

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ARE WE DYING?

THE attitude of the ordinary press towards Secularism is wonderful; or rather it would be wonderful if we did not understand the commercial principles which decide the policy of ninety-nine out of every hundred newspapers. One would think that the first business of a newspaper is to give news, and it appears to be so in America. But in England the news is very carefully selected. It is an understood thing that causes and movements which the general party public dislike, and which are anathema to the general body of advertisers, must be steadily tabooed. Not so much as a hint must appear of their very existence, unless occasionally when it happens to be possible to misrepresent or malign them, or when it happens that they command a certain number of votes which it is necessary to capture or conciliate. A Christian meeting, for instance, being a "respectable" gathering, will receive notice if it only numbers two or three dozen; while a Secularist meeting, being otherwise, will be passed over in silence though it numbers hundreds. For a long time the late Charles Bradlaugh was a victim of this boycott. And it took a curious and ridiculous form when his parliamentary struggle made him the cynosure of all eyes. He would sometimes deliver three lectures, one political and two anti-theological, or the reverse, as the case might be; and the press would report his political oration, and say absolutely nothing about the anti-theological ones, or merely say "Mr. Bradlaugh lectured again in the evening on" whatever was his subject.

Bradlaugh's atheism was a distinctive element of his intellectual life and his public advocacy, yet when he became famous the Liberal press treated it as only his private hobby, which was to be tolerated, but as far as possible ignored; while the Tory press, on the other hand, made it the occasion of misrepresentation and calumny.

Ever since Bradlaugh's death the press, both Liberal and Conservative, has pursued its old policy of the taboo, and tempered with occasional sneers and falsehoods. Scarcely anything our party does is reported. When we ran Mr. Watts for the School Board in Finsbury, for instance, most of the newspapers treated him as non-existent. The policy of imprisonment being played out, the alternative policy is one of ostracism. This is quite consistent, however, with well-timed detraction. Accordingly, we find paragraphs going the round from time to time, hinting or even stating that the Secularism which has been so studiously ignored is actually defunct, or in the last stage of dissolution. One such paragraph is the following, which we clip from an Edinburgh journal:—

"The National Secular Society, which made some noise in the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh's time, and of which Mrs. Annie Besant was a star, is fading out of existence. The N. S. S. could command at its prime the support of many thousands in London, and through-

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out the provinces, and attained, apart from its irreligious propaganda, some force in local politics. Now the Society has no meeting-place in London of any note; its provincial branches are few and weak."

Now we are used to this sort of thing. It will not spoil our appetite or disturb our sleep. Secularism is not to be overthrown with straws. How many times have we heard of its death! It dies to-day, and again to-morrow, and again the next day. But no one ever sees its funeral.

In this particular instance the press is misled, if indeed it is misled, by a handful of sterile malcontents, capable for a moment of a little mischief, but quite incapable of any constructive effort. They are utterly careless what they say or do as long as it is calculated to injure the National Secular Society. Let us see, however, what there is in this inspired paragraph.

The first trick is to compare the state of the National Secular Society in a time of quiet with its state in a time of intense persecution. Bradlaugh fought year after year, and the Society itself, apart from his position and personality, was never very flourishing. He attributed this to the disabling effect of the Blasphemy Laws, which rob Secularism of the legal rights of property and endowment which are enjoyed by Christianity. During his parliamentary struggle the Society grew in strength and numbers, and this progressive movement reached its climax during the present writer's imprisonment for "blasphemy" in 1883. The persecution was a splendid advertisement; it also rallied to the Secular standard a multitude of those who, while still Freethinkers, were indifferent for want of excitement, or had engaged themselves in political and social movements. This tremendous enthusiasm was bound to be followed by some reaction. In any case the Society was bound to return to its normal condition. A few years of quiet life told their tale, and when Bradlaugh resigned the presidency, less than a year before his death, everything connected with the movement had suffered. Even the circulation of his paper, the *National Reformer*, was not half what it was six years before, during the acme of excitement.

While that persecution and excitement lasted, people saw Bradlaugh's meetings, and meetings against the Blasphemy Laws, and they often imagined that the National Secular Society was a formidable organization. And so it was in a sense, for it included a number of stalwart Freethinkers who spared neither time, energy, nor money in resisting bigotry; and the same thing would occur again if the occasion arose. But it was not a formidable organization in any other sense. Its income was never large; in fact, grumblers often said that most of it was spent on the secretary's salary. Nor had the Society an office. Letters used to be addressed to the secretary's residence; and when Mr. Forder became a publisher, they were addressed to his place of business.

Bradlaugh was a giant, and the Society in his time was little else than a reflection of his great personality. His

was not really interested in it as an independent organization. He was a fighter, he lived in a time of deadly combat, and neither his nature nor the circumstances were favorable to the building-up of a strong self-governing party. That is a labor of time, of many hands, of many minds, and many energies.

It is not true that the Society has suffered by Bradlaugh's death in the way that is now suggested. It has lost a leader of immense personal power and popularity; but we are not aware that anyone is responsible for that accident, not even his successor in the presidency. There is really no use in continually saying that Bradlaugh is dead. We regret it as profoundly as the perpetual lamentators, but we keep on with the work, in company with our gallant colleagues, who know what it is to serve an unpopular and unprofitable cause. The Society's income has not diminished since Bradlaugh left it. It is larger than it was the day after his resignation. We have a respectable office in the Strand, and our secretary is paid a fair salary. It is said that we have lost the Hall of Science. But we never had it. Bradlaugh used it on Sundays and some other occasions, paying rent like any other occupant. He did not leave us a property in a single brick in the building. We tried to purchase it, and we failed, and it passed out of the old lessee's hands. But we have other meeting-places, in the West-end, at Camberwell, and at Ball's Pond. It is simply a lie that we only meet in the streets.

Our journals are as numerous and flourishing as ever. The press ignores the *Freethinker*, but it still subsists. We have many good men in the lecture field, and wherever Branches work with energy and harmony there are large audiences and an improving membership. Let those who growl and grumble see if they can beat our performance. That is a far harder task than irresponsible criticism. It may be added that our new Treasurer's Scheme promises in time to be a thorough success, and that we shall probably have very shortly a security for our property under a legal incorporation. And the moral is—Let us get on with our work.

G. W. FOOTE.

INTELLECTUAL EVOLUTION.*

DR. CROZIER, the author of a thoughtful book on *Civilization and Progress*, has followed up that work by an attempt to apply its principles to the history of intellectual development. He may, perhaps, be described as a Rationalist with a Platonic bent. That, at any rate, is the impression given by his first volume. He passes in review the labors of his predecessors, Hegel, Comte, Buckle, and Spencer, in attempting a philosophy of history, and holds that only within our own times have the labors of the higher critics brought together a body of historical facts sufficient to justify the endeavor to reduce them to fixed and scientific laws. This may be sufficient as against the first three, but I confess that it seems to me that both Comte and Spencer go deeper than Dr. Crozier, in that they take us down to the savage basis which underlies the higher reaches of thought, with which only he is concerned. Dr. Crozier may say that these alone are of importance to us. He remarks, indeed:—

"The larger part of Spencer's work is taken up with exhibiting in detail the great fact that, just as in the world of nebulae and stars, in the solar system, in the crust of the earth, and in the animals and plants on it, so, too, in the intellectual and moral worlds, every new ideal of morality that is dropped like a seed into the world will, like a seed, pass gradually from its first vague and indeterminate condition into a highly complex and involved one; will split itself, as it were, into endless differentiations, and into ever and ever greater complexity and variety of form, whether that germ be a religious precept, a principle of morality, a new style of painting or architecture. This fact of endless differentiation, however, although a truth of prime importance in its bearings on our conception of the universe as a whole, is barren and useless for the more limited purpose to which the author of this book aims to put it; as the sky, although spanning the world and being the abode of the gods, is useless to protect the homes of men from the wind and rain."

