

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

PROVIDENCE AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

SIR WALTER BESANT is one of the few literary men with a handle to their names. Of course he is none the better for it, and perhaps none the worse. It may be that the knighthood has directed his attention to politics, or that the Jubilee fever suggested the profitableness of catering to an imperialist public. Anyhow, he has written a little eighteen-penny book on *The Rise of the Empire* (Marshall and Son: London), which is designed as an introduction to a series of cheap volumes on the History of India and the Colonies. As a matter of course, Sir Walter Besant tells his story in a very interesting manner. With the instinct of a novelist, he seizes upon points of living interest, and presents them in a free and flowing style.

The two most vulnerable parts of the British Empire are Ireland and India. "In the case of Ireland," Sir Walter Besant says, "there has been no extension of empire; there has been an extension of burden." The Irish people, after six hundred years of conquest, are "as anxious to shake off the English yoke as they were at the outset," and millions of the Irish race across the Atlantic "never cease abusing us, conspiring against us, embittering the Americans against us." Sir Walter Besant's business is neither to defend nor accuse in the matter of Ireland, but to state the facts.

Our Empire in India is not the work of the British Government. It was absolutely created by the East India Company. Imperial rule there dates from the time of the Mutiny. Since then, we are told, India has been quiet. Nevertheless, we venture to say that there have always been rumblings of discontent. The Union Jack floats over the great continent of India, and Sir Walter Besant says that this fact "should fill our hearts with pride and gratitude, and should cause us to do and to dare as our forefathers dared, when England was a little place with all her history to make." No doubt the English would fight desperately rather than give up India. But the "pride" involved in this attitude is chiefly a pride of race, the other side of which is disdain of races with a far older civilization. Nor is it clear that the possession of India is any real advantage to the people of England, as distinguished from certain classes in the Army and the Civil Service. It must be admitted that our Indian empire is an anomaly. As an historical legacy, we cannot wilfully throw it away, and abnegate our responsibilities; at the same time, every Englishman who believes in self-government must find it difficult to close his eyes to the ultimate right of India to freedom from the control of a Western power. Our policy in India should be to train the natives in self-government, so that when we do withdraw they may be capable of progress and self-protection. Meanwhile, let us not indulge in pharisaic hypocrisy. We did not go to India, and we have not remained there, for the good of the inhabitants, but for our own profit and aggrandizement.

Our colonies have been built up in a different way. They are a real extension of empire, though too often at the bitter expense, and even the annihilation, of the aborigines. Sir Walter Besant's rapid story of the rise of our colonies is in every way admirable. He gives an excellent account of the Elizabethan seamen and their doings in the far West; and he notes "not to their credit" that they "first engaged in the slave trade." Next comes an account of the various settlements in

Virginia. One is astonished at the smallness of the "Virginia Company's" ships. Three that sailed from England in 1606 were the *Susan*, 100 tons; the *Godspeed*, 40 tons; and the *Discovery*, 20 tons. In 1620 the *Mayflower* emigrants landed at Plymouth Harbor. The Pilgrim fathers fled from religious tyranny in England, and they established a religious tyranny of their own in New England. "You must not believe," Sir Walter Besant says, "that it was a land of religious liberty. The Pilgrim fathers believed that everybody should think as they themselves thought. Had they achieved their own way, they would have sent Laud himself, and all who thought like him, across the ocean with the greatest alacrity." Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers were expelled from Boston. A branch broke off under a minister named Thomas Hooker, founding towns in Connecticut. Another branch, under another minister, settled at New Haven. Religious differences caused the founding of settlements on Rhode Island and in New Hampshire. Roger Williams, who advocated complete religious liberty, was banished from Boston as a damnable heretic; and he and his friends settled at the head of Narragansett Bay.

The various settlements in America had English institutions. They had no peers and no bishops, but they had the democratic parts of our constitution. "The colonists," Sir Walter Besant says, "were practically republican long before the War of Independence." When they threw off the yoke of King George, they had no alternative but the establishment of an open Republic. Those who draw comparisons between Cromwell and Washington, as though the latter could have set up a monarchy, do not know what they are talking about.

The United States of America owe much to England, though nothing to the English government. Between 1853 and 1888 no less than 6,012,043 emigrants from the United Kingdom poured into the great Western Republic. Nearly half of these were English, two-fifths of them were Irish, and one-tenth Scotch. There is good reason, then, in the nature of things, why this country and the United States should be friendly, and if possible brotherly. A conflict between them would be a kind of civil war.

We have not time to follow Sir Walter Besant's account of our colonies in three continents—Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. It is only 130 years since the first Englishman set foot on the Australian shore. The survey of the coasts was not completed until the famous voyage of the *Beagle* in 1837-43. On board that ship was the great Charles Darwin, slowly maturing for his mighty achievement in the realm of science. How new it all is! Our "Empire," after all, is a thing of yesterday. We need not pride ourselves too much till we see what we make of it.

The Anglo-Saxon race is spread over a very large portion of the globe. Our colonies represent every kind of climate that exists. Sir Walter Besant would help to people them by sending them our unemployed. Hitherto, he says, our statesmen have done nothing for the Empire. He says it is time they began.

The Englishman is a trader, and Sir Walter Besant believes in the civilizing powers of Trade.

This it is which opens up the world. Trade first induces men to break bread with each other rather than break each other's heads. Trade it is which widens boundaries, removes hedges, and fills up ditches; trade creates new wants, and imparts new ideas; trade it is which makes it possible for men to understand th

they have common wants, and must act in common to satisfy those wants; trade creates and fosters the virtues of loyalty, brotherhood, and discipline; trade it is which stimulates the study and the practice of the arts; trade is the founder and father of enterprise, invention, science, travel, and exploration.

Sir Walter Besant maintains that the Englishman of to-day is essentially the Englishman of King Alfred's days. He draws a large picture of this Englishman, as fond of fighting and open-air exercises, a big eater and drinker, restless, and full of enterprise. But he is intensely practical, little of an idealist, and governed by sentiment rather than reason. He is profoundly religious, but averse to priest-craft; tender and chivalrous to women, and fond of children. "He sits at home," Sir Walter Besant says, "with his wife and children, and desires no other society"—we presume, not even the public-house.

"The race," Sir Walter Besant says, "has been singularly favored by fortune or by providence." This is on page one. On page ninety-two "fortune" is dropped, and Providence reigns alone with a capital P. To our mind, this is somewhat blasphemous. Englishmen should avoid imitating the Jews and fancying themselves the chosen people. Other nations have contributed their quota to the world's civilization. Englishmen have not done everything. What we have done is not miraculous. "Providence" is not the explanation of our good fortune. The Straits of Dover are a better key to the mystery. Had our country been, not an island, but an extension of the continent of Europe, how different would our history have been! This is a little land, with an immense seaboard, inhabited by a fusion of races, and crammed with coal and iron. We got the start in industrialism, and this, coupled with our geographical position, gave us our commerce and maritime power. The matter is clear enough to natural eyesight, but some people must have a dash of mystery in everything.

G. W. FOOTE.

LIBERAL HIGH CHURCH THEOLOGY.

IN the current number of the *New Century Review* the Rev. Samuel Holmes writes on "Liberal High Church Theology and Professor Goldwin Smith." Mr. Holmes is himself one of those liberal theologians who fancy they can hold with the Church here and at the same time run with the hounds of Free Inquiry. Perhaps it would be more true, if less polite, to say that he is one who, having a billet in the Church, is ready to adapt his belief to the requirements of modern thought in any way that does not involve the resignation of that position. The substance of the Rev. Samuel Holmes's answer to Professor Goldwin Smith is that in reality Bibliolatry, the belief in Bible inerrancy, is not "Christianity's millstone," for the simple reason that "influential members of the most popular party in the Church of England" have got rid of it. It is true that Dr. Pusey, the founder of the High Church party, would have been astonished and dismayed by the admissions of *Lux Mundi*; but it is none less certain that, as High Churchism has climbed to the top, so Broad Churchism has spread about its roots. Mr. Holmes says: "Every lover of truth will rejoice that candid scholarship and staunch Churchmanship are to be found side by side; that many of those who adopt the same Church principles as the writers of *Lux Mundi* are prepared to discuss with perfectly open minds the contentions of literary and scientific criticism." How far these questions are likely to be discussed with perfectly open minds by those whose livings are in the Church is a question upon which some others besides Professor Goldwin Smith may have a slight difference of opinion with the Rev. Samuel Holmes. That gentleman gives us little opportunity of testing the point in his own case. He does not make clear his own position in relation even to the inerrancy of the Bible. Canon Liddon, the leading light of the High Church party, emphatically denounced all who refused to ascribe the Pentateuch to Moses, and Daniel to its traditional author of that name; but Mr. Holmes shows us that, under the pressure of external opinion, a change has been going on within the Church itself. The younger generation cannot accept and preach the doctrine of their fathers. In 1861 Dr. Pusey denounced the "heathenism" of Colenso; but, as Mr. Holmes points out, views on the Old Testament indistinguishable on points of criticism

from those of Colenso were admitted in the *Lux Mundi* to be true, and are now being largely adopted.

Mr. Holmes says:—

"As to the existence of legendary matter in the Scriptures, many of the younger clergy admit it more or less, and are thankful to know that such an essay as that of Dr. Bonney could be read at a Church Congress. Such deliverances as his secure to them a certain freedom, if not of speech, yet of belief. But I venture to protest against the word 'millstone,' as liable to mislead. For it should be thoroughly understood that the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible is now rejected by large numbers of eminent Christian teachers, who, when occasion demands, freely express their opinions, finding—and that is all that can be asked for—perfect toleration."

This, after all, only means that the Church has found that it cannot afford to kick out the most intelligent of its men, and, to me, I confess it indicates a paltering with truth rather than either candid scholarship or staunch Churchmanship; and I must regretfully say that the impression is confirmed by what Mr. Holmes himself has to say on the doctrine of Inspiration. This shall be stated in his own words:—

"In truth, the doctrine of Inspiration is only one phase of the old problem which meets us in Free-will. As long as we admit the existence of a God in the world, and at the same time believe in the freedom of man's will, the amount of help and guidance given by God to man will always be a question of the greatest perplexity. But if there does exist a Supreme Being, the Creator and Sustainer of the world, is it going beyond the bounds of rational belief to say that His guidance in spiritual matters can be discerned in the history of the Jews and of the early Christian Church?"

I must tell Mr. Holmes plainly that it seems to me that in raising the metaphysical question of free-will—in going to the common assumptions of Theism, and in referring to the history of the Jews and of the early Christian Church—he is but trying to carry us back to some realm of perplexity when the pretences of his Church cannot so easily be seen to be false. The plain question is, On what grounds does the Church say that its teachings are inspired any more than, say, the laws of England or the axioms of Euclid?

Mr. Holmes says: "While admitting that our predecessors were mistaken as to the kind of knowledge to which inspiration extended, they were right in believing in the divine guidance of the religious teachers of the Jews. The existence of that divine guidance is the important point; in that we too believe as well as they; therefore we still use the word 'inspiration.'" In other words, on points where the doctrine of inspiration could be tested—such as the time of the creation, the making of woman, etc.—the doctrine has broken down; but it is still upheld in quarters where the information of those who have not studied comparative religion and the evolution of beliefs is scanty. But what solitary fact can Mr. Holmes adduce to show that the Jews were any more divinely guided than the Egyptians or any other nation?

