like to have it subventioned everywhere. Successful religious sects soon get the itch for the money of the State.

The Nonconformists followed in the wake of the Churchmen and had a day at Windsor, where they presented congratulatory addresses to the Queen. On both sides there was much rejoicing over the extension of religious liberty; indeed, it almost appeared, from the loyal effusions and the royal replies, that religious liberty is about complete in England. And so it is if religious liberty means liberty among religionists. The Freethinker, however, is still a sort of outcast. He is liable to imprisonment for "blasphemy," and is denied the common rights of property which are enjoyed by all the religious sects. Amid all this jubilation the Freethinker raises his voice, and cries: "Thank you for nothing!"

The Nonconformist ministers who "deputed" at Windsor "had the honor" of kissing the Queen's hand. When they get to heaven they may "have the honor" of kissing Jehovah's feet, for that was the part of him which was seen by the seventy elders of Israel when they went up a certain mountain where he was taking a holiday. Another part of his anatomy was seen by Moses, but this is ticklish ground, and we had better avoid it.

Seriously, we are glad to learn the true secret of England's prosperity during the past sixty years. It is all explained now, and is as clear as daylight. The Nonconformist ministers, in their address to the Queen, reminded her that on her accession to the throne they—or rather the bodies they represented—had the "privilege of approaching" her, and on that occasion they prayed God to give her grace, wisdom, and strength for the benefit of her people. "We rejoice in recognising," they said, "that those prayers have been answered." And then they went on to speak of that sixty years of "unparalleled" progress in literature, art, science, and commerce.

There, now! That's perfectly plain. It clears up everything. All the progress of sixty years is due to the prayers offered up by the Nonconformist clergy in 1837. When we read and enjoy George Meredith and Thomas Hardy, we should not forget to thank the Nonconformist clergy. If they hadn't prayed, it would have made a terrible difference to our literature. When we admire the pictures of Leighton, Millais, Watts, and other artists, we ought to bless the Nonconformist clergy.

If they hadn't prayed, British art might have sunk to the level of a Saracen's Head, outside a country public-house. When we think of what we owe to the railway, the telegraph, the telephone, and all the wondrous applications of scientific discovery to the industrial arts, we should remember that our thanks for all these things are really due to the Nonconformist clergy. They conceived the happy idea of praying, in a wholesale way, for all these blessings in 1837. Hence we have them and enjoy them. God bless the Nonconformist clergy! And may he soon translate them from this miserable vale of tears to the beautiful land above.

Let us imagine a picture. A ship is wrecked off an iron-bound coast. There are women and children as well as men on board, and death stares them all in the face. But a lifeboat, manned by gallant fellows, most of whom drink and all swear, puts off to their rescue. As the lifeboat leaves a man of God stands on the beach and cries: "Go, brave men! pull your hardest! And I will remain here and pray." Away goes the lifeboat through the ravening waves, and brings back safely every soul on board the doomed ship. And then the man of God exclaims: "I saved them all: God answered my prayers."—That man of God is just like the Nonconformist clergy.

The Dean of Canterbury applied to the Corporation of the City of London for a grant towards the restoration of Canterbury Cathedral. The application was referred to the Coal, Corn, and Finance Committee. This looks curious, but we suppose it is all right. Dean Farrar doesn't want

coal or corn, but the third article, finance, is more appropriate. That is the heading he wants to come under.

The Church Lads' Brigade, numbering about three thousand boys, was recently reviewed in Hyde Park by the Duke of Connaught. According to the *Daily News* report, the great object of the Brigade is to "turn out into the world strong, true, upright, Christian men." This is a very pretty excuse for making the boys play at soldiers. The real object, we take it, is to train the boys for a possible military life; and the "Christian" is just a little bit of pretence to cover the actual design.

According to an interesting article in the *Quarterly Review*, the Sultan of Turkey is a man of irreproachable morals. In the early part of his reign he shrank from allowing capital punishment to be inflicted under any circumstances. But as soon as he began to fear for his own life, he sent hundreds of men to a cruel and lingering death. A weak man in such a position is one of the greatest scourges. He would annihilate the human race sooner than suffer in his own person. Whereas a strong man like Cæsar or Cromwell, while he may take precautions, despises assassins too much to let them dictate his policy.

The Sultan is very pious, and one of his chief counsellors is a fanatical dervish named Aboul-Houda. He lives in the Sultan's palace, and they go through religious exercises together. "Strange stories," the reviewer says, "are told of incantations and the raising of spirits." It is the same old story. Religious fanaticism is at the bottom of so much of the vilest crime and cruelty in the world.

Lord Salisbury threw over the Duke of Devonshire, a member of his own Cabinet, in order to please the Bishops in the House of Lords. The wily Bishop of St. Asaph got the Archbishop of Canterbury to move the rejection of a Denbighshire Educational scheme, initiated under the Welsh Intermediate Educational Act, by a committee of the Denbighshire County Council, framed by the Charity Commissioners, revised by the Education Department, and sanctioned by the Lord President. Lord Salisbury sided with the Archbishop and talked about "piracy." This means that the rejected scheme would alienate £2,000 a year from the Church. But as the endowment in question was not left to the Church, but has been coolly appropriated by it, the "piracy" rather seems on the other side. It is amusing to watch the anxiety of ecclesiastics when there is any spoil at stake. They are all alive then.

The "Voluntary" school teachers have been holding a Conference at Birmingham, between six and seven hundred delegates being present from all parts of the country. The President, Mr. C. J. Addiscot, expressed his pleasure at knowing that, under the Education Act of 1896, about £1,000,000 a year would find its way to the managers of Voluntary schools; but the question arose, What would be done with the money? He ventured to say it was the Voluntary school teacher who bore the "intolerable strain," in the shape of ever-increasing classes and ever-decreasing salaries. A resolution was carried, after a heated discussion, to the effect that the local bodies should only provide the school buildings, and that the State should pay the cost of the "secular instruction." Some delegates declared that this was a deletion of the religious instruction, which led Mr. Yoxall, M.P., the secretary of the Teachers' Union, to say: "We are not here as parsons' men or priests' men"—at which there were loud cries of dissent from a noisy minority, one of whom cried, "Disgusting!" The resolution was carried by a very large majority, amidst "tumultuous cheering."

Ex-parson Diggle, who has had it pretty much his own way on the London School Board, appeals to the ratepayers to elect next November men who will support the policy of filling children's minds with religious rubbish, that they may grow up in reverential awe of such humbugs as Diggle.

The *Church Times*, however, is dissatisfied with Diggle. It demands that the teaching of the Board schools shall not only be religious and Christian, as Diggle contends, but that it shall be on the basis of the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed.

Bosdin T. Leech, Esq., writes from Timperley to the *Manchester Guardian*, pointing out the Bishop's misstatements as to School Board education. He adds that, at his parish church, he was compelled to listen to a shrieking denunciation of Board schools by an outside clergyman, the Vicar of Halton. It was one tissue of incorrect statements. "The result was that the means adopted to work on the congregation seemed to me so illegitimate that I declined to contribute. One statement given with thrilling effect was that 'at Birmingham, after six years of undenominational teaching, when the Bible was excluded, juvenile crime increased so alarmingly that the ratepayers

demand a change back to religious teaching." Mr. Leech says: "I at once wrote to Birmingham, and got the police statistics, which showed exactly the reverse of what had been stated. From 1870 to 1873-4, while there was denominational teaching, juvenile crime increased from 1,085 to 1,627 cases; while during the six years of undenominational teaching it had decreased from 1,627 to 891." Mr. Leech probably agrees with Mr. Labouche that the statements of the clergy, when sifted, are seldom found trustworthy.