* *History of Intellectual Development on the Lines of Modern Evolution.* By John Beattie Crozier. Vol. i. (Longmans.) 523 pp.; 14s.

What, then, does Dr. Crozier offer us? It is an evolutionary deity in new shape—a divine idea working, not as man works by good for good, but through evil to good, exhibiting, as our author says, "a steady tendency to the production of higher and higher moral and social relations among men; a tendency apparently never lost sight of for a single moment, and now visible everywhere to us, athwart all the impediments, the immorality, the stupidity, the delusions, and even the frauds by which, in actual history, it was worked out." God, it seems, is a supreme Jesuit, ever dabbling in falsehood, fraud, and all kinds of evil, yet ever justified by the result. Nay, the result is so pleasing to Dr. Crozier that he seems almost in love with the process. Judas and Pontius Pilate were as necessary to the Christian scheme of salvation as Jesus and his apostles, but the world has not hitherto given them equal credit. Paul says that the heathen gods were devils, but, according to Dr. Crozier, all supernaturalisms were equally suited to those who held them at the time, and all individuals that ever lived were but unconscious instruments to the one great end of morality, and the elevation and expansion of the human spirit.

Dr. Crozier starts with Greek philosophy. Thales and his theory, according to our author, were to lead up to Plato and Aristotle, and these, through neo-Platonism, to Christianity. We then have an *excursus* on the evolution of Hindoo thought, Vedantism, and Buddhism, with a chapter on "Modern Theosophy," whose ancient pretences Dr. Crozier considers very seriously. One sentence is worth quoting at length. It ends by saying that "Theosophy, like some opossum among the higher mammalia, is the sole representative, in the Western world, of a type and mode of thought which attained its culmination in the East some two thousand years ago, but which, cut off since then from European influences, has remained stagnant, while European thought has steadily gone on evolving into higher and higher forms."

Coming back to the question of Paganism and Christianity, with which Dr. Crozier next deals, our author seems to me to regard too much the worst aspect of the former, and the best of the latter. At any rate, I would recommend the perusal of Mr. J. A. Farrer's *Paganism and Christianity* as an offset to his theories. Dr. Crozier goes into the question of the evolution of Christianity, and here I must follow him; but, before doing so, I at once express my opinion on his general thesis. Let it be granted that the religions of the past have subserved some useful purposes. All that we are now is the result of all the past, and, so far as the present is approved, that past may be defensible. But might not things have been very much better than they are but for much in that past? Dr. Crozier can fall back on the assumption that all things were necessary simply because they were. Anyway, I have no admiration for a father who can only train his child by offering it illusive hopes, and frightening it with bogies; and retain no reverence for a God who uses alike Judas and Jesus, Borgia and Bruno, for purposes whose ultimate issues we can never know. Falsehood and fraud may have served some purpose, but, once seen to be false and fraudulent, they cannot be countenanced by those who regard intellectual integrity. Christianity, however adapted to a race of slaves, is not true. Its alleged miracles did not happen. Its scheme of salvation, through the blood of an innocent person, is false and pernicious. Its God and its devil, its heaven and hell, are alike imaginary. It has outlived any possible usefulness. Christianity, like the *os coccygis*, has ceased to serve any vital purpose, and is but a reminder of the superstitions of the past. The majority of educated persons have outgrown its real teachings. It is a bogie presented by interested and insincere persons, who have ceased to believe in it themselves, but who force it, at the public expense, on the plastic minds of little children, and find their warrant in the advocacy, by Dr. Crozier and other Rationalists, of its past utility. Freethinkers, too, have their work, no whit less important than that of the teachers of the old supernaturalisms.

Yea, the yeast of evolution works, as hitherto, for ever;
Far are now the wallowing dragons in their slime;
Ah, but farther, further, further is the long, long way before us,
And now visions wait revelation down the thoroughfare of time.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

CHRIST-LIKE FALLACIES.

(Concluded from page 675.)

CHRIST'S fallacy in considering himself "The Light of the World" has been shared by most of those who profess to follow him. Hence, despite the fact that, according to the New Testament, he was subject to all the usual weaknesses and passions that belong to ordinary human beings, he has been extolled as the very essence of perfection, as one presenting to the world the best possible example, and as having established a system which introduced into the world the highest morality. Further, it is said that his teachings have been the cause of the progress of modern society. I have just been reading the report of a special sermon delivered so far back as Christmas Day, 1872, in the Temple Church, London, by the Rev. Dr. Vaughan, from the text: "The Book of the Generation of Christ." During the sermon the rev. gentleman said that without Christ "there would have been no Christendom, no modern Europe, no emancipation for the slave, no dignity for woman, no elevation of humanity into the virtue of unselfishness, into a duty of philanthropy. Then there would have been no birth of philanthropy as the mother of beneficence, no charity kindled at Christ's altar, to be the light of suffering, struggling, down-trodden humanity. Civilization itself would have been impeded, and theology would have been still the prerogative of the Jew and the synonym of all narrowness, exclusiveness, bigotry, and self-righteousness."

Similar extravagant language as this has been uttered by many Christian exponents since Dr. Vaughan thus spoke. In my recent debates the same wild statements were made, and the same preposterous notions were propounded by my opponents. Greater fallacies in connection with Christ it would be difficult to indulge in. It is marvellous how theological theories prevent adherents from recognising the true nature of historical facts. Is it true that without the advent of Christ the world would have been a moral and intellectual blank? If so, how, in the first place, do Christians account for the philosophy, philanthropy, and high-toned morality that were the pride of ancient times? As J. Toulmin Smith observes in his *Progress of Philosophy*: "The man who can read the writings, study and consider the opinions, the reflections, and the sentiments of a Plato or a Cicero, without beholding with amazement and with rapture the excelling powers of mind, the varied and the happy illustrations, the unbounded flow of thought which are discovered and displayed in the perusal of their pages, must indeed be indifferent—callous—dead to all that is beautiful, to all that is sublime, to all that is magnificent in conception and delineation" (p. 11). What better ethical gems can be selected from the New Testament than the following, which we take from Rhys David's *Buddhism*? "Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred—hatred ceases by love; this is always its nature." "One may conquer a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor." "As the rain breaks in on an ill-thatched hut, so passion breaks in on the untrained mind." "Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, It cannot overtake me." "As long as sin bears no fruit, the fool thinks it honey; but when the sin ripens, then indeed he goes down in sorrow." "Let us live happily, not hating those who hate us." "Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good,.....the stingy by a gift, the liar by truth." "Let a man speak the truth; let him not yield to anger" (pp. 128 and 131). With Buddha, be it remembered, ethical teachings were not merely empty words; they enforced practical, personal improvement. Even the Rev. Dr. Caird admits this when he says: "Now, it is the singular merit of Buddhism, whatever view we take of the ultimate end to which it pointed as constituting the salvation of man, that the way by which it taught men to reach that end was simply that of inward purification and moral goodness" (*The Faiths of the World*, p. 52). These are only a few samples of the grand, moral, and sublime practical teachings which were propounded long before the period when Christ is said to have lived, and they show the utter fallacy of the claim that the world is indebted to him for the ethics by which our lives should be regulated. Can anything be produced from the alleged teachings of Jesus better calculated to regulate human conduct than what has been here cited from men who lived prior to the Christian era? If so, let it be named]

In the second place, if Christ's presence were the principal cause of human progress, is it not a severe reproach upon the conduct of the Christian Deity that he should have kept from the world the power to elevate humanity until about two thousand years ago, and then to have sent it in the person of one who, up to the present moment, has not made himself or his principles known to more than one-third of the human race? If a knowledge of Christ be requisite to human redemption, the great majority of mankind are still unredeemed. Such a supposition, however, is only a dream of the religious enthusiasts. Modern improvements cannot be traced to any one man or any one system; they are rather the result of efforts of many men who lived in different periods, each striving in his day to improve upon the labors of his predecessor. The improved condition of the sciences of astronomy, geology, and physiology; the steam engine, etc., show how progress has gone on since the men whose names are associated with their discoveries first propounded their theories. And so with theology and ethics; the systems taught by Christ and his apostles have given way to professions which are thought more compatible with present requirements. Indications, indeed, are not wanting that what is termed the Christian religion will ultimately be replaced by one of a less dogmatic nature. Moreover, if the influence of Christ has been so potent as an incentive to progress, how has it happened that believers in Christianity have been persistent opponents to social and political advancement? Washington Wilks, in his *History of the Half Century*, from 1800 to 1850, says: "We have seen religion as embodied in a Protestant establishment resisting the concession of civil rights to four millions of British subjects, till statesmen and soldiers could see no alternative but concession or the horrors of civil war; resisting the removal of degrading disabilities from the members of communities similar in faith to their oppressors, until the growth of political liberty wrested away the power of vengeance and tyranny; resisting the concession of political enfranchisement to the demands of an unanimous and indignant nation; resisting, in short, whatever was obnoxious to the ruling powers, so long as it was obnoxious; active only in defence of its own outrageous privileges and noisome corruptions. We have seen in Dissenting sects, it may be, something of a similar spirit" (p. 34).