Mr. Holmes tells us that the Liberal High Churchman "takes the authority of Christ as paramount on moral and spiritual matters, and remembers that He on one occasion unmistakably said that the utterance of one of His disciples was inspired. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.'" If Peter was inspired when he said Jesus was the Christ, was Christ himself inspired when he said "Moses wrote of me," when he rebuked devils, and when he said that there were those standing around him who should not taste of death until they saw him coming in his kingdom? Mr. Holmes, in citing particular utterances, forgets his own admission, that the books have come down through erring men, who, of course, have had the opportunity of manipulating the texts. In giving up literal inspiration he is letting out the waters without perceiving whither they will carry him.

Mr. Holmes gives us little idea of what Liberal High Church theology stands for. But it is difficult to resist the impression that it represents the endeavor of parasites to accommodate themselves to a new position—to seek, on the one hand, to hold their own over the populace by a display of sacerdotal rites, and, on the other, to appear as if in line with the knowledge of the intelligent and cultured community.

J. M. WHEELER.

Freedom is the aim of morality.—Professor Steinthal.

RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH.

ONE great distinction between Freethinkers and most professed Christians consists in the fact that the former have always vindicated the right of free speech, while the latter have done their best either to limit or to prohibit the utterances of those who differed from them. The history of the Christian Church is a painful record of persistent persecution of heretics by the alleged followers of Jesus. It commenced almost as soon as the Christians possessed sufficient power to enforce their will, and it has not ceased yet. "The Church," remarks Draper, "set herself forth as the depository and arbiter of knowledge; she was ever ready to resort to the civil power to compel obedience to her decisions. . . . She became a stumbling-block in the intellectual advancement of Europe for more than a thousand years" (*Conflict between Religion and Science*, p. 52). History teems with narratives of persecutions practised by believers in Christianity upon those who could not share their views of the faith. For proof of this the reader is referred to Buckle's *History of Civilization*, Earl Russell's *History of the Christian Religion*, Howitt's *History of Priestcraft*, Ferguson's *Penalties of Greatness*, and Dick's *Philosophy of Religion*. From these pages it will be seen that the persecuting spirit has always been a striking feature of Christian propaganda. Fortunately, the evil has been considerably checked through the persistent advocacy of Freethought principles, although, as we shall presently see, it is not yet entirely eradicated.

It is urged by Christian exponents that, when the members of their faith interfere with free speech, they do so in spite of the teachings of their religion. This is not so; but, even if it were, it would only show that their faith fails to induce them to abstain from doing wrong. We gladly admit that in some professors of Christianity humanity is more powerful than theology; hence such persons grant to others that freedom which they justly claim for themselves. There are others, however, in the fold whose love of justice is subordinate to their religious fanaticism. And these very people persecute unbelievers when and where they have the power. In fact, many of such persons think their conduct is justified by such teachings of the New Testament as the following. Christ, on sending his disciples upon a preaching expedition, said (Matthew x.): "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city shake off the dust of your feet." This, we are informed by Oriental writers, was a mode in the East of showing hatred towards those against whom the dust was shaken. The punishment threatened those who refused the ministrations of the disciples is most severe, for "it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (verses 14 and 15). This accords with the gloomy and revengeful announcement (2 Thess. i.): "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." St. Paul exclaims (Gal. i.): "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." He also says (1 Tim. vi. 3-5): "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . he is proud, knowing nothing. . . . From such withdraw thyself." "Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. i. 20). In these passages persecution and punishment are clearly taught for disbelief. What stimulant did even Christ give to think freely when he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me; . . . if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"? Is there any incentive to impartial investigation in the gloomy words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"? Once established among mankind the erroneous notion that truth is confined to one particular channel, and that those who do not go in that direction are to be cast forth as a "withered branch," and then the impossibility of unfettered thought will immediately be apparent. Put a man to

examine a subject, and tell him that, regardless of evidence, he must arrive at one conclusion or be damned, the pursuit of truth is then made a hypocritical farce rather than a noble and useful reality.

When Christians foolishly and incorrectly taunt the Secularists with making but "slow progress," it is apparently overlooked that we are handicapped in our advocacy, and subject to obstacles which Christians have not to encounter. An instance of this has recently occurred at New Brompton, where Secularist lecturers have been denied the right of free speech. The particulars of this act of bigotry have already appeared in the *Freethinker*, but we again refer to the subject in consequence of reading in that very pious paper, the *Rock*, dated July 23, the following editorial note: "We should be the last to commend any exhibition of personal violence to those who insult our most holy faith, as neither good order nor our own cause will be served by taking the law into our own hands. But it is certainly interesting to find that an ordinary working-class crowd can be stirred to such indignation as was the case at Chatham the other day by the profanities of an infidel lecturer, and satisfactory to learn from the sequel that authorities can act so firmly as has Major-General Sir Charles Warron, commanding the Thames District, who has given instructions that Secularist speakers are not to be allowed to address meetings on Chatham Lines. . . . Sir Charles's action is the outcome of a recent disturbance, when a crowd (among whom were several soldiers) assumed a threatening attitude towards a Secularist lecturer who had spoken in very offensive terms of the Christian religion."

The *Rock* here displays a fine specimen of that veiled hypocrisy, theological conceit, and orthodox impertinence for which certain Christian writers and speakers are noted. The pious editor says he would be the last "to commend," etc.; but yet he finds it "certainly interesting" to know that the crowd acted as they did. That is, he would not recommend an outrage, but he was glad all the same that it was perpetrated. This is orthodox consistency with a vengeance. It is wearing the mask of peace, while rejoicing at social warfare. Where does the doctrine of "love your enemies" come in here? Talk of "insult [to] our most holy faith"! Why, no Secularist lecturer ever uses so many insulting epithets towards any faith as the *Rock* does towards the Roman Catholic religion. In the very issue which contains the above editorial note we read such choice phrases as these: "The blood-stained history of Romanism"; they (the Catholics) are "heretics," "seducers," "wolves in sheep's clothing"; and we further read: "It is our duty to oppose every effort they may make to obtain influence or power in our public life; to hold up every entrance to public positions of authority from them, seeing that if they gain these they would then be able to put into practice the intolerance and persecution they can only now (thank God) talk about." Is not this an insult to the "holy faith" of the Roman Catholic? We opine that he would think so. Judging from the gross insults which the *Rock* is continually heaping upon the Church of Rome, it is fortunate for its members that the editor and his sanctified friends have not the power to persecute as Protestants once did. Are not the following words, which are ascribed to Christ, appropriate here: "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Luke vi. 42)?

What does the *Rock* mean when it writes of "the profanities of an infidel lecturer," and of his speaking "in very offensive terms of the Christian religion"? A Secularist is not an "infidel," but an honest and sincere disbeliever in the shams and hypocrisy which are called orthodox Christianity. If we accept the editor's dictum, he is an "infidel" to the "most holy faith" of the Catholics, towards which he, week after week, indulges in "profanities" and "offensive terms" of an exceedingly undignified kind. The bitter feeling which he displays towards Secularists, and the reckless charges that he makes against them, remind us of the pertinent rebuke which the late Professor Huxley gave his orthodox calumniators. He said that he noticed the charges brought against him, "merely to illustrate the great truth, forced on me by long experience, that it is only from those who enjoy the blessings of a firm hold of the Christian faith that such manifestations of meekness, patience, and charity are to be expected" (*Controverted Questions*, p. 484). To read how

the self-satisfied Christian genius of the *Rock* assumes that his idea of religion is the true one, and far superior to all others, would be amusing but that it may possibly tend to perpetuate an intellectual fraud among the ignorant and credulous believers in his bigoted and antiquated theology.

On the action of Sir Charles Warren in giving orders to prevent the Secularists from speaking on the recreation grounds called the Chatham Lines, we abstain, for the time being, from further comment. The present writer is engaged to speak on the forbidden ground on Sunday morning, August 15; and we hope in the meantime that some amicable arrangement will be arrived at. Free speech is so dear to us, and its rights have been so bravely defended by the Secular party, that we shall not allow it to be assailed without doing our best to maintain its force, and to protect it from any unjust interference.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

I.—THE STORY OF THE BAPTIST.

It has been fully shown, in a former series of articles, that we do not possess the testimony of a single individual to the actual occurrence of any of the events related in the Gospels, and that the narratives related in those books represent merely what was believed among the Christians about the middle of the second century. It has also been shown that those narratives, wherever they have been tested, are found to be fictitious. I will now examine, at more length, some of the most important of these narratives, so as to place the fact beyond doubt that the latter conclusion is, in every case, the only one possible.

The earliest written Gospel, as far as we are able to judge, was that "according to the Hebrews." This Gospel, like our second Synoptic, contained no account of the birth of Christ, but commenced with the preaching of John the Baptist. The opening paragraph in the copy possessed by Epiphanus read as follows:—

"It came to pass in the days of Herod, king of Judea, that John came baptizing with a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan.....and all went out to him."

The earliest of the canonical Gospels—that "according to" Mark—also commences with the preaching of the Baptist, and, omitting an added quotation from Isaiah, reads:—

"John came, who baptized.....and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan confessing their sins" (i. 4, 5).

Here, by a comparison of the two passages, we are able to see how the original narrative was amplified and improved.

Coming now to the account of the imprisonment and death of John, we find that the compilers of the First and Second Gospels introduce the subject in a somewhat remarkable manner. Thus, Matthew says (xiv. 1, 2):—

".....at that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, and he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead."

Mark, following precisely the same method, says (vi. 14):—

"King Herod heard thereof.....and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead."

It would be fruitless to stop to inquire how the Gospel writers knew what Herod had heard, more especially since Jesus never once visited any of the cities or villages in Galilee (with the single exception of Capernaum), and could not, therefore, have gained any notoriety at all. Matthew, however, makes use of the error into which Herod is said to have fallen as an introduction to the story of the arrest and death of the Baptist, and goes on to say:—

"For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife."

Strangely enough, Mark also makes this supposed mistake of Herod the introduction to his story of the arrest and imprisonment of the Baptist. He says:—

"For Herod himself had sent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife."

Turning again to Matthew, that compiler, having stated

that Herod had cast John into prison, proceeds to give the tetrarch's reason for doing so, which ought logically to have been given first. He says:—

"For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her."

Mark also, by a wonderful coincidence, follows the same plan:—

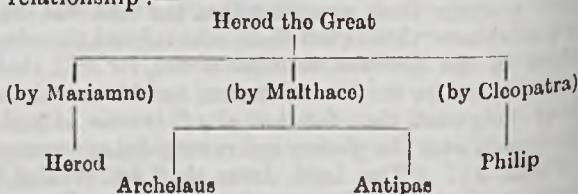
"For John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

Both evangelists, in fact, commence to tell the story backwards. In both accounts the narrative of John's imprisonment and death is related merely as an explanation of Herod's reason for believing Jesus to be the Baptist. The phraseology, too, is in many parts identical. The explanation of this peculiar way of introducing the story is, of course, obvious. The two compilers took their accounts from copies of the same document. The third Synoptist, Luke, was also acquainted with this document (ix. 7-9; iii. 19, 20); but he does not adhere to it so closely as the other two.

The story, as told by the first two evangelists, is that Herod had taken to himself Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and, being reproved for so doing by the Baptist, he had cast that pious meddler into prison. Then, later on, to use the words of Matthew, "when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced in the midst, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. And she, being put forward by her mother, saith: Give me here in a charger the head of John the Baptist.....And Herod sent and beheaded John in prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother" (xiv. 3-11).