The priests have been trying to push religious education in Italy by getting ecclesiastics appointed to teach religion. This project was forwarded in the Chamber by Signor Molmenti, who calls himself a Liberal, but who was energetically opposed by Signor Bovio, the well-known Free-thinker. At present, in the six thousand Italian Communes there are three thousand ecclesiastical teachers and twenty-seven thousand lay teachers. The Italian schools are secular lay-schools, but religious instruction is given. It is not, however, obligatory. S. Gianturca, the Minister of Education, pointed out that when priests are employed as teachers they are not—practically speaking—amenable to punishment in case of transgression.

Roman Catholics about Saffron Hill, London, celebrated on Sunday last the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. A big procession started from St. Peter's Church, Hatton-garden, and all the traffic in the neighborhood had to be suspended. In the evening the public-houses were crowded, and sacks of "confetti" were dispersed. It was a sublime spectacle, calculated to enchant one with the grandeur of religion.

There can be no doubt as to the advance of Ritualism within the past generation. The Church Association, in their petition with regard to the ecclesiastical patronage of the Crown, pointed out that, of our thirty-four bishops, twenty were Ritualists, and not more than five Evangelicals; of whom Lord Salisbury had nominated thirteen Ritualists and but three Evangelicals, while clergymen with Romanizing tendencies were appointed to all the richest billets. The Low Church has sunk into low water indeed, and Lord Salisbury is certainly not likely to give her a lift.

The meeting of the Annual Grand Lodge of the Orange Institution, under Colonel Waring, M.P., reminds us of how much an order, that was boasted of as a bulwark of Protestantism, has become a mere appenage to Conservative processions. The conflict of Orange and Green in the north of Ireland only makes sensible people say: "A plague o' both your houses."

Two hundred dignitaries of the Pan-Anglican Church, including black and yellow and sea-green bishops, have been assembled in solemn and secret synod at Lambeth. They have kept their sittings strictly private, and the papers have not taken much notice even of their public proceedings. Our national Parliament even would not have much respect if it had to carry on its debates with closed doors. As for the right-reverend fathers-in-God, it is safe to say that when two or three are gathered together there is the Devil in the midst of them.

According to the *English Churchman*, a party of Anglican clergy have propounded the scheme of "admitting the Queen to the sacred order of Priestess." They can cite the ancient Egyptians, and even the apocryphal story of Pope Joan. The scheme, too, is expected to receive the enthusiastic support of the New Woman.

The Archbishop of Canterbury held a garden party at Lambeth Palace on July 19. The ladies' toilettes are said to have been ravishing, and the Turkish Ambassador was there in all his glory. What a change from that other garden party just before the crucifixion! Christianity has become a more profitable business since then.

There need be little doubt as to the extent of Christianity on the Gold Coast of Africa. In 1892 1,295,000 gallons of rum were imported there.

The Arabs have an old legend about the cat which relates how that animal was created to keep down the mice which swarmed in Noah's Ark and devoured the food of the other inhabitants. Russian peasants say that the furry coat of the cat was originally designed for the dog, but that nobler animal forfeited it by growing impatient at the slow distribution of gifts at the Creation, and therefore going over to the Evil One in the hopes of getting something better. Since then the dog has hated the cat, because he suspects her of having stolen his coat.

At her last reception Mdlle. Couedon the Parisian young lady who professes to be inspired by the angel Gabriel, predicted that England would shortly lose both India and

Gibraltar at the same time. What a Devil of a fellow among the girls our old friend Gabriel has been. Was he the one who "inspired" Mary, the hair plaiter of Judea, some 2,000 years back?

The meteorologists of Greenwich do not endorse the old superstition about St. Swithin's Day. As a matter of recorded fact, it was found that in the year in which rain fell on July 15 the following forty days happened to be a trifle drier than when St. Swithin gave no rain. The old story about the removal of the saint's bones on the 15th, and the disastrous deluge of rain, which indicated the good man's post-mortem resentment, has been totally discredited. There is well-authenticated evidence that the removal was effected with much pomp and ceremony, and without a drop of rain.

Someone points out that Dunoon won't allow the Sunday steamer to call, but at the same time it booms Sunday coaches to Loch Eck.

This is a story they are telling of Dunoon on Sunday: Stranger—"There seems to be a Sunday law in this town!" Resident—"Yes, sir, yes; if you want to be shaved you will have to wait till to-morrow." Stranger—"Oh, I don't want to be shaved; I want to get a drink!" Resident—"Come with me."

A Scotch paper reports that in a young ladies' school, on the recent occurrence of a total eclipse of the sun, a still more effectual obscuration of the sun was ordered by the lady at the head of the house by having the blinds drawn down so as to prevent any idle breaking of the "Sabbath" by amateur observation of the phenomenon. Probably this was a unique example of "blind" obedience to the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue.

Christ Schlatter, recently deceased, still occupies some attention in American papers. It seems he has left a Book of Schlatter, which a Mr. Jarrett, with whom he stayed, is publishing. He read his Bible, a Catholic edition, considerably, and seemed to prefer the book of Daniel, which he expounded on many occasions. Next to Daniel, the prophecies of Ezekiel pleased him. He said to his hostess: "I told them that the head of the serpent lies in London, and that it has its coils around the world, and that nothing but the Creator himself can crush it. London is the modern Babylon, the Babylon mentioned in the Revelations. The Beast is the money power, no matter where found. Mammon worship is in the church as well as in State and society at large. The gold power is one combine."

Schlatter grew violent in his talks after a while. He paced the floor rapidly while pouring forth a torrent of words in an excited manner. "I will soon be away with Father alone. He would rather have me with the wild beasts than with human beasts. Then the time will come when they can spend the millions they have taken from the poor and unfortunate in trying to hunt me. But they can never find me. I shall go where Father takes me, but I must go alone. He often told me I must go to the Soudan, and that the 144,000 must be taken out of Egypt. At first I thought I had to cross the sea, but now I know different. Egypt is on this continent, and the 144,000 are reincarnated in the Western hemisphere." Christ Schlatter seems, like St. Paul, to have been born out of due time. He had the makings of a first-class prophet in the good old Bible days, when inspiration and insanity were all one.

Ezekiel is not a very savory prophet, and his sixteenth chapter is not readable in polite society. Yet, according to Jesse Salisbury's account of charms used in S.E. Worcestershire, "the repetition of Ezekiel xvi. 6 is a charm for bleeding at the nose, considered by many to be infallible."

In the case of the Rev. Edward Heury Parry, vicar of Dulau, who shot at a laborer named King, who claimed a shilling from him, the jury found that the accused was not in a proper mental condition to plead. He was ordered to be detained in the prison asylum.

Ex-convict and ex-monk Widdows gets a free advertisement in the papers for his preachings at the Church of Martin Luther, South Hackney.

According to the *Cleveland Leader* (Ohio), the Rev. James Hoskins, described as "a preacher of the Free-thinker faith," has been arrested and fined in the Atlanta Police-court for speaking disrespectfully of Jesus Christ, whom he called a hypocrite, a liar, and a pretender. The fine was made a nominal one on the offender's promising to discontinue his sermons; at least the report says so, though we hope there is some mistake. In any case, it is evident that religious liberty is far from being secured in the United States. You mustn't give your opinion there too freely of Jesus Christ as an alleged historical character. You can say what you

please about Confucius and Socrates, but not about the Prophet of Nazareth.