Further, in the New Testament there is much said against secular reform, and no system is propounded for securing the general temporal advancement of the people. For instance, nothing is stated in denunciation of slavery, in condemnation of poverty—two of the greatest obstacles to the enjoyment of mankind. Neither are there any adequate plans laid down in the book to secure political rights, a system of education, or the elevation and proper position of woman. Christ certainly showed but little respect to his own mother, and St. Paul enjoins absolute obedience upon the part of a wife to her husband in all things. As to regard for the sick, and the exercise of general benevolence, Max Müller and others have shown that these virtues were largely exercised in Greece and Rome long before Christianity appeared. We seldom hear now the fallacy urged that hospitals originated with the Christian faith. And so recently as October 11 the *Birmingham Post* reports a speech by the Bishop of Hereford, in which he said "that it was humiliating to find in the most Christian country in the world, and after so many centuries of Christian teaching, so little done to preserve children from those evil influences against which even the heathen philosophers, long before the Christian era, warned them." In the *New Age* of October 7 appears a report of an interview with the Rev. Mr. Douglas Morrison upon "The Increase of Serious Crime." The rev. gentleman, who is an acknowledged authority on the subject, says: "Our English law permits greater severity to be used on prisoners than could be exercised in Russian prisons." This is a telling comment upon the practical influence of Christ's advice, to be merciful, to "love your enemies," and to "forgive your brother seventy-times seven." The truth is, as Lecky points out, the spirit that prompts mercy and a just exercise of humanity, "in which some have imagined that they have discovered the influence of Christianity, was, in fact, simply an echo of the teaching of ancient Greece, and especially of Zeno, the founder of the sect who had laid down, long before the dawn of Christianity, the broad principle that all men

are by nature equal, and that virtue alone establishes a difference between them" (*History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 325).

CHARLES WATTS.

THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

XI.—THE MIRACLES OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

THERE is one matter in which the Fourth Gospel differs from the Synoptics: this is, that the former is, for the most part, an independent account of the life of Christ; but, as a consequence of this independence, this Gospel contains a large number of sayings and doings, ascribed to Jesus, which appear to have been altogether unknown to the other three evangelists. In this Gospel, as has been shown, a new mystical kind of language, not found in the Synoptics, is introduced, of which the subject-matter, style, phraseology, and peculiarities of expression correspond exactly with the "First Epistle of John"—the obvious and only rational inference being that the writer of the Epistle, who was beyond all doubt the author of the Gospel, was himself the author of the sayings which he has placed in the mouth of Jesus.

It is upon the sole and unsupported authority of this veracious writer that we are asked to give credence to the following alleged miraculous performances of Jesus: transforming water into wine, curing instantaneously a nobleman's son, giving sight to a man born blind, healing a cripple, restoring a dead man to life, and causing a wonderful draught of fishes. Those who consider the bare word of this writer to be of sufficient weight to establish the reality of these alleged supernatural occurrences are, of course, free to believe them; but they should, at the same time, bear in mind that this evangelist does not go so far as to say that he actually witnessed these wonders himself. He merely records them for others to believe (xx. 31). There are, further, some remarkable statements made in connection with some of these miracles which it may not be out of place to notice.

In the story of the raising of Lazarus we are told that, after the sisters had sent to Jesus informing him of the illness of their brother, that great teacher remarked: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby" (xi. 3). Then, instead of going to heal the sick man, he remained two days in the same place, after which he said to his disciples: "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe" (xi. 15). Also, when about to call Lazarus from the tomb, he told one of the sisters that she was about to see "the glory of God" (xi. 40). It is clear, then, from these statements that the sickness and death of Lazarus, supposing them to be facts, were arranged in order that Jesus, in restoring him to life, might give an exhibition of his wonderful power, and so bring praise and glory to himself and to God. The deity was to be glorified, not for smiting Lazarus with a deadly distemper and causing him to suffer all the agonies of death, but for raising him up afterwards—the first part of the performance being coolly ignored.

In the case of the nobleman's son, Jesus is represented as curing the lad without seeing him. All he did was to say to the father, "Go thy way; thy son liveth" (iv. 50), and the son was healed in that hour. If we ask why this simple method was not employed in the curing of Lazarus, the answer is that, in the first place, it was not so conducive to "the glory of God"; and, in the next, that a great miracle was needed to strengthen the faith of the disciples. It is true that after the little conjuring feat of turning water into wine—by which, it is said, Jesus "manifested his glory"—it is stated that "his disciples believed on him" (ii. 11); but this faith was a thing of the past, and something more wonderful had to be performed. Hence, Lazarus was condemned to die for the rekindling of the faith of the disciples and for "the glory of God."

We come next to the giving sight to a blind man (ix. 1-7). This miracle is thus recorded:—

"And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.....When he had thus spoken he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and

anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.....He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

One wonders, upon reading this unsavory method of cure, in which of the substances mentioned—the saliva, the road dust, or the water of Siloam—lay the healing virtue. If in none of them, then it was nothing less than idiotic to go through such a farcical performance. With regard to the question, "Who did sin?" it gives us a high opinion of the intelligence of the disciples when we find them asking whether the man himself had sinned before he was born. Christ's reply, however, furnishes us with matter for thought. The man was born blind, he says, in order that "the works of God"—which is but another name for a display of his miraculous power—should be "made manifest" in his cure; that is, the man was doomed to live in darkness from the time of his birth until, say, middle age, in order that Jesus, when he came, might by a miracle give him sight, and in performing this "work of God" bring fresh glory to himself and to "the Father." This sample of the Lord's methods illustrates that deity's statement in Isaiah (lv. 8): "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." It is to be hoped that few men in the present enlightened age would have the heart, if they had the power, to employ the methods which the Fourth evangelist attributes to "the Lord."

Leaving this matter, we come to another of "the works of God"—viz., the miraculous healing of an infirm man (v. 2-9). This is one of the miracles that were written merely to be believed; it is not in the least likely that the writer believed it himself:—

"Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, or Bethsaida, or Bethzetha, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered [waiting for the moving of the water: for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water, whoso then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had]. And a certain man was there which had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."

The words within brackets are omitted in the Revised Version because they are not found in two of the oldest MSS.; but they have to be taken into account all the same, for the reply of the sick man proves them to have formed part of the original narrative. The Revisers would, no doubt, have been glad to have omitted the anecdote altogether; for, if ever a story bore upon its face the impress of falsehood, this story is one. If it were an undoubted historical fact that at certain seasons a real live angel came down from heaven and "troubled" the water of a pool in Jerusalem, and that whoever stepped in first after that was cured of any disease or deformity he had—if this were a historical fact, it would have been known, not only in Palestine, but throughout the civilized world, and people from every province of the Roman empire would have flocked to the holy city to see the heavenly being descend. But, needless to say, no one, except the forger of the Fourth Gospel, appears ever to have heard of such a wonder. We learn from Josephus that there were within Jerusalem a fountain of Siloam and Solomon's pool, and that there were in the palace grounds many porticoes and pillars, with "groves of trees, and long walks through them, with deep canals and cisterns"; but we know of no pool designated Bethesda, or Bethsaida, or Bethzetha—the New Testament MSS. are not agreed even as to the name of this wonderful fount. Possibly the hill Bezetha suggested to the writer a name for his imaginary pool.