There is in this story just a small grain of truth. It is true that Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, placed the Baptist in confinement, and subsequently caused him to be put to death; but the stories of John rebuking Antipas on account of marrying Herodias, of the dancing before him, of the oath, of the demand for the Baptist's head, and John's immediate execution in consequence—these are pure fables.

In the first place, Antipas did not take his brother Philip's wife. He did, however, induce Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod, to leave her husband and live with him. This Herod was named after his father, Herod the Great, and was not called "Herod Philip," as gospel reconcilers frequently assert. The following table shows the relationship:—



After the death of Herod the Great, the kingdom which had been governed by that king was divided between his sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip; the first taking Judea and Samaria, the second Galilee and Perea, and the third Trachonitis and Gaulonitis. The eldest son, Herod, having been disinherited by his father, had nothing. Herodias, the wife of the latter, was inordinately ambitious, and readily agreed to the proposal of Antipas (who had also assumed the title "Herod"). She, however, made it a condition that that tetrarch should put away his lawful wife before she came to him. But this wife, who was the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia Petrea, having discovered the perfidious compact, fled to her father, and the latter immediately advanced with an army against his faithless son-in-law. In an engagement which ensued Herod Antipas was defeated. Upon this event Josephus remarks (*Antiq.*, xviii, v. 2):—

"Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment for what he did against John that was called the Baptist.....For Herod, fearing lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion.....thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause.....Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death."

Here the Baptist is only mentioned incidentally to account for the Tetrarch's defeat; he had been dead some years

when this battle was fought, and could therefore have had no knowledge of Herod's proposal to Herodias.

According to Luke's Gospel (iii. 1), John the Baptist commenced preaching and baptizing in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (viz., A. D. 28), and shortly afterwards was cast into prison. His public ministry, then, can only be counted by weeks or months. It was, in fact, not until after his arrest that Jesus is represented as commencing his own ministry in Galilee. The date of this arrest cannot, therefore, be placed later than A. D. 29. Now, in this year, and for several years after, Herodias was living with her lawful husband, Herod, and her daughter Salome (whom the Gospel writer has confounded with Herodias herself) was at this time the wife of Philip, the half-brother of Antipas, who was sometimes called "Herod Philip." The concocter of the Gospel story was evidently not aware that the "damsel" whom he represents as dancing before "Herod" was a great lady, the wife of Philip the tetrarch, whose actions were not under the control of her mother, and who would not be likely to demean herself by acting the part of a common dancing girl before an assembly of half-intoxicated men—even had her husband permitted such an exhibition.

The date of the war between Antipas and Aretas is fixed by two events. It occurred not long after the death of Philip the tetrarch, and a short time before Pontius Pilate was sent to Rome to answer charges made against him by the Jews. The first took place in "the twentieth year of Tiberius Caesar"—viz., in A. D. 33-34; the second in A. D. 36. The flight of the wife of Antipas and the battle with Aretas took place, therefore, in or about the year 35—six years after the arrest and imprisonment of John the Baptist. In other words, John had been dead five or six years when Herodias left her husband to live with Antipas. Thus, the story of that baptizer rebuking "Herod" is proved to be an impudent fabrication.

Again, the castle in which the Baptist was confined was in the southern part of Perea, to the East of the Dead Sea, and seventy or eighty miles distant from the nearest part of Galilee in which "Herod" is stated to have been feasting. It would, then, have been utterly impossible for Antipas to have sent soldiers to behead John and bring back his head in a charger during the progress of the feast, as narrated in the Gospel story.

The two Gospel accounts of the Baptist were derived, as already stated, from an earlier document, whose writer is unknown. All we can say with any certainty of the original fabricator of the story is that he was eminently qualified for his task, and was as great at lying as he was doubtless pious.

ABRACADABRA.

THE SPEAKER AT PRAYERS.

THERE are numerous antiquated formalities in the procedure of Parliament which are so harmlessly absurd that no one need be disturbed by their continuance. A good-humored toleration, for the sake of the Strangers' Gallery, involves no sacrifice of principle. Most of the eccentricities have a history, and, while they serve to amuse Transatlantic and other visitors, they offer no impediment to the progress of business.

Of one formality, however—the daily opening of the two Houses with prayer—it is difficult to speak with equal patience. Why and how it should have been suffered to continue so long will probably be one of the prize-puzzles of some future generation. It will be dimly understood why bishops, as bishops, were permitted to sit in the House of Lords. Everything connected with that House is rotten. But it will be hopelessly beyond the comprehension of some other century how the Commons could have endured in their own Chamber such an objectionable relic of priestly domination as these Church of England prayers. Truly, we are a conservative nation—conservative of everything, indiscriminately; of the good and the bad, of the picturesque and the absurd.

So slow is the world in shedding its "old clo'" that probably some time will elapse before people will be brought to see the incongruity and uselessness of the present grotesque preface to practical legislation. When they do see it, the quiet laughter of the few of to-day will find its echo in a universal roar. The farcical appeal for help and guidance to an obviously deaf, or indifferent, or immutable

Deity will be discontinued, and it will then be made apparent, even to the pious, that legislation has suffered no loss. For the present, superstition is so tenacious of existence and so widely extended that even our American cousins, who have freely divested themselves of most of their "old clo'," still retain this rag in their Senate.

In our House of Commons the devotional exercise has, at any rate, the merit of absorbing but little time. While the members are standing uncovered Canon Wilberforce reads prayers, which do not occupy more than five minutes. Generally the attendance of members is larger than might be expected; but the secret is, the bulk of the rank and file often attend prayers simply to secure seats. In the House of Lords, where prayers are usually read by the junior bishop, the formality is equally expeditious. It is not, however, the time occupied, but the thing done, that we have to consider; and, as in ordinary life much mischief may be wrought in a minute, so in Parliamentary procedure a very important principle may be sacrificed in the twinkling of an eye.

Prayers in the House cannot be said to be necessary, even from the Christian point of view. The Christian men who constitute the bulk of the London County Council find themselves equal to a great deal of work without any sanctimonious prelude. They initiate and carry out big schemes without the aid of a chaplain or a stereotyped appeal to the Savior. They do not call upon the Holy Ghost to take part in their calculations when levying a rate; they make no attempt to strike up a five minutes' connection between the Throne of Grace and Spring-gardens; and appear to go more in fear of the daily press than of the displeasure of Jahveh. Imagine the provincial astonishment that would be excited if the mayor of a borough felt it necessary to call upon the town clerk to read the Lord's Prayer prior to the presentation of the sewage report!

Parliament—let it pride itself as it may upon its achievements—does not, after all, effect so much practical good in one session as the County Councils and Town Councils and School Boards and Boards of Guardians and other local authorities throughout the country are doing every day. And why it alone should be timorous in entering upon its duties without a preliminary worrying of the Maker of all things—who presumably has other worlds to attend to as well as this, and cannot be expected to be always throwing in his vote and influence at St. Stephen's—is really beyond the comprehension of the unsophisticated mind.

If there were any perceptible result from these "prayers, prayers, idle prayers," the formality might be forgiven. But no one pretends that the gabbled jargon to a Mumbo Jumbo—known to some of the members, but absolutely unknown to others—has any appreciable effect on the tone, temper, speeches, or votes of the Legislature. Has it influenced a solitary division? Has it softened the asperity, or prevented the prevarication, or checked the chicanery, of Ministry or Opposition? Has it stopped an hon. member putting the question of which he has given notice, or a Secretary of State giving the reply he has prepared? Assuredly not. In plain terms, the thing is an empty, meaningless ceremony, perfunctorily performed, absolutely devoid of interest, and having about as much practical effect as that wonderful proclamation against vice and immorality read by the Clerk of Arraigns at the opening of Assize.

If there are hon. members who sincerely believe that they receive guidance from on High as well as from the party Whips, why do they not pray for it in their closets, or in the smoke-room of the House—though not too near to Mr. Labouchere—or anywhere else that affords facilities for a private entreaty to heaven? Then other hon. members would be spared the nausea of finding the orders of the day eternally preceded by "prayers." It will be said, of course, that members to whom prayers are distasteful need not enter the House while they are proceeding. True, and the same might be said if the Speaker opened the House with a comic song or a "nigger" breakdown.

The indifference with which members generally treat the sacerdotal imposition is exemplified in the Select Committees as well as in the House itself. Should there be a sitting before four o'clock, the members' door of each Committee-room is abruptly thrust open, and a gilt-badged official bawls in: "The Speaker at Prayers!" The members turn their heads unconcernedly, and proceed with their business. Very different, however, is the effect when

similarly comes the warning cry, "Division!" and a question of moment is afoot. Prayers may be missed, but a vote on an important matter—never!

In its origin and continuance, the practice is based upon the constitutional assumption that Christianity is a part of the law, and consequently should be associated with the law-making. But as the Christianity in this case happens to mean Church of Englandism, the proceeding—in view of the *personnel* of the Assembly and the varied religious and non-religious opinions the representatives hold—is a clerical imposition to which all may object. Why should not the very considerable contingent of Irish Catholic representatives, who are forced to come to Westminster, insist that an intercessional prayer should be put up on their behalf to the Virgin Mary?

Nonconformists might succeed, if they tried, in removing from the Senate this survival of State ecclesiasticism, and that other survival which is even worse—the administering of the oath to witnesses before the Committees. But, alas, the majority of Dissenters are themselves too thickly tarred with the theological brush to actively resent the infliction. Nevertheless, it must strike them at times that the whole atmosphere of the House is inimical to a proper devotional spirit, and that the ruthless dragging of sacred things into an arena where, at best, they are treated with cold toleration, partakes somewhat of sacrilege and desecration. To the reverential believer it must seem that here, at any rate, the office of prayers would be more "honored in the breach than the observance."

On all grounds, therefore, one would like to hail the advent of a modern Cromwell who should order, not the taking away of a harmless bauble to be afterwards replaced, but the final removal of these remnants of sacerdotal sway.

FRANCIS NEALE.

MRS. HARRIET LAW.