The Church makes much fuss of the saints who were martyred in the days of auld lang syne. We are happy to think, for the sake of humanity, that the evidence of the early Christian martyrdoms is quite as dubious as that of the saints' miracles. Indeed, it is wondrous that God, who wrought so many miracles in their behalf, allowed them to be martyred at all. But the ways of Providence are not as those of men. The inspired prophets, who foresaw the destruction of Babylon, and even predicted when the world would end, never could tell when they would be run in themselves. But the Church takes precious little notice of the sinners who get martyred to-day. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was boomed in every pulpit because it only reflected on some slaveowners in the Southern States. But *The White Slaves of England* has a different reception, for it reflects on men of wealth and on our industrial system, to touch which is to lay hands on the sacred ark of the Lord.

The Rev. Mr. Beackim, the pastor of a negro church at O'Neill City, Nebraska, having gouged out one of his eyes, and in consequence nearly lost the sight of the other, is now urging his flock to imitate him in complying with the Savior's commands. He says the Almighty approves of men with one eye. A man is apt to see too much with both eyes, and to become a disbeliever.

Isaac Selby is announced to conduct an anti-infidel crusade in Great Britain during 1897, so the end of the world is not quite yet. He has the indispensable credential of having been converted from Freethought, though we do not remember his name in connection with the Freethought platform. He has also "debated with all the leading Secularist lecturers in Australia," including Joseph Symes, W. W. Collins, and Wallace Nelson. How he fared in the said debates is not stated. According to the announcement, he has addressed very large audiences in Melbourne. We doubt whether he will be quite as fortunate in the old country.

Mr. T. C. Collings, the Smoking Parson, who had to resign his curacy at Spitalfields for his Socialistic predilections, has been appointed to the curacy of St. James's, Upper Edmonton, to carry on a mission among working-men. He is said to have expressed a wish to meet an infidel in friendly debate. We daresay he can be accommodated.

The *Lancet*, noticing Sir R. Webster's statement that the sanitary objections to kissing the fetish-book have been exaggerated, says: "The danger of infection is a matter, not of opinion, but of fact, whether we regard the risk as conveyed by the book from mouth to mouth, or as a mediate form of contagion in cases of epidemics. In the epidemic of small-pox in Warrington some years ago a solicitor, fearing that he might be infected by a previous witness from an infected house, claimed to be sworn with uplifted hand, but was refused permission by the County-Court judge, who was ignorant that in doing so he was violating the law and depriving the witness of his just rights." It laments that so few claim the privilege, owing to a dislike to be singular and to give trouble. This applies equally to affirmation and swearing in the Scotch fashion. The *Lancet* says: "Apart from the question of infection, the English form of oath stands condemned as an uncleanly mode of adjuration; it has also been condemned by an eminent English judge as being wholly unintelligible to children, and, he might have added, to many adults."

Says the ever lively *Sydney Bulletin*: "At Melbourne Criminal Court, on May 17th, a little girl of seven years was a witness for the prosecution. Crown Prosecutor Walsh, Q.C., straightway put to this mite the theological question: 'What do you mean by taking an oath?' The mite replied: 'Kissing the Bible.' Then up spake Holroyd, J.: 'What is the Bible, my girl?' and the poor little mite began to cry. Again up spake the Judge: 'Don't they teach you these things in Sunday-school? And don't they teach you what the Bible is?' And the mite cried even more. As Bishops and Jews and Bradlaughs and lots of other folk have not yet answered the above questions, the putting of them to a seven-year-old girl savors of problem plays and insanity."

It is said that the Church Army is positively billed for Australia, after the Lambeth Conference this year. It will shake up the Salvationists a bit, though a palpable imitation—merely the thing washed, shaved, and put into clean linen.

A Towers Chinaman was recently asked in court: "What religion are you—Christian or pagan?" To which the guileless one responded: "Me blow out matchee." He was sworn immediately. Another gave his occupation thusly: "Me swear and chop wood." And they say the Chow has no humor.

A bitter t'othersider, per medium of a godless Westralian paper, proposes that a law be passed "to do without God for six months, and appoint John Forrest to the post." But, then, they've done it already—to a great extent, at least. The true Westralian really doesn't know for certain which is God and which is John Forrest.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

North Maoriland saintdom smells badly just now. A solid-looking financier, who is alleged to have got away with some thousands, and is now in gaol awaiting trial, was a shining light in the sinner-saving business, and led the choir regularly. It is not known whether there were women in the case. A young shopkeeper who has levanted was a Sunday-school teacher, and has left more than one female teacher with a heavy burden to bear. Not long ago two churchwardens successively occupied a pew in the same church, and got clear away with some thousands apiece. Soon afterwards the Presbyterians lost a shining legal light by a self-inflicted pistol shot—he had embezzled a little fortune. Only the goody-goody get the chance to do such things.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

It is said that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England is going to be increased by a new Archbishop, and that the distinction will fall on the See of Liverpool.

Brann says: "Rev. Pearl Romine, erstwhile pastor of the First Baptist church of Jennings, Oklahoma, is not what might be called a pearl of great price; at least not at present, members of his congregation having presented him with an elegant coat of tar and feathers for trifling with the Seventh Commandment. Thus one by one does a wicked and perverse generation invade the prescriptive rights and time-honored prerogatives of the apostles of emotional religion."

Douglas Green, a New York Stock Exchange man, left his wife and fled to Europe with Mrs. Alice Snell McCrea, a divorced woman. All the parties were rich, so the matter was made much of in the newspapers. The curious part of the performance was that Mrs. McCrea insisted upon being married by a minister to Green before she would go to Europe with him. Evidently, in her opinion, it was not wrong for her to take her lover away from his legal wife, but it would have been wrong to live with him unless the colored minister who married them said she might. A purely religious conscience is an interesting thing to study.

The Pope is reported as having said to the American Catholic, Mr. Bourke Cochran: "I would gladly take to my bosom the whole world and embrace it in the holy Catholic faith, not for any benefit it could do me personally, but to advance the welfare of the men in this world. Thanks very much. Those who know what the papal embrace of the world meant would rather not."

Mr. Bourke Cochran, without the slightest fear of an indictment for blasphemy, compares Joachimo Pecci to Jesus Christ. He says: "After the mass, as he knelt down and prayed at the priedieu at the right of the altar, his face buried in his hands, that marvellous voice occasionally pronouncing a word, while a slight nervous quiver shook his body, one could not help thinking of that scene in the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of the Passion. It was indeed easy to imagine that the slight figure in white, almost prostrate over the back of the priedieu, was sobbing over the sins of the world and asking God to be merciful in His judgment of sinners."

John Wanamaker, the millionaire merchant, was in Chicago a few weeks ago, and spoke with "Commander" Ballington Booth. John said "there was no remedy for the hard times but the Gospel of Christ." What is the Gospel of Christ according to the record? "Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor," said Jesus. When John does that there will be a wave of prosperity for a few of the poor; but John is not that kind of a Christian. The *New York World* proved a few years ago that he kept his shirt-making girls at work on starvation prices. "O ye hypocrites," said Jesus.—*Freethought Magazine*.

Thieves broke into St. John's Church, Heywood, the other night, and not only rifled the alms-box, but regaled themselves with the sacramental wine. They got clear away, and are still "wanted"; but we shudder to think of their awful condition with all that quantity of the blood of Christ inside them. Perhaps they have died of hyperemia.

"Father" Ignatius, in a letter to the Humanitarian League, says that "from a Christian and humane standpoint" he should shudder to be in the company of a vivisector. This is creditable to his feelings, but not to his knowledge of the Bible. There is something very amusing in the way that Christians find a sanction for all good things in their own religion, often after the said good things have been promoted and made popular by disbelievers.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

## SPECIAL.

## THE TREASURER'S SCHEME.

IN last week's *Freethinker* I explained at considerable length the scheme of financial reconstruction put forward by Mr. Hartmann, the National Secular Society's treasurer, who proposes to raise (if possible) an income of £1,500 a year by means of definite annual subscriptions from members and friends. What is now wanted is a list of names and addresses of persons who will promise to subscribe any sum during the present year, from five shillings up to a hundred pounds. Mr. Hartmann himself opens with a promise of £50 for the first year.