Coming back to the Gospel narrative, and the "multitude" of sick, blind, halt, and withered folk who were lying around the pool waiting for the coming of the angel, we notice that Jesus, moved with compassion at the sight of such a number of afflicted persons, graciously decided to work another miracle "for the glory of God." So, singling out one of the sufferers—one cure would be sufficient to

display his power and secure that glory—he healed him, and left all the other unfortunates to their fate. Shortly afterwards, we are told, he found the man he had cured in the temple, “and said unto him: Behold, thou art made whole; *sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee*” (v. 14). Here it becomes evident that Christ believed—or the Gospel writer believed for him, which comes to the same thing—that disease and deformity were sent as a punishment for sins committed by the individuals so afflicted. The man who had been healed was evidently a cripple, for he was unable, unaided, to get into the water. Yet the loss of the use of his limbs is stated to have come upon him by reason of sins he had committed thirty-eight years before. Truly, Jesus was a wise man! He not only believed that dumbness and blindness were sometimes caused by invisible demons (Matthew ix. 33; xii. 22, etc.), but he likewise believed that diseases and infirmities were sent as a punishment for sins committed against God. How any rational person can credit Christ—that is, the fictitious Jesus of the Gospels—with the possession of superhuman wisdom, goodness, and every known virtue, is a matter that passes all understanding.

ABRACADABRA.

COMPARATIVE RELIGION.*

HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

THE section of his *Studies in Comparative Religions* which Major-General Forlong devotes to “Sacred Books of the West” is well worth reprinting separately, for here the results of sceptical criticism are stated in a manner that does not mince matters. Readers of the Preface to the Revised Version of the Bible are aware that “The Received, or, as it is commonly called, the Massoretic Text of the Old Testament Scriptures, has come down to us in manuscripts which are of no very great antiquity, and which all belong to the same family or recension.” There is an immense gap between the dates when the Bible books are alleged to have been composed and that in which they were first known to history—viz., in a Greek version called the Septuagint, and again an immense gap between this period and the oldest extant Hebrew MSS. Hence the importance of an investigation of the Septuagint, which is claimed to be a thousand years older than any known Hebrew text. This Major-General Forlong enters into with the result of showing that what passes as the Septuagint—which, by the way, differs from the Hebrew very considerably—is itself a composite of no real authority, the original having been lost at the burning of the Bruchium Library, B.C. 47; while the Roll of the Temple Standard, said to have been sent to Rome by Josephus, has also disappeared. Our author justly remarks at the outset of his inquiry:—

“The honest histories of Bibles have yet to be written, for ecclesiastics—almost the only writers thereon—have been hitherto bound under vows to strengthen and support these props and foundations of their faith, and to avoid all that seemed to shake or undermine them. Where learned and capable they have, as a rule, shrunk from exposing the weaknesses they have seen, and started with a *a priori* assumption of the infallibility which they had to establish, and thus nullified much historical and exegetical labor.”

But two centuries ago (January 8, 1697) Thomas Aitkenhead, an Edinburgh student, aged only eighteen, was hanged in that city for having spoken of the Old Testament as “Ezra’s Fables.” To-day one of the most learned and distinguished citizens of the “Scotch Athens” shows the justice of Aitkenhead’s epithet, from the tradition of the Jews and Christians themselves, that Ezra wrote by inspiration the books of the law that had been burnt. He does more. He shows that Ezra cannot have compiled the Old Testament until after 398 B.C., and that even this version was lost. The Jerusalem Standard is lost, the true Septuagint has gone, and the Samaritan Roll of the Pentateuch is also late. Our various texts of the Bible, Major-General Forlong affirms, all belong to mediæval times, and come from unknown and dubitable sources. Those trained to believe the nonsense of the Westminster Confession of Faith about “the singular care and Providence of God having kept the Scriptures pure in all ages”

* *Short Studies in the Science of Comparative Religions.* By Major-General J. G. R. Forlong, author of *Rivers of Life*. (London: Quaritch, Piccadilly; 1897.)

should read Major-General Forlong’s account of the known historical vicissitudes through which those Scriptures have passed, by no means unscathed, at the hands of ignorant or designing translators. Says our author:—

“The fountain is impure at its source, and every addition only polluted more and more the troubled waters; assuring us, as an historic fact, that no true Bible was known, or was possible, after our first century.”

He furthermore observes:—

“As to our present printed Hebrew Bible, these are but medleys—growths of the ages, and compilations of unknown value, belonging to our fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, and more immediately based on the editions of Rabbim Hillel, *cir.* 1000, Aaron-ben-Asher, and Jacob-ben-Naphtali of 1030-1040.”

His noteworthy conclusion is as follows:—

“A host of critical scholars now state that no version or text can be accepted as original or authentic; that even the best can only be termed ‘one among many, the least corrupt,’ and most certainly very far from original. Yet do we read, in the Articles and Confessions of Churches which learned men bind themselves by oath to maintain, that ‘the Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments are the Written Word of Almighty God and inspired by him; that the only acceptable way of worship is that herein instituted by him, and there limited by his own words, etc. They forget that all that lives must die; that the universal laws of evolution have here, as elsewhere, operated; and that Bibles, like religion, must go on improving or for ever perish.’”

It will be seen that the important work under review invalidates the claims of Christianity from two sides. It shows that its claim to the exclusive possession of divine truth is false, in the face of the facts known concerning other religions; and it invalidates the claims of its own sacred books by showing how untrustworthy is the evidence of their genuineness and authenticity.

BLASPHEMY.

BLASPHEMY is a word often used by foolish and by wicked people; by fools when they hear a truth they are unable to deny; and by rogues when they wish to protect their own dishonest trade, bolster up some palpable fallacy, or crush some honest and courageous advocate of truth. No word is more familiar to religious people than blasphemy; and yet it has never been at all satisfactorily defined. Up to date, there are no means known of distinguishing between the devout and prayerful Christian and the most openly pronounced Infidel or Atheist, as far as blasphemy is concerned. It is blasphemy to a Jew to say that Christ is God; to a Christian, Jews and all others who deny Christ’s godhead are blasphemers. To say that Christ died is blasphemy to those who believe him God and deny that God can die. All orthodox Trinitarians are blasphemers to the Unitarian, the Jew and the Mohammedan, who all say God is one, and only one. To call the Pope God’s vicerent or vice-God, is blasphemy to the rigid Protestant; to the Romanist it is heresy, if not blasphemy, to deny him that honor.

In one word, if the case is properly considered, it comes to this, that all rival sects are more or less blasphemers to one to the other; and no man can give an authoritative definition of the term.

If blasphemy consists of abusing God, or saying of him what is both untrue and scandalous, the Bible must be the most blasphemous book in the world, and Christian literature, liturgies, prayers, etc., are steeped in blasphemy—unless God be in reality infinitely the worst character ever known.

Prayer must be insolent mockery and blasphemy, if God be wise and good, and infinitely so. The impudence of asking him who is over doing everything to do more, who “doeth all things well” to do better, can never be adequately described. How a man who believes in infinite wisdom and goodness can have the cheek to beg and entreat them to change their conduct is beyond explanation.

Nobody cries “Heresy!” or “Blasphemy!” until bankrupt of reason or driven furious by undeniable truth. The cries are intended to frighten and intimidate people who show signs of independence in matters religious.

J. SYMES.

TRUTHSEEKERS AND TRUTHSHIRKERS.

WHO finds and gives to men a fact
Befriends the race for ages;
But priests have made a solemn pact
To fight the truth, for wages.