THE late Mrs. Harriet Law, whose valiant work for Freethought deserves to be kept in remembrance, was born on November 5, 1831, at Ongar, a village in Essex bordering on Epping Forest. Her maiden name was Frost. She was descended from flourishing farmers on both sides, and was one of a numerous family. Her father's favorite companion, she spent a large part of her early childhood in accompanying him wherever he went about the farm. She was essentially a child of nature, disliked being indoors, would be up early in the morning, and make a meal of fruit picked from the trees. Love of fresh air and sunshine never left her. Occasionally she had fits of brooding, and would remain alone for hours in the hay-loft, perusing and pondering over her *Pilgrim's Progress* and Young's *Night Thoughts*. When the children were growing up, the father fell into misfortune through selling his farm and business of refreshment contractor, and not re-investing to advantage. The family came to London. She took a house entirely on her own responsibility and opened a school. By this means she supported herself and assisted her parents. This help she continued in one form and another until the end of their days. Her father always declared that whatever Harriet did was right. She spoke of her mother as being of a most sweet and refined nature. She was a devout Christian, was baptized by Dr. Angus when about twenty years of age, at College Chapel, Bethnal Green, became a Sunday-school teacher, refused to eat hot dinner on Sunday, or to have her bed made on that day. Her first attempt at public speaking was in Mile End-road; she saw someone addressing a crowd, and stopped to listen. It was a Secularist making a warm attack upon Christianity. When he had finished she opposed him in a state of great excitement, then hurried away, frightened at what she had done. Soon after she went to the Secular Hall, Philpott-street, Commercial-road, with the intention of converting the Infidel. Here she first met Bradlaugh, G. J. Holyoake, Charles Southwell, etc. These she opposed in turn, but always found that her creed had somewhat wasted at each encounter, until there was nothing left of it. She used to leave the hall saying to herself, "I shan't defend that doctrine any more!" Her first heterodox remark was made to her minister, who remonstrated with her for speaking in public, quoting Paul's well-known injunction, that a woman's voice should not be heard in the church. She considerably startled him by replying, "Well, and what of that?" Mr. Edward Law, son of Mr. William Law, of Newton Abbott, attended the same hall. It was probably sympathy in a common cause that drew them together. They married while still Christians on January 11, 1855. There were four children, one son and three daughters. Two or three years after, when every trace of the theology that had been so real to her had

disappeared, she adopted lecturing as a profession. The three requisites of a Freethought lecturer at that time were a strong arm, a powerful voice, and a never-failing courage. These she possessed in an eminent degree. At her return from each lecturing tour she would regale her family with accounts of the "glorious fights" she had had with the Christians, how the latter had tried to drive them from the halls, by putting out the gas, sprinkling cayenne pepper about the floors, making thrusts at them with chairs, calling in the police; how she had saved herself from being lynched by passing through the mob in a top-hat and coat, borrowed from one of her male companions, the gentle Christians crying out all the time, "Where is she?" Of course, no one knew. She hardly knew herself; the transformation was so complete.

Her intense enthusiasm, high spirits, and fearless utterance of all she believed drew round her large numbers of most devoted comrades, whom she inspired to brave all with her in the interests of free speech. She was as proud of her bruises as other women were of their jewels.

At the death of Mr. G. H. Reddalls, of Birmingham, at the latter end of the year 1875, she purchased the plant and good will of his paper, the *Secular Chronicle*, and kept it in existence for three years. Although it never reached paying-point—she losing about £1,000 over the venture—it did meet with some measure of success, sufficient to indicate that, had she been an editor instead of an orator, it would have become one of the permanent possessions of the Freethought party. Her best work was done in periods of great excitement; it was when other people lost their heads that hers became most cool. She had the greatest admiration for John Stuart Mill, whom she knew very well, and spoke for him during his electioneering campaign when candidate for Parliament at Westminster.

Nothing like justice can be done to a character such as hers without some knowledge of her private life. She suffered from an excess of sympathy. Everyone's sorrow was her sorrow. One time she would be pleading—and successfully—for an erring daughter to be received back into her home; another time keeping roof over wife and children while the husband was in hospital; then lending a few pounds to give a man a new start in life; next paying out the broker for a family in distress; then being security for a small loan; and so on, and so on, throughout her whole life giving up her valuable time to such work, and bringing herself into pecuniary embarrassment. Her own needs were easily satisfied; her tastes were of the simplest. To put up at a miner's cottage was as pleasing to her as at the Grand Hotel; a little plain food, and plainer clothes, sufficed. In spite of her busy life, her children were never forgotten. When leaving London for a tour in the North her instruction to the housekeeper would be: "See to the children; if they are well and happy when I return, I will overlook all else." Nothing would keep her from them when they were ill; she would cease to be a lecturer, and become a first-class nurse. A few months since she remarked that there were two things she had striven all her life to do for her children—one was to keep them out of the hands of the doctor; and the other, out of the hands of the parson. Another remark of hers in connection with her children was that she would rather leave them with a sound, healthy constitution than with a thousand a year.

ACID DROPS.

LORD SALISBURY has no very high opinion of the Christians of Crete. With regard to them and the Mohammedans, he evidently thinks it is six on one side and half-a-dozen on the other. "If it were possible," he says, "to dig a ditch across the island, with the Christians on one side and the Moslems on the other, I think we should arrive at a satisfactory solution."

The King of Siam, now on a visit to England, is said to be handsome, accomplished, intelligent, and liberal. According to the *Daily News*, he maintains religious liberty in his dominions. Catholic and Protestant missionaries are allowed to proselytize at their pleasure, only they are forbidden to practise their business in the Palace. Some time ago a deputation of missionaries waited upon him, and said they were anxious to convert him and his people to the Christian faith. They told him it was well known that the people of Christian lands are much happier than those who inhabit heathen countries. The polite monarch replied with a smile: "I think the Czar of Russia is not so happy as the King of Siam."

During the King of Siam's visit to Singapore he was persuaded to go to the English cathedral. On arriving at the cathedral grounds, he found a number of Chinese coolies sitting outside in the broiling sun pulling the huge punkahs to keep the worshippers cool. Whereupon the King of Siam refused to enter the church. "If you Christians," he said,

"can't worship your God without keeping a number of heathen toiling in the sun, I have seen enough of your church service outside the walls."

A female inmate of Lambeth Workhouse refused to attend church on Sunday. For this offence against somebody—probably the parson—she was put for one meal on bread and water. On the matter being reported to the Guardians, Mrs. Despard asked whether it was not persecution. The chairman replied that discipline had to be maintained, and that if one were allowed to stay away from church the whole place would become disorganized. Mr. Redman added that if no punishment were allowed they would have to shut the church and sack the parsons. "And a good thing too," said Mr. Cochran. Eventually the matter was referred to a committee for consideration and report.

Raymond Hadley, of Church-street, Islington, is a baker six days a week, and a howler on the seventh. In the latter occupation he is generally assisted by George Humphry Knight, who is nothing all the other days of the week. These men frequent the highway in Finsbury Park on Sundays, and their religion is very noisy. As they refused to go to a spot where no obstruction would be caused to the traffic, they were arrested on Sunday last, and appeared at North London next day. Mr. Cluer said to the men: "I want an assurance that you will not go to this place again." Hadley: "When the spirit of God tells me to preach, I must preach." Mr. Cluer: "But the spirit of God does not lead you to any particular lamp-post." Knight: "If it led me to the top of a lamp-post, I would preach from it." Mr. Cluer: "If it did, you would be dealt with according to law." Knight: "You want us to obey the police and disobey God." Mr. Cluer: "Do you give me the assurance I ask." Knight: "I shall give no assurance." Mr. Cluer fined each prisoner forty shillings or fourteen days. Knight said he hoped no one would pay the fine for him. He burns to be a martyr for Christ and obstruction.

Mr. Cluer, one of our newest London magistrates, is a most accommodating gentleman. In his court the other day a Chinaman, who was a Buddhist, wanted to take the oath by blowing out a lighted candle. Mr. Cluer had no candle handy, but asked whether a wax vesta would do instead, and was producing one from his pocket when he was informed that it must be a candle or nothing. Superstitionists always stickle for the regulation ceremony.

William Hayes Ward, in the *New York Herald*, in giving an account of the "New Religion" which will probably soon appear in the East, says that "the Japanese are pretty well satisfied with their morality as compared with that of Christian nations." We should think so.

The bishops have at last closed their secret Pan Anglican Conference, in which it is understood that the question of how to regain Church control of education has been one of the chief topics of discussion, a subsidiary place having been given to the proposals for reunion with the Greek Church, on which a memorial was presented by Mr. Athelstan Riley. The reunion would be an apt mating of a living barbarism with a fossil one.

The ecclesiastical officers of the Church of England appear to have very easy terms of leave of absence and furlough. They have travelling allowances besides stipends, in the case of a bishop less only by 500 rupees a month, out of £5,000 a year for the provision of a substitute. Even a chaplain gets one year's furlough after three of service. This is why we see so many "returned empties" in England.

The Dean of Winchester, speaking of the Christian Church as a whole, says, in a volume entitled *Lombard Street in Lent*, published by Mr. Elliot Stock: "The Church is continually falling—I care not who may be staggered at such a word as that—is it not true? Everyone who, in the light of our present day, tests the whole history of Christianity is filled with an awful sense that there is something that has gone quite wrong; that there is something in Christianity which has not met the difficulties, which has not overcome evils, which has not moved with the times, which has often failed to raise mankind to a higher level."

The *Christian Commonwealth*, commenting on the above, admits that "every real student of history is constrained mournfully to assent to this conclusion." This admission that there is something wrong somewhere may suggest that the foundations are insecure.

Gas exploded in the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, at Pompeii, New York, recently. The priest's eyes were put out, and two of his assistants will probably die.

The clergy do not always behave themselves in South Africa; although the cloth in England, I am told, is always

a guarantee of good faith—more or less. Anyway, the people of Roodepoort want to hear from a parson named Williams, who formerly dispensed religion at the local English church, and has recently dispensed with it. He was some time ago presented with £16 to part pay his passage home; but he pocketed the cash and stayed on, waiting for something to turn up. That something took the shape of a cheque-book belonging to an insurance agent, whose office he had occasion to visit on church-subscription business. A few forgeries enabled him to pay his creditors (with bogus paper) and clear off with a comfortable little remembrancer of the credulity of the Roodepoort flock. His fresh field and pasture new is not yet known.—*African Critic*.

The United States Senate has been much exercised by the question whether Bibles shall have a tariff, like other books, or enter the States duty free. By a bare majority of four, it was resolved that God's holy word must pay duty.

A Syracuse priest tried to pass through the Custom House two richly-ornamented crosses, brought from Jerusalem, without paying duty on them. They are valued at \$500. The Customs' officers decided that the crosses were dutiable, and the priest has appealed to the authorities at Washington.—*New York "Truthseeker."*

Mr. Harry Payne, who sings in the choir of the Presbyterian Church at Southold, Long Island, has been reported to the elders. The young lady organist detected him in the act of reading Paine's *Age of Reason* while the pastor was delivering the sermon. Interviewed by a reporter, Mr. Payne asserted that *The Age of Reason* was a great book.

A man, believed to be the Rev. Francis Hermans, who is supposed to have killed Miss Henrietta Clawson at Salt Lake City, in September, 1895, and who, the police believe, has committed half-a-dozen other murders, is in jail at Pembroke, Ontario. He was officiating as lay reader in an Episcopal church at the time of his arrest.

The Young Men's Christian Association has a tent on the State ground at Peekskill, N.Y., where the Twenty-second regiment is camping. During a thunderstorm, July 11, lightning struck the tent and killed a corporal, who sat at a table writing. No other tent was struck. This is the first death that has occurred at the State camp.

Mr. Symes, writing in the *Liberator* on the living burials in Russia, says:—It is almost safe to guess that those Russian fanatics take their stand upon certain Bible texts; and there are texts which may readily be turned to account by them. What is the meaning of "buried with him by baptism" (Rom. vi. 4); "in baptism" (Col. ii. 12); "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20); "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" (Gal. v. 24); "If we be dead with Christ" (Rom. vi. 8)? It is impossible to say what the monkish writers of this mystic rubbish meant by it; but fanatics need not look further for incitement to such crimes as those which mark the history of the Russian Beguines. Indeed, we may easily gather from the New Testament that one distinguishing trait of the leading characters was a recklessness with regard to life, that they encouraged each other to "lay down their lives," and to go cheerfully to death. The distance between this and the actual sacrifice of each other for religious reasons is extremely short, and persons who give themselves up unreservedly to the leading of the New Testament may be expected to develop most religious crimes, as was actually the case in the early Churches.