This week's *Freethinker* is practically made up on Tuesday, so there have been but a few days for the receipt of replies to last week's appeal. Mr. Munns, the Margate veteran, promises £5, and the veteran James Fulton, of Greenock, another £5. Mr. W. H. Harrap, £1; Mr. W. Davey, 5s.; J. G. Dobson, 10s.; John Hughes, £1 1s.; F. Oscar, 5s.; R. Axelby, 5s.

During the next few days it is to be hoped that every Secularist will give this matter his serious consideration. Here is an opportunity for the party to "run" itself, as the Americans say; and I, who am accused of despotic designs, give it all possible support. I appeal to the Secular party to make a special effort for its own sake. Never before have we had a treasurer who has taken such an intelligent interest as Mr. Hartmann in the Society's affairs. All the money received will pass through his hands. I shall be happy to wash my own hands of all financial responsibility. And I conclude by saying that the party ought to have done something of this kind long ago.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. C. COHEN lectures again at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, this evening (July 25), his subject being "Scepticism: Its Meaning and Value."

A "Moral Instruction School Board Election Conference" was held on Monday evening in the Board Room of the Holborn Town Hall. Delegates were present representing the Ethical Union, the National Secular Society, the London Trades Council, the Fabian Society, several branches of the Social Democratic Federation, the Battersea Labor League, and other advanced bodies in the metropolis. Mr. Frederic Harrison, who presided, delivered a very interesting speech in which he denounced the Compromise of 1871 as absurd and unjust, and denied that the Bible, with its irrational and inhuman elements, could be a proper text-book of morality in our public schools. Dr. Stanton Coit moved that the general policy expressed in the resolutions put forward by the Ethical Union should be made the basis of election work in each metropolitan division. He did not think it possible to put special candidates in the field at present, and therefore the work during the forthcoming School Board elections would have to be of a propagandist character. Mr. Foote said that the idea was a good one, of substituting natural moral instruction for supernatural religious teaching, if there were any feasibility about it; but that could only be decided by experiment, and it would be worth while to give the project an opportunity. The resolution was carried.

It was decided that an Executive Committee should be appointed to draw up a Manifesto to issue literature, collect funds, and appoint local committees. Unfortunately, a long and warm discussion took place on a technicality, which might easily have been ended in a few minutes by a little more tact; and it was ultimately decided that the Conference should adjourn for (say) ten days, with a view to seeing what other resolutions might be necessary. The Executive Committee will be appointed at the next meeting.

When that meeting takes place it is to be hoped that the delegates will keep to business, and not make propagandist speeches. They do not assemble to convert each other, but to decide plans of action on a common agreement. What is to be done, and how to do it, are the only questions at issue. All discussion beyond that only leads to discord and division.

In our advertisement columns will be found an appeal for the promotion of a Bazaar to raise funds to extend the accommodation at the Failsworth Secular Sunday-school. The object is a worthy one, and we hope it will meet with a good response.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—August 8, Failsworth; 15, New Brompton. October 3, Sheffield; 10, Birmingham. November 7, Glasgow.—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.

F. J. BOORMAN.—Thanks for copies of your letters to Sir Charles Warren and the Clerk of the Gillingham Council. See "Sugar Plums."

J. LAWLER.—Very likely, as you say, the time will come when Christians will claim that *they* gave us Sunday bands in the parks. We believe the bye-laws prohibit the sale of papers in the parks—those under the County Council as well as those under the Government. With respect to a list of newsagents who sell the *Freethinker*, the difficulty is in making it up.

J. ROBERTS.—We know nothing of the anti-infidel crusader, Isaac Selby, who is said to be visiting Great Britain from Australia. He ought to have come in time to figure in the Jubilee procession.

J. H. BAIN.—The information you seek lies scattered in many books. Some references will be found in Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *Will Christ Save Us?* Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* gives a great number of resolutions in favor of slavery passed by American Churches. We do not think this volume is now in print, but it can sometimes be met with second-hand.

G. JACOB.—We saw the statement in the London *Echo*, but we have since heard that it was the "Angel" at Victoria, not at Islington, which recently sold for £180,000.

S. ELLIS.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

G. W. B.—Will try to find room.

HARRY RICHARDSON, 69 Chalk Farm-road, Kentish Town, N. W., thanks all who were kind enough to send him literature for distribution, and will be glad to receive more for the same purpose.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—J. H. Bain, 1s.; M. Christopher, 10s. *Per R. Forder*—T. T., 1s.; J. G. Findlay, 10s.; R. Allen, 4s.

GLASWEGIAN.—A most absurd series of statements, displaying characteristic inaccuracy. No such discussion took place at the N.S.S. Conference. Mr. Foote abides by the policy indicated in the Presidential Notes written after his re-election. He is perfectly indifferent to outside and ignorant opinion. The Freethought party is the only one he has or cares to reckon with. Slandering him may be an easy means of notoriety—for a brief while, but he is not foolish enough to heighten the advertisement. A leader of an unpopular and outlawed party must expect insults. Of course it requires patience to bear them, but that lesson is learnt once for all during a year's imprisonment for Freethought. When you have waited twelve months for a door to open, you can wait for most things afterwards.

T. BEAUCHAMP.—There is always a slackness during the summer. People cannot be expected to fill lecture halls during the dog days.

J. FRESHFIELD.—Mr. Foote may reprint his articles on Dean Farrar's book, but not without revision, and possibly much amplification.

R. AXELBY.—Better make it positive rather than contingent.

F. OSCAR.—Your promise noted with thanks. The names of your two friends will be welcome.

JOHN HUGHES.—Cheque received. Yours is a prompt response. Thanks also for your good wishes for the prosperity of the Treasurer's scheme. The whole party will be to blame if it fails.

J. G. DOBSON sends 10s. as his first annual subscription under the Treasurer's scheme, and hopes the N. S. S. will get all that it requires for its fight for human liberty.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Cape Argus—Crescent—Glasgow Evening Times—New York Public Opinion—Isle of Man Times—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—Sydney Bulletin—Watford Observer—Bolton Times—Humanity—Chatham and Rochester News—L'Etoile Socialiste—Daylight—Watford Leader—Open Court—Freidenker—Secular Thought—Liberator—People's Newspaper—Modern Reflector—World's Advance Thought—Liberty.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

For several years past the Secularists at New Brompton have held open-air meetings on the recreation-ground called Chatham Lines, and these meetings have always been very orderly, with the exception of a recent one, which was disturbed by a few foolish Christians, whose conduct is universally condemned. On Thursday evening, July 15, when Mr. Cohen went there to lecture, the Secularists were informed by Sergt.-Major Cox that Sir Charles Warren had ordered that the meeting should not be held. Mr. Boorman, the secretary of the local N. S. S. Branch, has written a courteous letter to Sir Charles Warren, pointing out that permission is given to other bodies to hold meetings on the ground, and asking that the Secularists, who are also citizens, shall not be excluded. Sir Charles Warren is known to be a very fervent Christian, and his name is associated in London with "Bloody Sunday"; but we hope he will rise superior to the bigotry of denying Secularists the common rights of free speech.

The Liverpool Branch has arranged for a course of lectures by Mr. J. M. Robertson, two on each Sunday, from September 12 to October 3, inclusive. The subjects are attractive, and as the hall in which the lectures are to be delivered is of limited size, it is advisable that friends should obtain course tickets, which are being sold at three shillings, and can be had from Mr. J. Roberts, 99 Saxony-road.