The Church is first to fight a fact,
And last to leave a fiction,
Because she knows that facts contract
Her fiscal jurisdiction.

The truest priests that ever prayed
Are full of sad misgiving;
They long to leave their truthless trade,
But can't; it is their living.

To-day the parson's in a strait:
He's forced to preach his fictions,
Though science urges him to hate
Deceit and contradictions.

In days of faith the parsons ruled,
And coolly nursed abuses;
But now, when fewer folk are fooled,
They blush, and frame excuses.

The priest, when praying was in vogue,
Robbed boldly and serenely;
He was a frank and candid rogue,
But now he cozens meanly.

When nature frowned our fathers prayed,
Through mental indigestion;
We, now, nor pray nor feel dismayed,
But search, and sift, and question.

Instead of pray'r, a paper kite
Prevailed 'gainst heaven's thunder;
Now, God is fading in the light,
And Fear's divorced from Wonder.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

ACID DROPS.

THE London Primitive Methodist Council has issued an address on the coming School Board elections, urging all Primitive Methodists to vote for the "Progressive" candidates, on the ground that they "want the Old and New Testaments, without note or comment from the teachers, excepting such explanations as are necessary to make the lesson intelligible to the pupil, to be the sole textbooks of religious instruction." This sort of religious instruction just suits the Evangelicals, who affect to be surprised that it does not also suit the Church of England. Lord Salisbury was quite right when he said that it was Nonconformist religion that was taught in the Board schools. The Nonconformists support it through thick and thin, because it serves their turn; and they do this in spite of their professed principle, that the State has nothing to do with religion, either in the way of maintenance or patronage.

Rev. Dr. Clifford moved a resolution on the same matter at the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Free Church Federation. What the Church party wanted to do was to "divest the religious instruction of its simple Biblical character." But suppose we put it in this way. The Church party wants to teach the Apostles' Creed, which the Nonconformists also believe in; while the Nonconformists want the children to read about Judah and Tamar, and Onan, and Lot and his daughters, and the Levite and his concubine, and the amours of Solomon, and the bawdy adventures of Aholah and Abolibah. Of course Dr. Clifford will not like the matter placed in this light. But that does not concern us. He is fond of telling Churchmen "the truth," and we venture to send him a little for his own consumption.

The Lord's Day Observance Society has written to the directors of the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, and Tate Gallery, in opposition to the memorial of the Sunday Society for an extension of Sunday opening at those institutions. It declares the object of such movements is to abolish the "theological" observance of the Lord's Day. It also points out that the opening of these public institutions on Sunday evenings is a flagrant rivalry with places devoted to religious worship. Aye, there's the rub! After all, it is a dispute between the men of God and the religious free-traders. What the ministers hate is "rivalry." They know they can only flourish under a system of protection.

The *Daily News*, noticing Mrs. Chant's blessing of the utilization of music halls on Sundays for "sacred" concerts, says: "The churches and chapels have had a 'monopoly' of Sunday for a very long time. At the end of it all, they have only succeeded in attracting a very small portion of the available public."

The Christian Socialist party in the Church of England are trying to make some cheap capital out of the engineering dispute. They have sent a round-robin appeal to the Employers' Federation, telling them that they had better accept arbitration, and reminding them of their responsibilities to Christ. This is a new element in trade disputes, and it suggests to us the following idea. Jesus Christ did very little good while he was on earth, nearly two thousand years ago. He has been coming again ever since, but his advent is still delayed indefinitely. Why does he not put in an appearance and begin business in London as an arbitrator? No doubt he would be impartial, for it is against his principles to be a capitalist, and against his inclination to be a workman. His decisions, therefore, should give satisfaction to both sides.

The Archbishop of York, preaching before the Guild of St. Luke, which is composed of physicians, made the remark that Christ took upon himself our infirmities. This he followed by saying: "We never read of any bodily illness in the life of our Lord, nor was there reason to suppose that he ever suffered from any sort of disease." He did not attempt to reconcile these statements, any more than to explain how it was that when Jesus was pierced with a spear "forthwith there came out blood and water," which has led some to suppose he must have been dropsical.

The Archbishop explained that disease rose from the fall of man. All the microbes and bacteria who pollute and thrive on human misery, we are to suppose, were special creations designed for Adam and Eve after they left the Garden of Eden.

The Archbishop said: "The only occasion on which our Lord made any reference to the origin of disease, he attributed it, not to any visitation from God, but to Satanic influence." We wonder he ventured on such a proof of his Lord and Savior's ignorance before educated men; for those who know the history of their profession are aware that Hippocrates had combated the notion that disease was the work of devils long before Jesus countenanced this stupid superstition.

Here is what the *Weekly Times and Echo* has to say on the matter: "As medicine and medical men become more empirical, it is curious to observe how they are seeking to associate themselves with the clergy. The doctors go to church once a year now, and march in procession at St. Paul's, with lady doctors in scarlet robes and black college caps looking ever so nice."

"And Archbishops preach sermons showing how essentially 'religious' doctoring is, which is no doubt true enough, the ordinary medical conception of the 'cure' of disease being simply the counterpart of the priestly idea of the atonement for sin. And, as a matter of course, the more clerical the doctor grows, the more callous he becomes to human suffering. The priest championed the Inquisition, and the leach defends and practises vivisection."

Frederick Murray Browne has been tried for sending those postcards at Rochford and Cold Norton. A long report of the case appears in the *Essex Weekly News* under the heading of "The Anarchist and the Bible." Unfortunately the Chairman was Lord Rookwood, a bigoted opponent of the late Charles Bradlaugh. Poor Browne, who insisted on defending himself, acted without the slightest discretion; and any just and compassionate magistrates, in consideration of his long detention and his mental derangement, would have let him go under the First Offenders' Act. Lord Rookwood, however, sentenced him to six months' hard labor. This is a most excessive punishment, but we fear there is no hope of its being mitigated. According to the report, the jury were unable to agree, and Lord Rookwood had to lock them up. After an hour-and-a-half's confinement, they returned into Court with a verdict of Guilty, and Lord Rookwood had his coveted opportunity of passing sentence.

Poor Browne will be well advised in future to refrain from writing dirty Bible texts on postcards. All the witnesses said the texts were obscene; they also said the Bible was *not* obscene—which is an absurdity. The truth is, the texts *are* obscene, and for that very reason they should not be reproduced in such a fashion. Nevertheless the sentence on poor Browne will react upon the Bible. A court of justice has declared that there are Bible texts which cannot be copied out and sent through the post without bringing the copier and sender under the law

against obscenity, and rendering him liable to six months' imprisonment. Such a judgment must sink the Bible itself in public esteem.

It is a great pity that Browne complicated matters by making one of his postcards, addressed to a female school-teacher, so gratuitously offensive. He is a red-hot Anarchist, and appears to believe that he has a right to do anything he pleases. But that policy is impracticable in this world, as everyone who tries it finds out to his cost.

Whether anything can be done now for the poor wife and children remains to be seen. Mr. Forder is giving the matter his personal attention, and will report to us as soon as possible.

Mr. H. S. H. Cavendish, a young African explorer, who has just returned after a fifteen months' absence in East Africa, gives his testimony to the barbarity of the Christian Abyssinians, who, he says, have been killing men, women, and children, and inflicting horrible tortures on the prisoners.

Captain Winstanley says that there is greater security of life and property among the Moslem fanatics of the Soudan than among the Christians of Abyssinia, a chief feature of whose religion is hatred of the followers of the Prophet of Arabia, with whom they will not eat or associate when avoidable. The Christianity of the country is a ceremonial rather than a belief, and inculcates no guiding principles to integrity of life. A chronic state of lawlessness pervades the kingdom.

Possession by devils is universally believed in. In the case of a poor woman seized with convulsions, Winstanley says: "I endeavored to instil into my hearer's minds a belief in natural causes producing the unhappy effects I had heard and witnessed; but Jumbo referred me as a Christian to the Bible. 'If you believe the Bible, you must believe in possession by devils; if you do not believe in the possession by devils, you cannot be a Christian.'" This, he confesses, was unanswerable.