I am conquered. Prayer has been proved to avail. True, all the prayers in Australia cannot alter the weather, cannot cure the drought, cannot make Christ or his bag of tricks attractive, cannot set a broken leg or save a drowning man; no, but in California there has been a prize fight, and the wife of one of the combatants prayed that her husband might win! And, to the astonishment and disgust of most people, he *did* win. "God" may turn a deaf ear to the cry of distress, to the prayers of those who are starving, drowning, burning; but a prize-fight is quite another thing. "God" has evidently not forgotten his own experiences in the ring, and the milling Jacob and he gave each other. So, when this wife told him her husband was going to have a pugilistic encounter with a better man than himself, he resolved to help him. After that, who can doubt the efficacy of prayer?—*J. Symes, in "Liberator."*

Following what he supposed was the wish of his "Savior," Reuben Beachum finds himself blind. Here is a press dispatch telling how it was done: *O'Neill, Nebraska*.—"If thine eye be single," read Reuben Beachum from the sixth chapter of Matthew, "then shall thy whole body be filled with light." Beachum is a colored farmer and preacher near O'Neill, and a religious monomaniac. He didn't fully understand the passage in question, but thought he did, and, on

the theory that the Lord approved of one-eyed men, thrust a penknife into his right optic to reduce the number in accordance with the supposed requirement of holy writ. He lost the eye. Inflammation set in, and the other is likely to go too. Beachum thinks he has done the Lord's will, and says he will gladly pass the rest of his days in darkness if the burden is laid upon him. Beachum can also quote "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," as a sanction of self-mutilation.

The case of *Shaw v. Shaw* was the petition of Mrs. Elizabeth Shaw for a divorce on the ground of the cruelty and adultery of her husband, Mr. Arthur Shaw, who was stated to be a Wesleyan preacher. There were charges of adultery with three or four women. The petitioner said that her husband had treated her badly. On several occasions he had struck her, and once he threw her down and knocked her against the wall. The servant who in 1893 went into petitioner's service, at which time she was fourteen-and-half years old, said that the respondent seduced her; while another said that at the age of fifteen, two days after she went into respondent's service, he seduced her. His lordship, in granting a decree *nisi*, said that it was "a very bad case."

In Ireland, so an Irishman informs me, the drummers on the g-l-lorious Twelfth beat the drums with canes. The rebound is quicker than if sticks were used, and as each time the drum is struck a Romanist soul goes to the bottom-most depths of Hades—well, now you can understand the use of canes.—*Liverpool Post*.

Sir Charles Warren has not condescended to reply to the civil and respectful letter addressed to him by the secretary of the Chatham Branch of the National Secular Society. Meanwhile the lying report is being circulated through the press that the Secularists are forbidden to hold meetings on Chatham Lines in consequence of the violence of one of their speakers. The speaker was Mr. Cohen, and he was guilty of no violence. A row was deliberately kicked up by a handful of ill-bred Christians, for whose conduct an apology was offered by the Christian Evidence representative. Such is the paltry excuse behind which Sir Charles Warren shelters his own bigotry. A few Christians wilfully create a disturbance, and the Secularists are punished for it by being warned off a place which is open to all the rest of the public.

Mr. Charles Watts, at the end of his article in this week's *Freethinker*, displays a commendable spirit in relation to this matter; but we believe he will find himself helpless. Chatham Lines belongs to the War Office, and Sir Charles Warren has all the rights of a private proprietor, just as the Crown has absolute rights over Trafalgar-square, which is Crown property. We understand that there is a good meeting-ground just outside the Lines, and Mr. Watts will doubtless speak there on August 15. He is too old and experienced to run his head against brick walls.

The following advertisement is from a Welsh weekly paper: "Wanted, a Medical Assistant, qualified, Welsh, and a Methodist (no Churchman need apply). One that can deliver lectures on temperance, and would preach on Sundays free. Must be truly religious; in fact, attend all meetings in connection with the sacred cause of Methodism, and wear the orthodox silk hat.—Apply 'Physician.'" This reads like a joke, but it may be deadly earnest. You cannot bottom the solemnity of a solemn Methodist. He is impervious to ridicule.

According to the *Woking News*, there is an awkward problem at Byfleet. A man in the village, of weak intellect, is fond of attending the church services. Of course, there is nothing remarkable in that. But he is so dirty that people cannot sit near him, and the churchwardens have complained to the Guardians. One of these gentlemen suggested that the offensive church attendant should be induced to take a bath; but it may be found easier to take him to the water than to make him wash. Something, however, must be done, or the parson will soon have a congregation of one.

President Faure is going to visit Russia, and F. Volkovsky says, in *Free Russia*, that the head of the French Republic will find no Republicans in St. Petersburg or Moscow. They are all in Siberia.

The *London Journal* of June 3, 1721, informs us that "accounts from Madrid mention that at a tribunal of the Inquisition lately held there they passed sentence upon eighteen persons. Four women were convicted with witchcraft, and the rest with Judaism. One man and one woman were burnt alive for persisting in their opinion, but two men and four women had 'the extraordinary favor' of being first strangled and afterwards burnt."

If the standing armies of Europe only were marched in rows of five, and at the rate of three miles an hour, it would take nine-and-a-half days before every man could have passed any given point. We fancy we hear the lingering trills of the shepherds' song of old: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." This peace, we presume, like the place of God, passes all understanding. Amen. And Amen yet again.

The beer-drinking powers of our old English ancestors were astounding; the canons of St. Paul's received thirty gallons each as their weekly allowance.

An American paper says that, if the angels of heaven are like those in the church memorial windows, it must be hard to tell heaven from a nightmare.

Two rival American orders are seeking recruits among pious ladies in England. The one is entitled "The King's Daughters," and the other "The Daughters of the King." When will America send us "Daughters of the Republic?"

The High Church writer of a tract entitled *The Duty of English Priests to the Breviary*, in which he seeks to persuade the clergy to recite the Breviary instead of the Morning and Evening Prayer, has withdrawn the tract, having been warned that the position is legally untenable, and that those who Romanize in this direction will find themselves in conflict with the law.

When "Rev. George Stewart, of N.S. Wales," assured the Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland the other day that horse-racing is the cancer of Australia, he forgot to mention that it only affects six days a week, and that the cancer of the seventh is the Calvinistic hypocrisy which seeks to make the Sabbath a hell-upon-earth. Look at the Melbourne Sunday!—*Sydney Bulletin*.

J. K. Jerome would abolish tintinabulation on the Lord's Day. He says: "Church bells may have been necessary in the days before clocks; but do the Church authorities think that a man hears the church bells, and then suddenly decides to go to church? They are unnecessary remnants of the early days of Christianity. They ought to have been abolished with Smithfield fires and other religious follies."

"Peter Lombard," in the *Church Times*, says of Shelley: "Had he lived a few years longer, I believe he would have done as Wordsworth did—turned Tory and High Churchman." Does the worthy Canon really believe this, or is it necessary to add, when giving a good word to a great poet? Who can tell? Shelley might have had an attack of brain-softening if he lived long enough. But he did not.

The so-called Spanish anarchists who have been deported to England are by no means "the refuse of Barcelona." One of them is a professor and a writer of comedies; another is a journalist and publisher. According to the *Liverpool Courier*, many of them had "a noble carriage and a handsome appearance." All of them appear to be Freethinkers, who have incurred the hatred of the Catholics.

The Birkenhead police seem to have nothing better to do than to worry the poorer class of tradesmen who sell milk or sweetstuff on the day when the Lord began his six days' labor. The Lord's Day in Birkenhead must be devoted solely to the church or the public-house.

Mr. Hall Caine's new book is entitled *The Christian*. The first edition, in six-shilling form, is to be published on August 9. We are informed by the literary press, no doubt under high inspiration, that this edition runs to 50,000 copies, and will put £6,000 in the author's pocket. He does much better out of Christianity than Jesus Christ did. Judas would never have ratted if he had carried Mr. Hall Caine's purse.

Mr. Nisbet remarks in "Our Handbook" in the *Referer*, anent the prosecution of fortune-tellers: "Where are you to draw the line? I stopped the other Sunday to hear a street preacher holding forth upon the certainties of hell-fire unless certain simple precautions, which he indicated, were taken to avoid it. Was this a 'prediction' within the meaning of the Act, and, if not, why not, seeing that the hat was afterwards sent round in order that those might contribute who thought the preacher's cheerful intelligence worth paying for?"

The philosopher takes refuge in a "perhaps," and will not be driven to say things are certain which wise men cannot agree about. The man of science is supreme in his own domain, and will not allow theologians to interfere with his conclusions. Society, in its actual life, has long been Atheistic.—*J. A. Froude*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, August 8, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W., at 7.30, "Who Was Moses? an Answer to the King of Siam's Question."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—August 8, Failsworth; 15, New Brompton. October 3, Sheffield; 10, Birmingham; 24, Halifax Sunday Society. 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.

J. ROBERTS (Liverpool) sends us extracts from the local newspapers containing accounts of the landing and reception of the Spanish Anarchists. According to their own account, these deported "suspects" are guilty of nothing but being Freethinkers. They say that opposition to Catholicism is a crime in Spain. At the same time they admit having been friendly with the men who threw the bombs at Barcelona. Mr. Roberts had a long talk with some of them, and he says that they belong to a high type of human nature. Some of the stories they tell of their tortures in prison are simply horrible. One is of a nature that cannot easily be printed. We venture to suggest that if any one of the "suspects" has suffered this torture, he should satisfy a committee of Englishmen of the fact. If it can be established, it will damn the Spanish Government in the eyes of civilized people. But there ought to be positive proof, and it should be forthcoming.

MR. FOOTE does not write a "Special" for this week's *Freethinker*. It seems useless just at present, in the height of the holiday season, to press Mr. Hartmann's scheme for the financial reorganization of the N. S. S. upon the attention of the Secular party. The matter will be taken up again very shortly. Meanwhile promises to any amount, from £100 to 5s., can be sent to Mr. Foote, or to Mr. Hartmann (treasurer), or Miss Vance (secretary), at the N. S. S. office, 377 Strand, W.C.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Thanks. We missed seeing the *Telegraph* leaderette.

T. J. HEAD promises 5s. annually under Mr. Hartmann's scheme, and wishes it "complete success."

E. GOTTHEIL will subscribe 10s. annually under Mr. Hartmann's scheme.

C. CATELL thoroughly approves Mr. Hartmann's scheme for reorganizing the N. S. S. finances, and will subscribe 5s. a year.

J. H. BAIN, promising 5s. annually, regrets that the Secular party is so slow in "catching on" to Mr. Hartmann's scheme, which he says is one of "magnitude and nobility." He wants to know whether Secularists really intend to meet the forces of reaction.

F. BROOKS.—Ask your Christian friend for the evidence. Charles Bradlaugh never took out his watch and gave God Almighty five minutes to strike him dead. The story existed before Bradlaugh was born. The other allegation is a filthy lie. We will not soil our pages by reproducing it. If these are your Christian "friends," the sooner you make them *strangers* the better.

DIGNIFIED.—Glad to note that you now see the Secularists were not to blame at Chatham.

G. JACOB.—The statement respecting the "Angel" did appear in the *Mecho*. Of that we are positive, though we did not keep the number, which must have been dated within ten days of our first paragraph. It was a publican who told us that it was not the "Angel" at Islington, but the other "Angel." We know nothing of either place, and the figure in our paragraph was merely incidental.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Animal's Friend—Two Worlds—Freidenker—Ourselves—Fur Unsere Jugend—Isle of Man Times—Liberator—Mecho—Sydney Bulletin—Progressive Thinker—Free Russia—Chatham Observer—Woking News—The New Order—Referee—Humanity—Secular Thought—Birkenhead News—To-Day—Liberty—Zion's Watchtower—Grimsby News—People's News-paper.