The friends of Dr. Moncure D. Conway and Mrs. Conway will be pleased to hear that Mrs. Conway has been much benefitted by her voyage. Mr. Conway's place has been taken, until September, by Mr. Washington Sullivan, a convert from Catholicism; but it is doubtful if the arrangement will be permanent.

Mr. R. P. Edwards, 2 Leohead-road, W., a member of the West London Branch, who has frequently lectured with acceptance for his own Branch in Hyde Park, is willing to offer his services to other societies. We have not had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Edwards, but we hope soon to receive the report of those who have given him a trial.

The New York *Sun* tells how Boston Common is being secularized on Sunday. Formerly permits were only given for religious services. Now the man or society that wants to advocate the single-tax theory has just as good a chance to exhort as the one who preaches from a Bible text and urges his hearers to embrace religion. In fact, the Sunday afternoon stroller through this forum can hear preached all shades of religious and political views.

New York is straining to remove the hub of the universe from Boston into its own State. A school is to be founded near New York to be known as the School of Ethics and Psychology. A leading object is the teaching of Buddhism. The teachers will, unlike the missionaries of the Christian faith, take the vows of poverty, and never teach or preach for money. They have secured the services of Mr. H. Dharmapala, formerly of Ceylon, who was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions, representing the religion of Buddha. The Executive Council is composed of Dr. Jean du Buy, Secretary; Dr. Alfred Walton, Treasurer; Mrs. Elizabeth Matthews, Prof. Edward A. Spring, Countess M. de Canovarro, and Myron W. Phelps, with a large membership of earnest, thinking people, who, not in harmony with dogmatic theology, are willing to spend their time and money in searching out the truth.

*Secular Thought*, of Toronto, July 10, reprints Mr. J. M. Wheeler's article on "The Resurrection Mystery." It also has a notice of the death of Daniel Baker.

*The Open Court*, of Chicago, gives as a frontispiece to its July number a portrait of the German Freethinker, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. There is also an article on the Rev. J. M. Goeze and Lessing, giving an account of the controversy between the popular man of God and the poor *littérateur*. In Lessing's time Goeze was a famous pastor, who, as far as applause went, had all the best of it. Now he is almost forgotten, and the advocacy of the old traditional belief is becoming a laughing stock to the educated world. Professor Cornill begins an important series of papers on "The History of the People of Israel," and there is a well-illustrated article on "Eschatology in Christian Art," which helps to show the terrible character of Christian belief when it was living and growing.

Our readers will remember that when the Glasgow Sunday pleasure-steamer, *Victoria*, first went down the Clyde to Dunoon she landed her passengers on the pier, where they were kept prisoners until they broke a window in the gate-keeper's house and crawled through. To prevent a repetition of the "scandalous scene on the Sabbath," caused solely by the pietists, the Dunoon Commissioners built great gates of wood to prevent landing at the pier-head.

But they reckoned without Graeme Hunter and his host from Glasgow, who last Sunday stormed the pier and smashed the brand-new gates to smithereens. The townspeople were on the side of the invaders, and they received them with extravagant signs of delight, such as the beleaguering of Derry manifested towards Captain Kirke's men. The stout Argyleshire police were swept away like driftwood before a tidal wave, and a bloodless victory was scored for the Glaswegians. The Burgh Commissioners should now appoint a special day of fasting and humiliation.

"Atheos" contributes a good letter to the *Grimby News* on the influence of Christianity on the world. It is pleasant to see newspapers giving both sides a fair hearing.

A first instalment of the correspondence between Renan and Berthelot, the great chemist, appears in the *Revue de Paris*. "It is as clear as daylight to me," says Renan in one of these letters, "that Christianity is dead, quite dead, and that no good can be done with it." Intellectual depression might for a time throw the masses back towards the old faith. "But," says Renan, "if I saw the whole world come back to Christianity, I would not believe in its vitality. The more I learn the better I can descry the elements of a new religion."

Ingersoll's grand lecture on Shakespeare, one of his very finest efforts, is now reprinted on this side of the Atlantic, and is on sale at Mr. Forder's. The Colonel is a close student of Shakespeare, and is never tired of reading his immortal dramas. His criticism is done lovingly, and with a poetic enthusiasm which befits the lofty subject. Every admirer of Ingersoll, who is also a reader of Shakespeare, will hasten to obtain a copy of this beautiful discourse.

## SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS OF A SCOTCHMAN AND FREETHOUGHT.

My mother dying in childbed when I was four years of age, my father sent me to live with his parents in Glasgow. My grandfather had a lot of books, and read much; my grandmother said that he was deistical. My grandmother was a strong Christian of a Presbyterian sect—I think called the "Auld Lights." I attended church with her, and also Sunday-school. She taught me to read, and ere I was eight years of age she used to take me with her, when she went to take tea with a friend, that I might read a chapter out of the Bible ere they took tea—a common custom of religious fakirs of the time. I suspect she was proud of this (and me), for she sent me to school when I was about eight years for the purpose, she said, that I might learn the new pronunciation of words—"might" and "light," instead of "micht" and "licht," as she pronounced them; and I was put at once into the "Bible and Collection Class"—a proof of the attention she had given me. Here I remained for nine months.

My father, having married again, took me to Dundee to live with him. Before I left my grandmother I had strong doubts of the eternity of damnation. I could not reconcile it with either humanity or justice; but I dared not mention this to her, nor did it occur to me that anyone but myself had such doubts. At that time hell, with all its painted horrors, was openly and eloquently preached from pulpits; and the more eloquently and terrifically it was treated, the more the preacher was praised.

I loved my grandmother, though I doubted some of her fierce beliefs. One Sunday we were walking in the country, and I began to whistle. She said: "George, ye munna whistle on the Sabbath." I desisted, but reasoned thus: If I put my lips in a certain form and blow through them, there comes a whistle; if I put them in another form, there is no whistle—where is the good or evil? This was but infant logic; but the mind was of an inquiring order, preparing to reason on what it was told.

My grandfather died when I was ten to eleven years of age, and several chests full of books came to my father.

My stopmother was a Wesleyan, though not a strict one; but she caused me and her son by her first husband to attend a Wesleyan chapel.

My father called himself an "Independent," but I don't remember his going to church. On Sundays he was with his books, or teaching me arithmetic. He wrote out the multiplication table large, and posted it on the window-shutter so that I could see it at a glance.

I helped to empty the chests of my grandfather's books,

and came on a lot of weekly numbers of a serial—called, I think, the *Universalist*. There was a motto on each number, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." These were my sentiments. I read these numbers, and I was glad to find that there were others who didn't believe in the eternity of hell. This gave me great consolation, and nerved me to think on.

At this period, till I was about fourteen or fifteen, I was a praying Christian. Many a night did I fall asleep on my knees in bed saying my prayers. Other fellows went down on their knees on the floor, with their elbows on a chair, after they had partly stripped. I never could see anything in the particular position; and especially in winter time I found it more comfortable to get into bed first with my face on the pillow. And I can, after all those years, still recommend this as the most comfortable position for those who still pray. My prayers were always original. I thought it more respectful to God to pour out my thoughts in my own language than in those poetical ditties such as "This night I lay me down to sleep." But I soon began to get ashamed of my prayers. I sometimes thought myself impudent in asking God for this or that, as if I could instruct him or remind him, which made me think I was too egotistical. I had better live a good life and not trouble him. One fine summer evening I saw thousands of very minute flies fill the air near me. I looked at them swaying too and fro, and I thought: "Now, were all these worshipping, or praying to, me, would I think any more of them for it? No; I would think them foolish. Far better that they should enjoy their lives, and not mind me." And as I thought that those flies and I were much more a likeness of each other than was I to the Creator of the universe, my praying capacity decreased as my thinking capacity enlarged.