These worthy Christians wear amulets against witchcraft, and blacksmiths are for some reason credited with being in league with the foul fiend, with whose assistance they have the power to enchant human beings, to inhabit their bodies, and to convert themselves at will into hyenas and devour their victims.

The Abyssinian Christians invariably believe that the hyena is a spirit with the power of transforming itself into human shape. So universal and deep-rooted is the belief that any scepticism is regarded as a kind of Atheism.

Speaking last week at the annual meetings in connection with the C. M. S., the Rev. G. H. Pole, a missionary from Japan, denounced the members of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches in that country as little better than heathen. And this in spite of the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is the parent of the church of which the rev. gentleman professes to be so true a disciple. Here we have another of those Devil-dodger missionary frauds crying down the work of his parent Church in the hope that by so doing he will bring more prominently before his admirers his own work, which he had previously frankly admitted to be in many cases a miserable failure.

Following upon the recent revelations concerning the self-immolating fanatics in the district of Tiraspol, Russia, the newspapers now report that there is a sect in the province of Kazan the members of which advocate death by suffocation, believing that heaven can only be gained by suffering martyrdom in this life. Consequently, when any member of the sect is believed to be on the point of death a small cushion is placed over the sufferer's mouth and held there until suffocation ensues, the other members standing round and singing psalms.

A very similar brotherhood of monks at one time existed in Spain. They were known as Dispensadores. It was a cardinal principle with them that, once a sick person had taken the last sacrament, and thereby ensured eternal salvation, he must not be permitted to imperil his soul by returning to a world of sin. Should the communicant, instead of duly dying, show signs of recovery, the pillow was used to ensure that the soul winged its way to heaven, instead of returning to the defilements of earth.

Pestilences, famines, earthquakes, battles, murders, and sudden deaths are permitted by the inscrutable unwisdom of an alleged Providence, in order to give reverend fathers-in-God an increased sense of consolation and comfort, together with a saintly elation of superiority to these evils. Jones gets knocked down by a cab, that Brown may rejoice

how a merciful Providence has spared him from such personal experience that God's ways are not our ways.

"Providence" comes on the heels of the tyrannical Spaniards in the Philippines with a disastrous cyclone. The island of Leyte is the worst sufferer. Two towns have been completely destroyed, and thousands of people were destroyed by an immense wave that swept inland and engulfed several villages. Still, as the Scripture saith, he doeth all things well.

Life's ironies are inexhaustible enough to stagger the faith of the cheeriest optimist. Take the death of James Hitchen, for instance. He was one of the oldest and most trusted engine-drivers on the London and North-Western Railway. He was driving the Scotch express between Crewe and Carlisle, and when the train was passing under a bridge at Winsford, in Cheshire, he was struck in the forehead by a stone. It was a serious wound, which bled copiously; but he stuck to his post, and took his engine on to Carlisle, where he was attended to in the local infirmary. But erysipelas set in, and he was soon a corpse. And the cream of the joke, perpetrated by the great Aristophanes of the Universe, is that the stone-thrower probably knows nothing about the death of James Hitchen. Very likely he is a boy, who threw the stone for a lark, and is prepared to repeat his performance at the earliest opportunity.

There is a certain morbid element in adults, as there is a savage element in boys. Over in Chicago a sausage-maker has been prosecuted for the alleged murder of his wife, whom he is said to have boiled in one of his fat-rendering vats. After a trial extending over several weeks, the jury disagreed, and there is to be a new trial as soon as possible. Meanwhile the prisoner is daily deluged with flowers and dainties by Chicago women.

A boy pupil-teacher at Ocker-hill National School was dismissed by the vicar for declining to sing in the choir, and to attend Sunday morning service at a mission. He claimed £20 damages in the Dudley County Court for wrongful dismissal. The vicar alleged that he was dismissed for idleness and disobedience. Nevertheless, the jury gave a verdict for the full £20, with costs. Nor was the judge one whit behind them in reprobating the man of God's action. "The jury," he said, "have been sitting here all day; I have been sitting here all day, and you keep on talking balderdash." But this should not be surprising. Every clergyman talks balderdash every Sunday according to the depth of his orthodoxy.

William Walker, of Newark, is an anti-vaccinator who takes his stand on the Gospel. Prosecuted by the Guardians for failing to have his child vaccinated, he said he would submit evidence of one of the greatest physicians, and that was God, speaking through Jesus Christ. They would read in St. Matthew's gospel, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." As his child was healthy and whole, he refused to have it vaccinated. Common sense and the Gospel did not avail, the law recognising the authority of other physicians than the one referred to.

The *Edinburgh Review* says that there is a popular riddle current in Germany, "What is the difference between the Emperor and God Almighty?" To which the sarcastic answer is, "*Gott weiss Alles, ober der Kaiser weiss Alles besser*"—"God Almighty knows all things, but the Emperor knows all things much better".

God and the Emperor united last Sunday week, when the ceremony of blessing sixty-three colors took place in Berlin in front of the monument to Frederick the Great, in presence of the Imperial Chancellor and an immense crowd of the general public.

Brother Moore says that hell has "cooled down until the difference between spending the winter in hell and in Klondike is hardly worth fussing about."

The recruiting sergeants have taken a leaf from the book of Diggle. A case heard at Marlborough-street yesterday shows that there is now a sort of religious examination for the army. Recruits are asked to state their religion, in order to test the sincerity of their statements that they have never before been in the service. If they make their profession of faith "like a military man," their denial of previous enlistment is at once suspected, and this generally leads to a prosecution for the false declaration. To answer like a military man is to say that you are "Church of England," if you happen to belong to that fold, or that you are "R. C.," if your allegiance is to Rome. The only safe thing, according to the Sergeant, is to confess to no religion at all. A certain want of the power to "give it a name" is supposed to mark the slackness of the civilian mind. —*Daily News*.

The proposition to furnish electric light to the land of the

Pharaohs recalls the story of the ingenious little girl who was present at Sunday-school one day when the Golden text happened to be the verse, "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles." In answer to the teacher's question as to what various kinds of lights there were, several youngsters suggested "lamps," "gaslights," etc. But when the little girl was asked what she could suggest as a light for the Gentiles, she cried out, "Israelites!"

Some correspondents of the *Daily News* have been giving instances of what they consider good *repartees*. Here is one:—Two parsons were walking down Sackville-street, Dublin, when an old woman accosted them as follows, begging: "May the blessing of God Almighty follow your reverences all the days of your life." Getting nothing from them, she added, with bitterness, "And never overtake ye."

Another: She—"Sir, do you hold the Church dogma of —?" He—"Madam, honestly I do not." She—"Then, sir, you are an Atheist?" He—"I beg you pardon, madam; I am a dentist."

S. M. Poole says: "One day I overtook an old woman in St. Mary Cray, Kent. 'How is your neighbor, Mrs. O'Sullivan?' 'Very bad, sir, very bad.' 'Does she do any work?' 'Nivir a stroke.' 'Has she any relations?' 'No, nivir a child.' 'Does the parish allow her any relief?' 'No, nivir a penny.' 'Whoever, then, does keep her?' 'Och, the Lord Almighty keeps her, and the neighbors just help a bit.'"

G. Keith sends this old chestnut:—A Roman Catholic priest met one day a lady whose spiritual condition, in his opinion, was not satisfactory, and greeted her with, "Good morning, daughter of the Evil One." "Good morning, Father," was the smart reply.

Another sends this:—A Scotch minister, seeing one of his congregation asleep, brought him up with a pause, and then, holding out a finger, said solemnly: "There'll be no sleeping in hell, John." To which the offender retorted: "Aye, but it'll no' be for the lack of ministers."