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 Vance.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Ford, 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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

A VERY fair audience, in spite of the tropical weather assembled at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The New Sayings of Christ." Mr. Marriott occupied the chair. This evening (August 8) Mr. Foote lectures again from the same platform, taking for his subject "Who Was Moses? an Answer to the King of Siam's Question." The dusky monarch put this question last Monday while waiting in what is called the Moses room at the House of Lords, and does not appear to have got a satisfactory reply.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures at Failsworth, near Manchester, this Sunday (August 8), afternoon and evening. We hope friends will rally in force from the surrounding districts.

The adjourned meeting of the Moral Instruction Conference was held at St. Martin's Town Hall on Wednesday evening, July 28. The attendance was not as large as on the previous occasion. The first business was the election of an Executive Committee of fifteen. Mr. Foote's proposal was adopted, that each of the nine groups represented should nominate one member, and the other six be elected personally by the whole Conference. The nine thus nominated included Mr. Charles Watts as representing the National Secular Society. When the other six came to be elected it was apparent that the Ethical party and the Socialists—both of whom, and particularly the latter, were very much over represented—were bent on packing the Committee with their own nominees. With the exception of Mr. Watts, not a single person is definitely on the Committee who is not either an Ethicist or a Socialist. Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen were not elected. The Socialists just held their hands down when a name belonging to the National Secular Society was read from the chair, and held them up for nearly everyone else. A few of the Ethicists, including Dr. Coit and Mr. Gould, acted more fairly and sensibly; but the majority acted just like the Socialists. The result was a triumph of sectarianism; but it will not help the Moral Instruction movement outside the Conference. The Socialists showed, before the meeting broke up, that their real interests lay in quite a different direction. One of them, in fact, after trying to introduce the free maintenance question, spoke of "this Moral Instruction affair" quite contemptuously. It remains to be seen whether a Committee thus composed can do much good, or even hold together.

A manifesto has to be issued, and a series of questions to School Board candidates drawn up. Both will involve considerable difficulty in view of the composition of the Committee. Nor is there a clear, definite, and general view of the scope of the Committee's functions. In short, there is ample room for misunderstanding and difference, not to say discord.

Before the Conference broke up Mr. Cohen asked the pertinent question: "Are we to understand that the business of the Committee is simply to impress upon candidates and electors the importance of substituting non-theological moral teaching for religious instruction?" The chairman and some members of the Conference replied with a dubious "Yes." But it was evident that other members were of a different opinion.

Dr. Coit moved, and it was carried, that the Committee should take steps to call another and wider Conference some time this year, with a view to forming a permanent organization, whose operations should be extended all over the kingdom. Should this motion be carried into effect, there will be an opportunity of rectifying the blunders of this initial movement.

There are two great parties first to be considered in the education struggle—Church and Nonconformity. The only serious third party consists of those who are opposed to religious teaching altogether, and the working strength of that party lies in those who want to destroy theology. Some may attach most immediate importance to what is called the "negative" side, and others to what is called the "positive" side. But that is only a difference of attitude, founded perhaps on a difference of temperament. The fact remains, when all is said and done, that the primary bond of this minor third party in the education struggle is opposition to the orthodoxy based upon the Bible; and it is only those who mean business in that direction, without collateral or ulterior designs, who can give any real force to the policy of supplanting religious teaching by moral instruction.

Mr. Justice Collins has put a fresh nail, and a very big and firm one, in the coffin of the Lord's Day Observance Act. Mr. Jeffreys Williams brought an action to recover a

penalty against Mr. George Wright, printer and publisher of the *Times*, for advertising a Sunday concert in the Queen's Hall. Mr. Williams, who affirmed instead of taking the oath, stated that, so far from being a Sabbatarian, he had no religious belief. His object was to expose the Act. He attended the concert and heard a song there which made him laugh. It was undeniably an entertainment, and money was taken at the doors. Dr. Parry was called to prove that there was no levity in the performance, and Mr. Wright said he had no control over the advertisements in the *Times*. Mr. Justice Collins, however, passed over these points. He non-suited the plaintiff on the ground that he had failed to prove that there were no free seats at the concert.

The *Daily News*, in a leaderette on this action, points out that Mr. Justice Collins's decision seems to indicate "an easy way out of an obsolete and vexatious statute." So long as some free seats are provided, though others are charged for, it appears that the new interpretation of the Act is complied with. The House of Lords, at the instigation of the Bishops, threw out Lord Hobhouse's Bill; but the worthy judge, who has a liberal reputation, points out a way of relief, which the *Daily News* hopes (as we do) will be widely adopted.

Freethinkers all over the kingdom should make a special note of this case. It should be of great assistance to our party in obtaining the use of public halls for Sunday lectures.

Mr. F. J. Boorman, the enthusiastic secretary of the Chatham Secular Society, replies, in the *Rochester and Chatham Standard*, to several writers on "The Errors of Atheism." He manages, in brief compass, to clear away a deal of misrepresentation.

Our esteemed Freethought contemporary, the *Truthseeker*, of New York, prints "Further Notes on the Jubilee," in its issue dated July 24. The printer has omitted to state that all those fifteen paragraphs are taken from the *Freethinker*. Probably the name of that journal got dropped out in the make-up of the page. Mr. Macdonald, the editor of the *Truthseeker*, is far above reprinting from other papers without acknowledgment. He can write very interesting paragraphs himself, and his brother George has a very pretty turn of the pen in his weekly "Observations."

The Bradlaugh Club's excursion, announced in our last issue, leaves Liverpool-street at 9.10 a.m. on Sunday, August 22, Bethnal Green at 9.15, and Dalston Lane at 9.21, for Rye House and Broxbourne.

INGERSOLL'S LATEST.

(From the Preface to H. Taber's "Faith and Fact.")

For many years the pulpit has been losing influence, and the sacred calling no longer offers a career to young men of talent and ambition.

When people believed in "special providence" they also believed that preachers had great influence with God. They were regarded as celestial obbyists, and they were respected and feared because of their supposed power.

Now, no one who has the capacity to think believes in special providence. Of course there are some pious imbeciles who think that pestilence and famine, cyclone and earthquake, flood and fire, are the weapons of God, the tools of his trade; and that with these weapons, these tools, he kills and starves, rends and devours, drowns and burns, countless thousands of the human race.

If God governs this world, if he builds and destroys, if back of every event is his will, then he is neither good nor wise. He is ignorant and malicious.

A few days ago, in Paris, men and women had gathered together in the name of Charity. The building in which they were assembled took fire, and many of these men and women perished in the flames.

A French priest called this horror an act of God.

Is it not strange that Christians speak of their God as an assassin? How can they love and worship this monster who murders his children?

Intelligence seems to be leaving the orthodox Church. The great divines are growing smaller, weaker, day by day. Since the death of Henry Ward Beecher no man of genius has stood in an orthodox pulpit. The ministers of intelligence are found in the liberal Churches, where they are allowed to express their thoughts and preserve their manhood. Some of these preachers keep their faces

towards the East, and sincerely welcome the light, while their orthodox brethren stand with their backs to the sunrise and worship the sunset of the day before.

During these years of change, of decay and growth, the author of this book looked and listened, became familiar with the questions raised, the arguments offered, and the results obtained. For his work a better man could not have been found. He has no prejudice, no hatred. He is by nature candid, conservative, kind, and just. He does not attack persons. He knows the difference between exchanging epithets and thoughts. He gives the facts as they appear to him, and draws the logical conclusions. He charges and proves that Christianity has not always been the friend of morality, of civil liberty, of wives and mothers, of free thought and honest speech. He shows that intolerance is its nature, that it always has and always will persecute to the extent of its power, and that Christianity will always despise the doubter.

Yet we know that doubt must inhabit every finite mind. We know that doubt is as natural as hope, and that man is no more responsible for his doubts than for the beating of his heart. Every human being, who knows the nature of evidence, the limitations of the mind, must have "doubts" about gods and devils, about heavens and hells, and must know that there is not the slightest evidence tending to show that gods and devils ever existed.

God is guess.

An undesigned designer, an uncaused cause, is as incomprehensible to the human mind as a circle without a diameter.

The dogma of the Trinity multiplies the difficulty by three.

Theologians do not, and cannot, believe that the authority to govern comes from the consent of the governed. They regard God as the monarch, and themselves as his agents. They always have been the enemies of liberty.

They claim to have a revelation from their God, a revelation that is the rightful master of reason. As long as they believe this, they must be the enemies of mental freedom. They do not ask man to think, but command him to obey.

If the claims of the theologians are admitted, the Church becomes the ruler of the world, and to support and obey priests will be the business of mankind. All these theologians claim to have a revelation from their God, and yet they cannot agree as to what the revelation reveals. The other day, looking from my window at the bay of New York, I saw many vessels going in many directions, and yet all were moved by the same wind. The direction in which they were going did not depend on the direction of the breeze, but the set of the sails. In this way the same Bible furnishes creeds for all the Christian sects. But what would we say if the captains of the boats I saw should each swear that his boat was the only one that moved in the same direction the wind was blowing?

Christianity, with its ignorant and jealous God, its loving and revongeful Christ, its childish legends, its grotesque miracles, its "fall of man," its atonement, its salvation by faith, its heaven for stupidity, and its hell for genius, does not and cannot satisfy the free brain and the good heart.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

"St. John's" Assistance Fund.

The Committee who are organizing the fund for Mr. J. H. Saint report that the Freethought party have already responded moderately well to their appeal, although several friends have not yet replied. The accounts for the month of July have been duly audited, and Mr. Saint has been placed under the care of Dr. T. R. Allinson, in his Hygienic Hospital. Grants have been made weekly, and will be continued as long as funds permit. Collecting cards will be forwarded to any friend applying for same, and individual donations will be acknowledged by return of post. The Secretary is Mr. F. Todd, 21 Abdale-road, Shepherds Bush, London, W.

Are there not enough known facts to teach our children that would interest and benefit them? Cannot children be brought together on Sunday and have a good time, and be taught truth and sense, instead of lies and nonsense? Is there anything more important for us to do than to provide a place for our children where their minds will be free from such detrimental environments? Have we not too long been permitting priest and preacher to bend the twig?—
Katie Kehm Smith.

MODERN SCIENCE AND "THE IMPOSSIBLE."

It is really surprising what nonsense the "reconcilers," in their efforts—which reveal all the pitiful desperation of impotence—to bolster up the decaying remnants of ancient mythology, are at times capable of giving forth. I read quite recently in one of the evening newspapers an article on the new telegraphy without wires, written by a reverend gentleman not altogether unknown in the world of political and religious controversy. He went so far as to say that this wonderful discovery would administer "another sharp lesson to the clever people who are so fond of the word *impossible*, and who have been assuring us that modern science is going to knock on the head all our old 'superstitions.'" I will not do the good pastor the injustice of presuming for one moment that he is unacquainted with the method of criticism used against the old superstitions by so many of the leading modern scientists and philosophers; and, bearing this in mind, I must confess to a profound astonishment that he should so far "give himself away"—if I may be permitted to use the vulgarism—while trying to throw dust into the eyes of his readers. Applied to a large body of opinion which prevailed, say, a hundred years ago, such criticism would not have been out of place; applied to modern times, it is undoubtedly incorrect—indeed, it could not be more so.