This took place about the time that Robert Owen had agitated thinkers by his *Essays on the Formation of Character*. These were condemned by religious folks—the same fraternity who later condemned the works of Charles Darwin. But the principles enunciated by Owen and Darwin now rule the world, and even those who still condemn the principles of Owen act on them, apparently without knowing it. Owen said that the human character is formed by the organization received at birth, acted on by the circumstances in which it is placed during life. And as these were thrust upon him, philosophically he was not to be praised or blamed for his actions.

I read those essays, and they were so convincing that I was bound to accept their conclusions. Branches were formed in several large towns, notably in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where lectures were given on Sunday mornings and evenings—I speak now only of Scotland. Discussion after the lectures was always allowed, and it was very interesting. Opponents often took a very absurd view of Owen's doctrine of "none praise and blame." I remember in Edinburgh an opponent stood up on the cushioned seat to deliver his speech. This was not allowed, and when an attendant asked him to come down he replied: "Oh, don't blame me, I cannot help it." To which the attendant replied: "Oh, I am not blaming you; and I cannot help getting you down off the seat, which is not allowed."

Sixty years ago "revival meetings" were common in country places after harvest. Young folks attended them for miles around. Burns gives a truthful account of them in his "Holy Fair." The sermons were of the most ferocious kind, the horrors of hell forming a dominant part. I have seen young women brought out of the churches fainting, and laid on the ground to recover.

The farther north you went in Scotland, where there were only villages, the more religious—that is, superstitious—the people were, and the more useless in time of need. I was in Dingwall, a good way north, lodging at a small inn. The captain of a vessel further north arrived in a cart very ill, on his way south to a doctor. He stopped, and was put to bed. The natives were afraid of him, and would hardly go near him, wouldn't sit up with him. I did all night, and during the time had written a letter at his request to a relative. He died next day, and it was only by my remembering the address that I wrote that they were able to communicate with his friends. Nothing would prevent them, however, from holding a Wake over his dead body next night, and I went to bed, as I didn't see the good of it. The same custom exists in Ireland, and there it is a night of whisky-drinking, song-singing, carousing,

and wild debauchery. Again a land of superstition. A quick-witted, superior people, were they not led, and their characters formed, by the teachings of their priests, who are held sacred by the people.

During the last sixty years I have had opportunities of observing the superstition of many lands; in our Great Britain and Ireland, in continental countries, and in Turkey. The superstitions vary, but the effect is the same on all peoples—a lessening of the power of man to understand nature and render it more beneficial, and an intense ferocity in all to injure those who are not of their particular religious fad.

The more religious man is, the more dirty he is. In Rome during the reign of the Popes, you could not study the magnificent ruins of the old Pagans without risking tramping in human filth. Since the government has been in secular hands all that has been swept away, and in the small towns of Italy men go round picking up human nastiness with small shovels, and carry it away in hampers on their backs. Your religious man thinks disease is a visitation from God; the secular man thinks most of it is caused by bad water, bad smells, and inferiorly-ventilated houses, overcrowding, and starvation.

The secular man improves inferior conditions, prevents overcrowding, makes proper drains, builds more wholesome houses, ventilates them to get better air into them. The religious man falls down on his knees and prays.

When an epidemic attacks a community, religious men flock to church, walk there in procession, perhaps carry lighted candles in broad daylight, sing and chant and pray. The secular man looks to nature for the cause, removes it, and the epidemic slackens and ceases. When Lord Palmerston received a Scottish deputation, asking him to appoint a day of humiliation and prayer to assuage the cholera, he told them to go home and clean and limewash their houses—a purely secular advice.

I have said that I gave up the eternity of hell doctrine; but, as I read and thought, I had to give up its very existence. I could find no place for it. It was all very well for our ignorant ancestors, who thought the world flat, to believe what they were told, that hell was down below and heaven was up above; but to us, who know that the world is a globe, turning round at such a rate that what is up at noon is down at midnight, there remains no up nor down. There is only space without limit, for that which would limit must itself stand in space. And as our most powerful telescopes tell us of nothing but stars, stars, stars, I had to abandon hell as a myth.

I had given up praying, but not reading. The few books I had I had to buy. Among them were Ferguson's *Astronomical Lectures*, Dick's *Sideral Heavens*, Combe's *Constitution of Man*, D'Holbach's *System of Nature*, *The Vestiges of Creation*, some books of poems, travels, and an occasional novel. As I never attended church nor prayer-meetings, I had a great advantage over religious folk.

I had the whole Sunday for my recreation and mental advancement. I had also a much greater advantage. The books I read were ever consistent with themselves; they didn't contradict nature's facts, and they spoke on matters which could be submitted to proof—all which gives a sound foundation to the mind to build upon; whereas the young mind that listens to religious dogmas hears of statements that are often contradictory, and of things that cannot be submitted to proof. So the mind gets confused, and becomes subject to every wave of doctrine. Nothing is too absurd but it can be swallowed by one or the other; hence the numerous creeds that have divided mankind.

It may be asked why I did not give up heaven by the reasonings on which I gave up hell. Well, I at once confess I was here illogical. But I stuck to a God and a heaven for a year or two after I abandoned hell—I suppose because there was something more loveable about it; and the effect of early training must be considered. Although I was a Materialist for years before I came to England, and saw nothing more holy on one day than another, I remember, when first I heard a band of music on board a steamboat on a sunny Sunday morn at Hampton Court, it gave me a momentary twinge, which in a second reacted into gladness, thinking how happy must be the people of merrie England in comparison with those who suffered the dolorous Sundays of my youth in Scotland.

G. ANDERSON.

(To be concluded.)

## NEEDS EXPLANATION.

["Bishop Goe is only one of the ten thousand observers who sadly proclaim that never was Mammon more powerful. Virtue has increased in the land; has this particular evil diminished? Some day Bishop Goe may offer the explanation" (Melbourne *Argus*). But "some day" is an uncertain date, and meanwhile the world is most anxious to hear further on this subject from the one person who carries the key to the mystery in the pocket of his episcopal apron.]

Good Bishop Goe, explain  
Why happens it that Mammon  
Controls this world of gammon,  
Since virtue *ought* to reign;  
Good Bishop Goe, explain.

Each Sabbath-day each priest  
Condemns our love of money;  
And yet—how sadly funny!—  
The Church has not decreased  
This evil in the least.

The vulgar greed for gold  
To *me* seems quite surprising;  
For in your sermonizing  
The creed that you uphold  
Is just the Word of old.

You cry aloud in prayer  
For God to make us "humble."  
A faint "Amen" we mumble;  
But dooce a bit we care,  
As far as *I'm* aware.

Fat wages you receive,  
Besides your private income,  
And reckon it "fair dinkum,"  
While many who believe  
Must starve, unless they thieve.

Pale curates on your mat,  
Obsequious as waiters,  
Pay homage to your gaiters;  
They carry you your hat,  
And vanities like that.

And *you* would frown and snort,  
Although you be so holy,  
Were they less meek and lowly.  
His Nibs at Bishops court  
Is—well, not quite *their* sort.

The same respect for rank  
Is common in the city,  
Where bosses—more's the pity—  
Look down upon a "crank"  
Who's never robbed a bank.

A prelate, or a lord,  
Or any person toney,  
Thinks Virtue, which is "stony,"  
Can very well afford  
To be its own reward.

Though millionaires regard  
Our wants without a shudder,  
Their milch-cows have no udder  
Whereat a struggling bard  
Can take a pull. *It's 'ard.*

Good Bishop Goe, explain  
To us, this Easter season,  
Why Mammon sways our reason.  
Though Virtue *ought* to reign,  
Good Bishop Goe explain.

—*Sydney Bulletin.*

FITZ-SINNAH.