R. Tangey contributes the following:—Simultaneously a young Cornish lady had three suitors, representing the Church, the Army, and the Navy. The rev. gentleman had a great advantage over his rivals, being always "on the spot," but mark how, in his fancied security, he gave himself away. Referring to his rivals in conversation with the lady on one occasion, he made the highly interesting observation that there were "land rats and water rats." "And cu-rats," retorted the lady.

The Howard Association, under the direction of Quaker Tallack, has done marvellously little for the prisoners of the realm, about whose interests it is supposed to be concerned. We should say that the Rev. Douglas Morrison alone, not to speak of the Humanitarian League, has done far more for the ventilation of the question than the wealthy association which numbers the Duke of Westminster and many nobles and M.P.'s among its patrons. The just-issued Report of the Association has much about the Diamond Jubilee of "our honored Queen," and a very indignant paragraph directed against the Ethical Society for inviting the Association to confer with regard to moral instruction in schools; but we learn little of what actually has been done for the diminution of crime or the reformation of criminals.

Our old friend, the divining rod, turns up again in the pages of the *English Mechanic*, but "A Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society" has a habit of "dowsing" all nonsense in a pail of pitiless logic, and occult humbug finds little mercy at his hands. Dealing with the error in the Christian era, "A Fellow of the R. A. S." says: "If Herod the tetrarch began his rule A.U.C. 713, and died—according to Josephus—at thirty-seven years of age in 750, he must have been ruling while still in his cradle!—which, to be candid, I don't believe. Furthermore, Matthew says that our Lord was born in Herod's lifetime, and hence prior to 750; but a little lower down his birth is set down in A.U.C. 754. This may be all right, but to my obtuse intellect it appears singularly like a muddle." The muddle is made worse by Luke putting the date of Christ's birth in the time of Cyrenius. It has been well exposed recently in our columns by "Abracadabra."

The *Catholic Herald* prints a paper read by Dr. Colvin before the Catholic Young Men's Society on "Evolution." He contended that evolution was only a theory, but one which the Catholic might hold as much as the theory of special creation. He does not say how he reconciles it with the legends of Genesis.

John Fiske has been telling the people of Minneapolis that 'the last quarter of the nineteenth century has been

pre-eminently the age of the decomposition of orthodoxy. One and all orthodox creeds are crumbling into ruins everywhere. The thought of to-day will shortly reach a plane where there will be no place nor use for orthodoxy." But he also told them that "only a few minds have learned to regard absolute freedom of thought as something to be desired."

J. W. Ward, of Denby Dale, near Huddersfield, is an adult Baptist who has the courage of his convictions. Last Sunday he was immersed in a suit of old clothes in the adjacent stream, which is almost black with pollution from the neighboring mills. It, however, served to wash him spiritually "whiter than the snow." The proceeding caused much amusement to the spectators.

London, noticing the movement in Marylebone against the Church rate, points out that the parish has been taxed to the extent of about a million sterling during the present century for the support of the Established Church. The £5,635 a year now taken from the rates is expended as follows:—Canon Barker, Parish Church, £1,100; the Rev. Russell Wakefield, St. Mary's, £700; the Rev. O. P. Wardell-Yerbergh, Christ Church, £500; the Rev. Canon Acheson, All Souls', £500; the Rev. J. Robinson, Trinity, £800.

Sheikh Quilliam, in reply to an opponent who discussed his lecture on Mohammed, declared: "The fruits of Christianity are public-houses at the corners of every street, drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution rampant throughout the land, and gambling in the form of raffles being part of every church bazaar. The whole bench of bishops in the House of Lords voted against the abolition of slavery, opposed the introduction of railways, and at one time denounced teetotalism as being a form of Atheism." Some non-Moslems gave their opinion that Islam was at least more reasonable than Christianity.

The Rev. R. Vaughan Pryce, M.A., principal of the New College, St. John's Wood, lectured there on "Can we still Believe in Miracles?" The trend of his discourse was that we can. In this matter Mr. Pryce should speak for himself. We see no reason to question that his mind is exactly in the state that can easily swallow miracles. Probably even he would like to inquire into the *modus operandi* if he heard that one of his scholars had caused an iron axe to float on the Regent's Canal. As far as argument was concerned, Mr. Pryce depended on God. The gullet that has once swallowed creation from nothing need not gulp at transubstantiation.

It does not look as if the conversion of England would arrive as soon as Cardinal Vaughan expects. From the Registrar-General's returns it appears that the proportion of Roman Catholic marriages in 1851 was 49 per 1,000. Since that year the proportion has, with some alterations, been on the whole steadily declining, and in 1895 it fell to 41. Rome always makes a bounce over its gains, but says nothing of its losses.

Dr. Welldon, the famous Headmaster of Harrow, declared the other day at the University College, at a meeting of the Council of Education, that it was a great mistake to consider that the value of education depended upon its being connected with any definite form of orthodox religious instruction. Education, he holds, is a good and sufficient end in itself. This utterance is not relished by the Church organs, which regard the real object of education to be submission to the clericals.

A new sect of Christians have started in Kansas. They call themselves by the not very distinctive name of "True Believers." They have one distinctive rite, the primitive Christian one of "the holy kiss." "Greet one another with a holy kiss," said Paul. It is said that with the True Believers the kiss is very much more in evidence than the holiness. The sect is likely to have some popularity with young believers, but already the American papers hint that the love-feasts of the early Christians only brought them into trouble, and had to be suppressed.