Throughout the greater portion of the present century the *a priori* method of criticism has been, to all intents and purposes, obsolete. It was doomed to extinction from the first. The modern scientist is the last person in the world to deny the possibility of *anything* in nature outside the realm of pure mathematics. He recognises that it would be a piece of presumption on his part to do so. Why? For one reason, because he is not egotistical enough to disacknowledge the immensity of his ignorance; and for another, because he has no means of disproving the possibility or conceivability of some particular suggestion or recorded tradition. Such Biblical stories as the miraculous birth of Christ, the turning of water into wine, and the dead coming to life again, are not asserted to be impossibilities, contrary though they are to every scrap of scientific observation. To the religionist who says that these remarkable occurrences were brought about by "the hand of God"—that is to say, by supernatural means—the scientific Agnostic (and, I think I may add, the vast majority of those who prefer to call themselves Atheists) answers that he knows nothing whatsoever about any supernatural powers, that he is absolutely unaware of any means by which he may obtain that knowledge, and that there is not the faintest evidence to lead him to surmise for a moment that such forces are behind the palpably existing universe; but at the same time he will not positively deny their existence. It is absurd to dogmatize concerning infinity, which we not only know nothing about, but which is unknowable. So also is the scientific attitude towards the conjectural assertion that the universe has a Creator, a Being who rules and directs its every atom, but whose origin and personality, if the word may be used, are inscrutable. On the authority of Tyndall (Lecture before British Association at Belfast in 1874) we have it that, so far as the eye of science has ranged through nature, no intrusion of purely *creative* power into any series of phenomena has ever been observed; and the assumption of such a power to account for special phenomena, though often made, has always proved a failure. But further than that, the idea that the universe was created by an agency external to itself is completely inconceivable, and there are many things which, even though conceivable, are absolutely unbelievable. Tyndall said that, as he could jump over a small hillock, he could, in imagination, *conceive* a man jumping over Mount Blanc. This "external agency," or God, is, with blind illogic, asserted by Theists to be self-existent, an "uncaused cause"! This idea is, if possible, even more hopelessly inconceivable than the previous one. Why, then, should there be any attempt to postulate on the great problem of life and origin, which, the more scientists have racked their brains over, has become to them more and more conclusively inscrutable. On these matters we must, if we wish to be really honest, confess ourselves Agnostic; affirming nothing, but refusing to give credence to any of the many foundationless attempts at explanation. This is the attitude of all that is best in modern science and philosophy.

Coming back, however, to the main point under consideration in this short paper, and bearing in mind the scientific tenet that nothing outside the realm of pure mathematics is positively denounced as impossible, it is well to inquire on what ground all traditional "miracles," and supernatural stories seriously told us as genuine facts are rejected as unworthy of the belief of sensible men. The great and fundamental principle of modern criticism, worthy the name, is to be found in the words of Locke: "We should in all cases proportion our beliefs to the evidence." When Charles Darwin was asked on one occasion, shortly before his death, by two distinguished scientific visitors to his house, his reason for having given up Christianity, he replied: "Because there is no evidence in support of it." That he thought it opposed to science and scientific knowledge his own works prove. Take the want of evidence by itself. Nobody knows, for instance, who were the authors of the Gospels, nor when or where those books were written. Their contents, supernatural and otherwise, have not received the slightest corroboration worthy of the name. Such flimsy evidence as this would not be accepted by any "profane" historian, and a scientist would treat it with contempt. "I do not know any body of scientific men," says Huxley (oh! that we had more such lofty minds and courageous hearts!), "who could be got to listen without the strongest expressions of disgusted repudiation to the exposition of a pretended scientific discovery, which had no better evidence to show for itself than the story of the devils entering a herd of swine, or of the fig tree that was blasted for bearing no figs when 'it was not the season of figs'.....scientific ethics can and does declare that the profession of belief in such events, on the evidence of documents of unknown date and of unknown authorship, is immoral." Then what evidence is there that such a person as Abraham ever existed? or Moses? or Pharaoh? It is rather significant that there has never yet been found in any part of Egypt a single monument alluding to a Pharaoh or any of the ten plagues. No objection can be brought against this method of criticism, for there is no adequate reason whatsoever to induce us to criticise the Bible in any different spirit to that in which we criticise historical or scientific matters. "Everything rests upon evidence" has been the watchword of some of the noblest and greatest British intellects of the century—Mill, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, etc.—who, in their herculean researches after truth, have been compelled to reject the old superstitions.

It is extremely doubtful whether a single disbeliever in the various "faiths" will feel any shock whatsoever in this latest discovery in electrical science; on the contrary, none will welcome it more sincerely. It has never been the heterodox who have feared the march of knowledge. As Ernest Haeckel says, "the enormous daily progress of natural science is irresistibly destroying the roots of all Church dogmas"; and as the wonderful possibilities of nature become greater and greater in the eyes of science, so also does its antagonism towards revealed religion become more and more uncompromising. It is the method of nature which science has to disclose, and it is the application of science alone by which we can hope for further light.

CHARLES STIRRUP.

Jehovah to Moses.

From an eternity of idleness
I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
From nothing; rested, and created man:
I placed him in a paradise, and there
Planted the tree of evil, so that he
Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
All misery to my fame. The race of men,
Chosen to my honor, with impunity
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
Until, with harden'd feet, their conquering troops
Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,
And make my name be dreaded through the land.
Yet ever-burning flame and ceaseless woe
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong—even all
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
(Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.

—P. B. Shelley.

MEMOIR OF THOMAS COOPER, M.D.

As eminently deserving of your space, permit me to present your readers with this sketch of a sturdy, independent, and notable character, all of which qualities seem well borne out in the likeness I have seen of him—a fine, benevolent face and noble head. The following memoir is remarkable in that it is a generous and graceful, if at times halting, testimony to an avowed Freethinker—an Atheist possibly—by a most pious, orthodox Christian. And in the circumstance it is needless to observe how honorable to the latter. In adapting the rather prolix article for your columns, I have omitted considerable of less concern, but have been careful to retain just enough to indicate the character and the prejudices of the then environments, and the author's point of view. *The History of the South Carolina College, from its Incorporation, December 19, 1801, to 1857*, containing this memoir, was written and first published by Professor Maximilian La Borde, M.D. (born June 3, 1804) of that institution, in 1857—just eighteen years after Dr. Cooper's death. The College is the leading State quasi-secular educational institution situated in Columbia, the capital of the State. It is still hampered in its possibilities for the best work by the same conservative influences—the pressure of churchly surveillance and the consuming jealousy of the denominational colleges. Almost applicable to-day is one of Dr. La Borde's apostrophes, p. 132: "All hail to the year 1824! It was a year of quiet. [They had had some students' troubles].....It is wanting very much in events. There are no stirring incidents.....It is a smooth sea without gale enough to disturb the surface. Prayers and recitations, and recitations and prayers, and the weekly examination of the monitor's bills—these make up pretty much the year's history." I may note further as significant that as late as April 15, last, the college library having for years halted at its 30,000 volumes, the news is telegraphed that "President Woodrow has just bought 200 books for library.....over one-half consists of essays on literature by best English authors. But every class is represented, *except perhaps science*; there is a little of latest humor, latest fiction, essays, criticism." How these orthodox, who avow they "have the truth," fear science, the truth-teller! Rev. Dr. Woodrow is the celebrated "Christian evolutionist" mentioned on pp. 84 and 316 of vol. i. of Dr. White's *Warfare of Science with Theology*. Connected with the College off and on since 1857, its president last four years, he now retires, a Professor Woodward of the faculty succeeding. In view of the notoriety Dr. Woodrow at one time achieved, it might not be amiss to close these introductory remarks with a citation from his recent and final baccalaureate sermon, preached, as was his custom, to the graduating class, on "The Word of God." I give this up to-date, profound gem! As for those who would claim the Bible *contains* the Word of God, he will have none of it, as that would involve vulgar reason, a poor authority. "On the other hand, I say that the Bible is God's word, meaning thereby that every word and syllable in the Bible, as first written, from beginning to end, comes from God, as is asserted and claimed in the extracts from it which I read you, and, therefore, is absolutely true; and that the office of reason is not to sit in judgment upon what is found there, but solely to seek to learn what is the true meaning of every part. And, further, that the Church is equally powerless with reason to decide that anything found in the Bible is no part of the word of God. [Italics mine].....The Supreme Judge.....in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." It should also be of interest—and particularly to Dr. White—to know, as the orating "scientist" asserted in concluding: "I have now done what I could to set forth what I believe, and for more than fifty years believed, to be the true doctrine respecting the Bible, and what I have been publicly teaching for more than fifty years.....All parts of this doctrine trend towards the one point—the setting forth of the Word itself, under the guidance and enlightening power of the Holy Ghost." This in a secular college that a Dr. Cooper once presided over!

I will trespass no further on your kind patience, and now give Dr. La Borde's memoir of Dr. Cooper.

Charleston, S.C., July 11.

LOUIS LEVINE.

MEMOIR.

I propose to present Dr. Cooper more distinctly to my readers. To this notice he is eminently entitled, and I shall endeavor to bring to the discussion a spirit of entire candor and impartiality.

He was born in London, England, October 22, 1759. He was educated at Oxford. Having taken a position in reference to French politics, and published a pamphlet in reply to Burke, he left England under a threat of prosecution, and took up his residence in Northumberland, Pennsylvania [U.S.A.], where he met his friend Dr. Priestley. Upon his arrival among us, he found the country in a state of high political excitement, and, taking part in it, he was tried for

a libel under the sedition law, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of four hundred dollars. In 1806 he was appointed one of the judges of the Pennsylvania Common Pleas Districts, from which office he was removed by Governor Snyder in 1811, at the request of the Legislature. He held successively the Professorship of Chemistry at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa., and of Chemistry and Mineralogy in the University of Pennsylvania. December 13, 1819, he was elected to fill for one year the Chair of Chemistry in the South Carolina College, made vacant by the death of Professor Smith. On December 15, 1820, he was elected President *pro tempore*, and December 1, 1821, was permanently elected. December 3, 1834, his resignation was requested, and he was disconnected with the College. His last days were spent in editing and publishing *The Statutes of the State*—a labor which was assigned him by the General Assembly. He died at Columbia, May 11, 1839.....No man of his time was more generally known to the people of the State. Of an eager, restless spirit, always anxious to take part in everything of moment which was passing around him; of resolute and determined cast of character, with great vigor of understanding, combined with varied learning, it was impossible that such a man should not be known to his contemporaries, and leave behind him fixed and positive impressions.....What is the peculiar nature of his genius? I will be understood when I say that his understanding was strong and vigorous. He had great acuteness, and his perceptions were clear and well defined. He had wonderful facility in taking hold of the thoughts of others and appropriating them to his own purposes. His mind had great activity, was always on the search, and nothing of value which was thrown out by others escaped him. But it was not blind obedience; he subjected it to the crucible of his own reason, to the test of personal experiment. He had in largest measure the element of independence, and in the end his opinions were his own. It is true that on many subjects he differed from those around him, and that he entertained opinions entirely opposed to the settled convictions of the community where his lot was cast.....He had a marvellous capacity, and his enthusiasm in the cause of learning knew no bounds..... His genius was eminently practical—*utilitarian*. He looked upon man very much as an animal, and believed that the framework of society was designed to provide for his physical wants and necessities. As in man he saw nothing but the animal, so in the objects of knowledge he saw nothing but external nature; of man in his higher nature, as a being of immortal powers, with aspirations reaching into a never-ending futurity, he had no just conception. For those pursuits, then, which are not immediately connected with the bodily wants he had no taste. On the contrary, he denied to them all claim to attention. He thought that all time devoted to them was just so much thrown away. His mind was objective. For metaphysical and ethical investigations he had a perfect contempt. In his report to the Board of Trustees (April, 1823) he remarks, in reference to a proposition made at a previous meeting, that he should teach metaphysics, "that he professes himself qualified and competent to teach metaphysics, having devoted much more time to that very unsatisfactory study than most men; so much so as to be fully persuaded that it is not worth the time required to be bestowed upon it." He proposes to substitute a course of political economy for it. It is a matter of history that a committee was appointed, at his suggestion, to report on the propriety of abolishing the study altogether. And so, likewise, he had no sympathy in ethical inquiries. He estimated everything by its temporal value.....His mind was defective in the genuine philosophic element; he was no great generalizer. He abounded in facts, and the use which he made of them proved that he was an acute rather than a great thinker. Compared with his friend Priestley, I would remark that they were very similar, though Cooper was decidedly inferior. The name of one is linked for ever with the science of chemistry, while the other has left nothing behind him.