## A Great Marvel.

That zealous Churchman, the Rev. Canon Venables, of the Church of England (in the article "Episcopacy," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*), says: "An almost impenetrable cloud hangs over the closing years of the first and second century. .... How is this momentous change, without a counterpart in history, to be accounted for? .... The more we look into the circumstances, the more the marvel grows."

If the good Canon had examined what pretends to be an earlier history of those times, he would have found nothing but forged records, made by whom no one can know. The hiatus was accidentally left. Wait patiently a few years longer, and the Vatican Library, or a secret closet in some old monastery, will supply the coveted knowledge, just as almost the entire ecclesiastical literature has been found when it was most wanted. To point out any defect in Church history, and the "Almighty powers," of which the Pope at Rome is the head, will supply the defect, as the "lamented" Joseph Smith had a new revelation whenever such a need was suggested to him by his apostles.

## BOOK CHAT.

No one could be better entitled to give his *Mature Thought on Christianity* (Watts and Co.; 6d.) than Professor Francis William Newman, who is now in his ninety-third year. One does not expect at that age anything like virile antagonism. In his *Phases of Faith, Religion not History, What is Christianity without Christ? Christianity in its Cradle, and Life after Death*, Professor Newman has sufficiently stated his views. He does not appear to have essentially modified them. He is still a fervent Theist. He believes in a real Jesus, a veritable Jew, who appealed not to the Gentiles, and who, far from being divine, aimed at the principedom. He points out the evidence that the gospels are later than the destruction of Jerusalem, in that Paul knew nothing of the miracles wrought by the living Jesus, though he stayed fourteen days with Peter, and would have been a credulous listener. It is interesting to note that Professor Newman's latest production has as preface some lines entitled "My Greeting to the Coming Sex."

\* \* \*

Those who wish to see what the young poet is thinking may do well to peruse *Hope's Brotherhood*, by William Platt. Its tendency may be judged by the fact that it is published at the *Clarion* office (72 Fleet-street, E.C.; 6d.), and its frankness and originality by its being dedicated, with three bars of choice music, "To my sweetheart, Cissie Willis, who inspired it." The thought of *Hope's Brotherhood* may not be clearly defined, but it has certainly flaming light and aspiration, love of nature and love of humanity. When the poet finds the universe—

Boundless and timeless, still lacks time and space  
To echo out the grandeur and the grace  
Of that great utterance when the girl says, "I love you,"

we feel pretty sure he is in the first bloom of life when every draught of nature's air becomes the real sacrament of joy. We do not wish Mr. Platt to live to become ashamed of his juvenile verses. He has nothing to be ashamed of. He is evidently endowed with the poet's master-keys of sympathy and melodious expression. The writer of *Hope's Brotherhood* can evidently do something still better. He should be able to soar away from all suspicion of belonging to the erotic, neurotic, and tommyrotic schools, and become himself an inspiration of love, trust, and high endeavor to others.

\* \* \*

Besides the discoveries of Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt on the borders of the Libyan Desert, Professor Petrie's recent explorations in Egypt have also been wonderfully fruitful. The bulk of his collection is in two groups, separated by a gap of more than thirty centuries, the later documents being an enormous mass of papyri from the Roman city of Behnesa, west of the Nile, about one hundred miles south of Cairo; and the earlier a great variety of objects which throw a flood of light upon the habits of a people evidently in a high state of civilization, who occupied Lower Egypt centuries before Abraham, and almost as far back as the date assigned in the Bible chronology to the creation of the world. It will be long before the whole of the papyri are adequately examined; but there is no doubt they will largely add to our knowledge of ancient Egypt.

\* \* \*

Peter Eckler, of 35 Fulton-street, New York, is issuing a handsomely-got-up "Library of Liberal Classics." The series include the works of Paine, Meslier, Volney, and Voltaire. A specimen volume of Voltaire's *Romances*, which is sent to us, gives "The Man of Forty Crowns" and "The Huron, or Pupil of Nature."

## Obituary.

ONE of the old Owenite Socialists passed away on July 14 in the person of Mr. Thomas Riley, who for half a century carried on the business of newsagent and bookseller in Woolshops, Halifax. Mr. Riley had been connected with advanced movements from the days of Robert Owen and Charles Southwell downwards, and was for many years connected with the Halifax Secular Society. He was one of the founders of the Mechanics' Institute, and had reached the age of seventy-seven, respected by all who knew him.

There was a time when falsehood, fulminated from the pulpit, smote like a sword; but, the supply having greatly exceeded the demand, clerical misrepresentation has at last become almost an innocent amusement.—*Ingersoll.*

The Bible is the great cord with which the people are bound; cut this, and the mass will be able to appreciate facts instead of faith.—*C. Bradlaugh.*

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## AGNOSTICISM AND COWARDICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Will "Plainspeaker" kindly define what he means by the term "Agnostic"? We shall then be able to discover whether we are among those whom he brands as cowards. For our own part, we do not accept anything we cannot prove to be true; but we do not reject unless we can prove to be false. Therefore, with regard to those things we cannot prove to be true or false we take an agnostic attitude—that is to say, we suspend our judgment, because we have no means at present of proving or disproving them. Is there anything cowardly in this?

This especially applies to religious systems, such as Christianity and Buddhism. We cannot prove or disprove their statements about heaven, hell, purgatory, Nirvana, Karma, re-incarnation, etc. However strong our objections to any or all of these, we cannot pass final judgment upon them without placing ourselves in a judgment seat we may be quite incapable of properly filling, and making our reason or our feeling a criterion for those of the rest of humanity—a course which, though it could not be accused of cowardice, would certainly savor of presumption. We would also mention that, to our mind, all Agnostics are necessarily Freethinkers, though all Freethinkers need not be Agnostics. All alike are outside the pale of religious systems, and get an equal share of the scorn and rage of offended orthodoxy. Why, then, should they waste their energies in throwing stones at each other?—Yours truly,  
Rex (B.A., Cantab).

Sir,—I feel bound to protest against the letter in last week's *Freethinker* headed "Cowardly Agnosticism." The letter is unjust in its unwarrantable epithets, and recklessly impolitic. "Cowardly" and "lily-livered" are among the most offensive expressions that men can fling at each other. A writer who has not the courage to sign his own name to his accusation should be exceedingly chary of applying such epithets to other people.

The ethical culturists that I have come across are honorable, gentlemanly, and very good-natured people, who do excellent work, and by no means deserve to be called hard names because they do not go so far as we do. They demolish Christianity in their own fashion, though they do not care to use such strong language as that in which "Plainspeaker" indulges. The Ethical party and the Secular party are identical in their aim. They are two wings of an army; and any form of quarrel between them is greatly to be regretted, as only calculated to hinder the progress of Rationalism.

As an Agnostic as well as an Atheist, I do not like to see such a heading as "Cowardly Agnosticism." It seems as much out of place in a Freethought journal as "Dastardly Secularism," or "Lily-livered Atheism," or "Infamous Freethought" would be. When "Plainspeaker" associates Agnosticism with "cowardice" and "pretence," and quotes, with at least partial approval and acceptance, Dr. Sexton's paltry insult that "Agnostic means ignoramus, or humbug," the abuse thus directed against Agnosticism is too much like fouling our own nest and playing into the enemy's hands to be at all agreeable to thoughtful Freethinkers. If we feel so much braver than our comrades of the ethical culture movement, let us spend our heroism and energy in attacking our common enemy, superstition, and not waste our strength in belaboring, or insulting, or even unnecessarily ridiculing or wounding, weaker brethren who are less aggressive and more constructive in temperament than we. If we treat them as "Plainspeaker" does, we must not be surprised if they avoid us as being too brutal and savage in our methods and language.

The Atheist, if he has a sound and cautious intellect, must adopt the Agnostic position, just as Bradlaugh and all logical Atheists have had to do. He cannot safely deny the existence of a something or other which is labelled with a meaningless word and defined in many conflicting ways, or alleged to be indefinable and beyond all human comprehension. If it is cowardly to take refuge in Agnosticism, then Bradlaugh and Huxley were cowards. I trust that this will enable "Plainspeaker" to see both the injustice and the imprudence of his accusations. Why, too, except for purposes of hasty rhetoric, he should place a "showy mantle" on the shoulders of Agnosticism—the modest confession of ignorance of the unknown—passes my comprehension.—Yours truly,  
W. P. BALL.

Rev. Dr. Primrose (winding up a few remarks)—"Oh, my young friends, the Lord loves a cheerful giver." Little Johnnie (speaking up)—"Does he love you, sir?" Rev. Dr. Primrose—"I labor all I can to make him do so." Little Johnnie—"Then please put a few more berries on my plate."

## PROFANE JOKES.

"THAT was a sensational prayer Dr. Gumms delivered the other Sunday. I wonder if he expected it to be answered." "Certainly; and so it was too. Why, nearly every paper in the country replied to it."

Mrs. Barber noticed that her daughter, Edith, did not say her prayers in the morning, and questioned her as to the cause. "Don't you want God to take care of you during the day as well as at night?" she asked Edie. "I think if God takes care of me at night, you might take care of me daytimes," was the quick response.

From the diocese of Canterbury; story vouched for by hearer. Protestant vicar's wife to lady friend—"Mr. [a neighboring priest] is dreadful; he wears a libretto." (She meant "biretta.")

*Apropos* of "providential escapes" from railway and other accidents, a story is told of the Bishop of London. A lady was narrating to his lordship how her aunt had escaped from a railway accident. "Five people in the same compartment were killed, and my aunt alone escaped; wasn't it providential?" "Humph!" said the Bishop, "as I don't know your aunt, I can't say."

"Brethren," said a well-known bishop the other day in the course of a sermon, "I beg you to take hold of your own heart and look it straight in the face."

This was not so bad as the curate who read that "Immediately the cock wept, and Peter went out and crew bitterly."

Eve—"Did you eat that apple, Adam?" Adam—"I'm sorry to say I did." Eve—"And I was going to make a pie with it!" Adam—"Then I'm glad I ate it!"

## THOSE BOYS.

"I SAY, Pa, wouldn't it be a bad job for God if the sky was to open and he was to fall through?"

"Ma, have I been a good boy to-day?" "Yes, Bobby." "Well, ma, let me go to bed like a man without saying my prayers."

Sky-Pilot—"Do you like to attend church along with your papa and mamma?" "Well, I guess I like it about as well as pa does."

Revivalist—"My dear boy, when that great day comes will you be found with the sheep or the goats?" "Blowed if I know; ma calls me her pet lamb, but pa calls me a kid; so I'll give it up."

Sky-Pilot—"Why did the shepherd in scripture leave the ninety-and-nine to look after one?" "Cos he were a tup."

"Now, dear boys, I have been telling you about the Blessed Savior. You have read your Bibles, and I want you all to tell me which Bible character you would most like to see when you get to heaven?" A general chorus rose for "Gerliar."

## The Protection of Birds.

The Humanitarian League has just issued several new publications, one being a collection of letters recently contributed to the *Saturday Review* by Mr. Joseph Collinson, Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., W. H. Hudson, C.M.Z.S., and Mr. Ernest Bell, M.A. The correspondence deals with the question of protecting rare birds from the ruthless hands of the collector. Mr. Collinson points out that some of our most beautiful birds are in a fair way to become extinct for want of legal protection, in which Sir Charles Dilke agrees. One of the writers thinks there would be no difficulty in passing a law for their special protection all the year round.

## Christian Bliss.

When the saints in glory shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it! When they shall see how miserable others of their fellow-creatures are who are naturally in the same circumstances with themselves; when they shall see the smoke of their torment and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear the dolorous shrieks and cries, and consider that they in the meantime are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity—how they will rejoice!—*Rev. Jonathan Edwards.*

There is no learned man but will confess he hath much profited by reading controversies, his senses awakened, and his judgment sharpened. If, then, it be profitable for him to read, why should it not, at least, be tolerable for his adversary to write?—*Milton.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, O. Cohen, "Scepticism: Its Meaning and Value."  
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (86 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, T. Thurlow, "Religion in the Grip of Science."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, H. P. Ward.  
CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): 3.15, H. P. Ward.  
EDMONTON (Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "A Crumbling Creed."  
FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand)—Finsbury Park Branch: 3.15, O. Cohen, "Foreign Missions."  
HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S.W.R. station): 7, Stanley Jones.  
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture; 3.30, Stanley Jones.  
ISLINGTON (Highbury Fields, Highbury Corner): 11.30, E. Calvert, "The March of Time."  
KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, A lecture.  
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, O. Cohen.  
LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon-lane): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. July 27, at 8.30, O. Cohen.  
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack; 7, W. J. Ramsey. July 28, at 8, H. P. Ward. July 29, at 8, Mr. Westcott.  
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 3.15, A lecture.  
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Religion and Morality."

### COUNTRY.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall): 3, Monthly meeting of members.  
OX HILL AND STANLEY (West Stanley Board-Schools): July 31, at 6, J. Taylor, "Authenticity of the Scriptures."  
PONTYPRIDD (28 Middle-street, Trallwn): Meetings every Sunday evening. Discussion invited.  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lecture or reading by a local gentleman.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—July 25, m., Kingsland; a, Finsbury Park. August 1, m., Camberwell; a, Peckham Rye. 8, m., Mile End; a, Victoria Park; e, Edmonton.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 25, m., Wood Green; e, Edmonton. August 8, m., Camberwell; a, Peckham Rye. 22, a, Peckham Rye. 22, m., Wood Green. 29, Edmonton.

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

J. T. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, London, E.—September 5, Limehouse.

E. PACK, 90 Camden-street, Camden-road, N.W.—July 25, m., Mile End.

H. P. WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—July 25, 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 Bradford-street. Service and discourse every Sunday afternoon at 3.15.

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

Information and literature may be obtained from Mr. Malcolm Quin, Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne, who will be willing to consider applications to deliver lectures on Positivism gratuitously and without expense, where such lectures may be desired.

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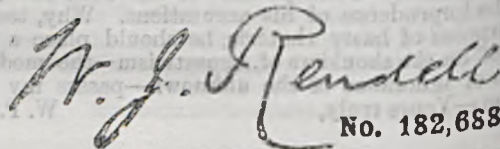
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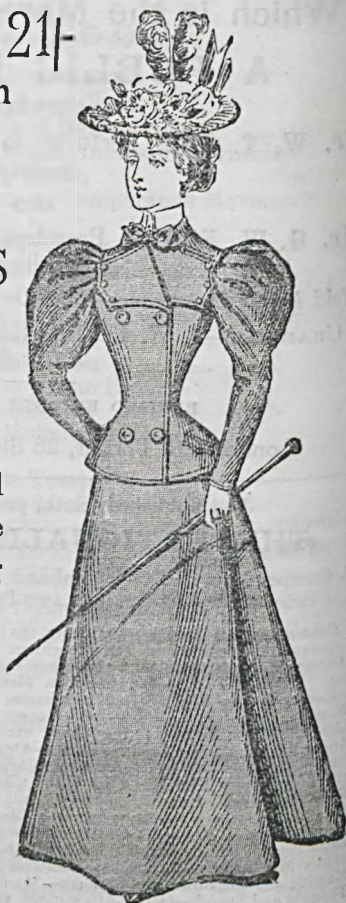
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