That his acquirements were varied and extensive cannot be questioned. His mind had ranged pretty well over the broad surface of thought and knowledge, and had gathered something at every step.....He was a great reader, had a fine memory, and forgot little that was worth remembering. He was not entirely ignorant of anything which might become the topic of discussion in the circle of educated gentlemen. He was a man of information, rather than of learning.....There is, no doubt, force in the remark that he may have failed in reaching the highest excellence in any one department of knowledge, because his attention was divided among so many. This is certainly fatal to success with most minds.....Priestley and Franklin, more kindred spirits, have, in the midst of most distracted pursuits, secured immortality. Dr. Cooper's largest attainments were in chemistry and the cognate sciences, law, medicine, and political philosophy. His principal publications are: a *Translation of the Institutes of Justinian*, his *Translation of Broussais*, his *Medical Jurisprudence*, *The Emporium of Arts and Sciences*, and his *Lectures on the*

Elements of Political Economy. Besides these, I may mention his elaborate *Essay on the Pentateuch*, and any number of pamphlets, religious and political.....His *Essay on the Pentateuch* has long since had the flimsy veil of its false learning and inconclusive reasoning torn from it, and stands exposed in all its deformity [this naive statement may be read with a smile to-day].....His contributions to the *Southern Review* are worthy of mention; and as they exhibit him to great advantage, I give the articles by name: in 1st vol., Principles on Agriculture, Gall on the Functions of the Brain, Begin's Therapeutics; in 3rd vol., Higgin's Celtic Druids, Modern Gastronomy; in 4th vol., Higgin's Celtic Druids; in 5th, Bentham on Judicial Evidence; in 6th, Agrarian and Education Systems, Geology and Pentateuch, Social Life of England and France; in 7th, Operations of Poisons; in 8th, United States Bank, Distribution of Wealth.

(To be concluded.)

SABBATH LOVE-SONGS.

(Before Mr. Justice COLLINS.)

In the case of Williams v. Wright, Mr. Jeffreys Williams sued Mr. George Edward Wright, printer and publisher of the *Times*, to recover a penalty of £50 for an alleged offence under the Lord's Day Observance Act. Defendant denied the alleged offence.

The plaintiff appeared in person, while Mr. C. A. Russell, Q.C., and Mr. Bankes represented the defendant.

The plaintiff, who refused to be sworn, on the ground that he had no religious belief, said, before he gave his evidence, he wished to state that he did not approve of the Act under which he was suing, because he was in favor of the utmost liberty being enjoyed by everyone, and agreed that halls should be open on Sundays for lectures and other purposes. Having affirmed, he gave evidence to the effect that on Saturday, March 20, he saw an advertisement in the *Times* that a concert would be given on the following evening at the Queen's Hall. On Sunday evening he went to the Queen's Hall and purchased a ticket for the concert at the box-office, for which he paid a shilling. By means of this ticket he entered the hall and listened to a portion of the concert. He heard a humorous love-song which made him laugh. It seemed to him to be an ordinary entertainment, similar to those which were given on week-days, and therefore it came within the Lord's Day Observance Act. Under Section 3 of that Act the defendant was liable to a penalty of £50 for having published an advertisement relating to the entertainment.

Mr. Russell, on behalf of the defendant, submitted that the concert was not an entertainment or amusement within the meaning of the statute, and that, as the statute was a penal one, the plaintiff must show that the defendant had a guilty mind.

Dr. Parry gave evidence to the effect that the compositions specified in the advertisement were free from any possible accusation of levity, or of exercising any influence on the hearer other than that which was wholesome and elevating. Similar works were performed in the musical festivals at the great cathedrals. In cross-examination, witness said that the compositions were known conventionally as secular.

Mr. G. E. Wright, the defendant, stated that he had no control over the advertisements which appeared in the *Times*.

Mr. Justice Collins held that the plaintiff had failed to prove that there were no free seats at the concert, and gave judgment for the defendant, with costs.

—*Daily Telegraph*, July 29.

Clear Thought Necessary.

Clear thinking is quite as important as correct living; and the man who helps to make men think aright thereby helps to advance not only intellectual, but moral progress, and to augment the sum of human happiness. He, on the contrary, however unexceptionable his conduct and pure his motives, who helps to befog, mystify, and confuse the minds of men by his shallow, dreamy thought, is quite as much the enemy of moral as of intellectual advancement. Slovenliness in thought is certain, in the long run, to result in slovenliness in morals. Thought cannot be divorced from conduct, even though the thought, true or erroneous, of one generation shows itself most conspicuously in the conduct of succeeding generations. A teacher of error may be sincere; but his sincerity in no way severs the connection between cause and effect, and therefore in no way diminishes the results of the error. Indeed, intellectual error is dangerous and harmful in proportion to the sincerity of its adherents, upon which its growth depends.—*B. F. Underwood*.

WHEN?

WHEN have Infidels founded Inquisitions to torture men into belief?

When has Infidelity afflicted mankind with twelve centuries of woe, most fitly described as "The Dark Ages"?

When has Infidelity carried on religious wars like the "Crusades"?

When has Infidelity slaughtered fifty million people as Mother Church has?

When have Infidels murdered the teachers of our race, as Christianity did Hypatia, Bruno, Vanini, Servetus, and many others?

When have Infidels vented their spite upon the dead by digging up and burning their bodies?

When have Infidels begun, on St. Bartholomew's Day, and massacred seventy thousand of their fellow-men in one week?

When have Infidels persecuted the Jews?

When have Infidels sold "Indulgences"?

When have Infidels set up the worship of bones, hairs, and rusty nails, "wood for the true cross," and other relics?

When have Infidels decried the use of anaesthetics in obstetrical cases as "an impious attempt to escape the curse" denounced against all women in Genesis iii. 16?

When have Infidels burned holes in Quakers' tongues, and dragged old, bedridden women from their couches, and hung them, as witches, on the evidence of little children?

When have Infidels opposed comforts and refinements, such as the introduction of stoves, carpets, chandeliers, violins, and organs in churches?

When has any Freethinker ever characterized fire, marine, and life insurance, and the setting up of lightning rods, as "challenges to God Almighty"?—*Torch of Reason*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A SIGNAL ANSWER TO PRAYER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the Free Library of Newington (South London) is a volume called *Present Day Tracts*, published by the Religious Tract Society. One of the Tracts is on the efficacy of prayer. In the preface to the volume appears the following pious supplication: "May God abundantly bless this volume, and cause it to fulfil in some measure its great purpose." God has, indeed, abundantly blessed the volume, so far as this Library is concerned; for, though the book has appeared in the catalogue for three years past, not a single individual has sought to borrow it until the other day. And then it was asked for by the undersigned, who has since found in its contents abundant confirmation of his Freethinking views. On the other hand, Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*—not commended to the blessing of God—seems to have been in demand. X.

PROFANE JOKES.

It was a church gathering, and they had met to say farewell to a missionary and his wife. A layman was asked to pray, and he began in this wise: "O Lord, who carest both for man and beast, take care, we beseech thee, of our dear brother and his wife."

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

Bobby—"Maw, I read of a man to-day who was one hundred and seventy years old." Mother—"Oh, what a lie!" Bobby—"Well, mamma, it was in the Bible."

Elsie was greatly perturbed by the discovery that her brothers had set traps to catch birds. Questioned as to what she had done in the matter, she replied: "I prayed that the traps might not catch the birds." "Anything else?" "Yes," she said; "I then prayed that God would prevent the birds getting into the traps, and"—as if to illustrate the doctrine of faith and works—"I went and kicked the traps all to pieces."

So far as our daily life and conduct are concerned, Christianity is an extinct creed, even its own priests assuming tacitly that as a religion for daily use it is preposterous and impossible. With the words of Jesus Christ for ever in our mouths, we go about the world protesting, by the sign of the Sword, that the Cross is only a figure of speech, or, to put it more correctly, a sword-handle.—*Robert Buchanan*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30. G. W. Foote, "Who Was Moses?"
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (86 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, Stanley Jones, "Philosophers in Parliament."
EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End road): 8, E. Pack.
WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. 881 Harrow-road, Paddington: August 9, at 9, Business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): 3.15 and 7, H. P. Ward.
EDMONTON (Angel road): 7, C. Cohen.
FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand)—Finsbury Park Branch: 8.15, R. Rosetti, "Is the Bible the Word of God?"
HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S.W.R. station): 7, R. P. Edwards, "Did the Christ of the Gospels Exist?"
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 8.30, J. Fagan.
ISLINGTON (Highbury Fields, Highbury Corner): 11.30, A lecture.
KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, J. Fagan.
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, W. Heaford.
LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon lane): 11.30, O. Cohen. August 10, at 8.30, H. P. Ward.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, H. P. Ward; 7, E. Pack. August 11, at 8.30, O. Cohen. 12, at 8, Mr. Westacott.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 8.15, O. Cohen.
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Philosophers in Parliament."

COUNTRY.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY-SCHOOL (Pole-lane): C. Watts—2.30. "The Drawbacks of Christianity"; 6.30, "Sin and Secular Salvation."
PONTYPRIDD (23 Middle-street, Trallwn): Meetings every Sunday evening. Discussion invited.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and friends meet at 1.30, corner of Arundel and Norfolk-streets, and will leave at 1.45 for Wharncliffe side—Mr. Ewing's. Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7.30, Business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): S. R. Thompson—11, "Whence and Whither?" 8, "A Few of God's Favorites"; 6.30, "Why I am an Atheist."

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—August 8, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 8, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. 23, 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, 850 Old Ford-road, London, E.—September 5, Limehouse.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—August 8, m., Limehouse; e., Peckham Rye. 15, m., Clerkenwell Green; e., Bradlaugh Club. 22, m., Mile End Waste; a., Harrow-road. 29, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye.

E. PACK, 90 Camden-street, N.W.—August 15, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. 22, Limehouse. 29, m., Mile End. September 5, e., Clerkenwell Green. 13, m., Kingsland. 19, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. 26, m., Mile End; a., Finsbury Park. October 17, m., Camberwell.

POSITIVISM.

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

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

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

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