A very successful evangelist, who had predicted the end of the world and fixed the date of the resurrection, and was working large crowds of people into a state of holy frenzy, visited Ballarat, and presently had a big percentage of the population preparing for its end, and packing up for the voyage over Jordan. Business was bad, particularly among drapers, it being held by the women that existing styles were going right out in favor of diaphanous robes and feathers. At this juncture a Bridge-street draper hung this legend on the outer wall: "Bargains! Bargains!! Bargains!!! Grand clearing sale in view of the Resurrection! Cerements a specialty." It brought business back. The last trump would not drag the average woman from a bargain.—*Bulletin*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 31, Secular Hall, Church-road, Camberwell, at 7.30, "God and the Devil."
November 23, Leicester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 31, Stanley, Durham; October 30, November 1, 2, and 3, debate at Stanley; 7, Glasgow; 8, Motherwell; 9, Paisley; 10, Greenock; 14, Edinburgh; 21 and 23, Athenæum Hall, London. December 5, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.
- F. COTTELL.—Pleased to hear you had such a good audience for Mr. Watts on Sunday evening, also that you enrolled some new members at the close of the lecture. See paragraph.
- F. J. BOORMAN.—See "Sugar Plums." Glad to see Mr. Thompson making such a good fight for the cause.
- H. TAYLOR, on behalf of the Failsforth Secular Sunday School Committee, tenders us thanks for "the generous assistance" given through this journal. We did not want any thanks, though we are pleased to receive it; for it is our duty, as well as our inclination, to assist every earnest effort on behalf of Secularism as far as possible. What pleases us most is that the lady members "desire to specially thank Mrs. Foote for the beautiful work she has sent."
- H. TAYLOR.—See paragraph in "Sugar Plums." Kindly let us know the result of the function.
- J. T. BLANCHARD.—Your letter would have been answered had you given any address. As you now ask for a reply in the *Freethinker*, we give it there. You quite misunderstand Mr. Foote's powers and duties as President of the N. S. S. It is no part of his function to issue "authorizations" to lecturers. The Executive has authority to issue special lecturer diplomas, which carry no emolument, but are certifications of fitness. Formal application for such a diploma must be made to the Executive through the secretary, as you might have learnt from Miss Vance.
- N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges the following promises:—J. F. Hawkey (per S. Hartmann), £1 (p); J. Robinson, 5s. (p); W. Early, 5s. (p). C. Cohen acknowledges:—G. Colquhoun, 10s.; Gateshead Admirer, £1; South Shields Admirer, 10s.; J. T., £1 1s.; G. McLolland, 10s. G. R. (as promised), per E. Truelove, £4.
- THE HOOPER FUND.—T. Bellamy, 6 Thoresby-street, Sneinton, Nottingham, acknowledges:—J. Barry, 5s.; W. S. Douse, 2s.; R. Kilburn, 2s.; Charles Watts's Huddersfield Friends, £1; J. G. Fisher, 5s.; J. Umpleby, 5s.; C. A. Hooper, 2s. 6d.; A. Friend, £1; Edward Self, 2s.; W. Christopher, 5s.; W. Cabell, 5s.
- H. A. BRUCE MOORHOUSE (Plymouth).—The question of the efficacy of prayer has nothing to do with the question of the existence of a deity. Supposing there be a God, the question is, not whether he can answer prayer, but whether he does answer prayer. Furnish your evidence of that, and we will submit it to our readers.
- W. H. SPIVEY.—Glad to have your expression of confidence and good wishes. No doubt, as you say, silent contempt of such persons is best. The one you mention has a personal grievance. He was not made enough of. Mr. Foote will visit Huddersfield again as soon as possible.
- E. H.—(1) Reporting debates involves a large expenditure. A mere summary would be uninteresting, like a skeleton instead of a living figure. (2) Mr. Holyoake does not say that there is "something behind Nature." What he says is this, that the God we seek is probably the Nature we know. (3) We believe Joseph Symes met Brewin Grant in debate somewhere in Durham. It was very many years ago.
- H. W. C. (Middleton, U.S.).—You will oblige a correspondent by stating your authority for the date of the zodiac in Egypt and in China. He would like particulars of the books.
- RANSGATA SECULARIST.—Pleased to know you think so highly of the *Freethinker*.
- C. H. C.—Next week. Overcrowded this week.
- J. CHACE.—Doubtless it is a Bible contradiction. But we still think the Peculiar People could reply as we suggested. They might also say that the malady referred to in Matthew ix. 12 was spiritual, and that Jesus Christ was standing forth as a spiritual physician, not as a practitioner of bodily medicine.
- A. W.—A farcical offer, worthy of the clique and its cause. We have no time to waste on such puerilities.
- C. GROVES and J. HUBBALL.—Permission to form N.S.S. Branches has to be obtained from the Executive. We cannot act independently.
- W. BRADBURN, illustrating the softening influence of the Gospel, says that he has often heard his mother tell how her mother took her finger when a very little child, and put it to the flame of a candle, saying, "That is how you'll be burnt in hell for telling a lie."
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Hackney and Kingsland Gazette—Newcastle Daily News—Two Worlds—Liverpool Daily Post—Crescent—English Mechanic—Secular Thought—Hull Catholic Herald—Huddersfield Daily Examiner—Adult—Progressive Thinker—Edinburgh Evening News—Chatham and Rochester Observer—Freidenker—Isle of Man Times—Catholic Times—Hull Daily News—Humanity—Blue Grass Blade—Truthseeker.

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

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 23 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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.

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

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.

MR. FOOTE lectured to a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, his subject being "The Apostles' Creed: What the Clergy Want in the Schools." Mr. Robert Forder occupied the chair, and expressed a hope that all Freethinkers would take a deep and practical interest in the forthcoming School Board elections. This evening (October 31) Mr. Foote lectures in the Secular Hall, Camberwell. It is a considerable time since he has lectured there, and a crowded meeting is anticipated.

Mr. Charles Watts had a capital audience last Sunday evening at Camberwell—the largest, he informs us, he ever had there. Mr. Sabine made an excellent chairman, and brief discussion followed the lecture.

This evening, Sunday, October 31, Mr. Watts lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Stanley, Durham. On the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday he continues the debate with the Rev. A. J. Waldron, which commenced on Saturday evening, October 30.

Mr. Forder is sending out parcels of literature to soldiers and sailors in the army and navy, at the cost of Mr. George Anderson. Those soldiers who have left the stations, and sailors that have been transferred to other ships, should at once communicate with Mr. Forder, so that the parcels may safely and promptly reach them.

Dr. Stanton Coit's letter, in reply to our last week's paragraphs, will be found in another column. We insert it as a matter of justice, and also gladly. It shows that Dr. Coit and his friends are aiming at the triumph of their own cause, possibly some generations hence. But that is not what the N.S.S. was invited to co-operate in. Any effort at the approaching School Board elections should be of a practical character, having a definite relation to present issues and the existing state of parties.

From an interview with Dr. Coit in the *South London Mail*, we see that he speaks of his New Church as a common ground for Atheists, Agnostics, Positivists, and Christians. No doubt Dr. Coit means well and is thoroughly sincere in all this, but that only shows how little he realizes the fact that ideas, whether right or wrong, and not mere sentiment, are at the bottom of every system. The Secularist and the Christian may agree together as citizens, but in philosophy, and therefore in ethics, they are sundered by their different views of the origin and destiny of man.

Mr. W. Heaford occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Oct. 31), his subject being "The Flight of the Gods." We hope he will have a good audience and a hearty reception.

Mr. C. Cohen lectured at Newcastle-on-Tyne last Sunday. His audiences were the best he has ever had there. Five new members were enrolled.

The *Echo*, in its column "Hear All Sides," often gives currency to letters from pronounced Freethinkers. Last week it printed an excellent letter on the School Board question from Miss F. A. Law, who inherits a noble tradition. Another notable letter was that of Major G. O. Warren on the Peculiar People, who, he points out, only act up to the conviction to which other Christians pretend. He observes: "What a jumble this Christian civilization of ours is! If you go into Court, you have to swear on a Bible that says you must not swear; and if you obey the Bible when your children get sick, and don't happen to get well, you are liable to arrest and imprisonment. It's queer, isn't it?"

The *Secular Almanack* for 1898, issued by the National

Secular Society, and edited by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler, is now on sale. The Calendar has been overhauled by Mr. Wheeler, who takes a lot of trouble over this publication. Mr. Foote opens the articles by one entitled "Poor Devil!" Mr. Wheeler follows with a careful and instructive one on "Secularism and the Clergy." Mr. Watts writes excellently on "Secularism Vindicated," Mr. Moss brightly on "Miracle Workers," Mr. Heaford trenchantly on "The Religious Temperament," and Mr. C. Cohen cheerily on "Our Work." There is a full list of Secular and Free-thought societies at home and abroad, and other information useful to the public for whom the Almanack is designed. We may add that all profits from the sale go into the N. S. S. exchequer, and will be used in promoting the interests of the Free-thought movement.

The Congress of the American Secular Union is called by C. B. Waite, acting president, for the 19th, 20th, and 21st of November, in Hardman Hall, New York. We hope there will be a large and enthusiastic gathering.

We much regret to hear that Mr. Thomas MacLeish, who has been such a zealous and efficient secretary to the Glasgow Branch, has been for a considerable time out of employment, and that, as he may have to leave Glasgow to find a situation, he has thought it best to have someone appointed in his place. The new corresponding secretary is Mr. Thomas Robertson, 218 Allison-street, Glasgow, to whom all communications should be addressed. We sincerely hope that Mr. MacLeish will yet find a situation in Glasgow, and be able to resume his valuable work for the Branch.

Mr. A. G. Nostick, who lectures for the Glasgow Branch to-day (October 31) on "Norway: Its Scenery and its People," will illustrate his lecture with limelight views from photographs taken by himself during his visit to that country. His lecture is the beginning of a series to be delivered once a month during the session. No doubt there will be an excellent audience this evening.

Mr. Thompson is doing good work on the Gillingham School Board. One of his latest strokes is the exposure of the bigotry of the majority who voted for another paid monitress instead of Miss Hill, although, as the local *Observer* admits, the latter was head and shoulders above all her rivals. What kept her out was the fact that she is the daughter of a Secularist, her father having been president of the Chatham Secular Society. "Religious beliefs," the *Observer* says, "still seem to be a bar to promotion."

Mr. Thompson also pulverized the statistics of the Board chairman, who had been trying to make out that the Voluntary schools cost only half as much as the Board schools. The chairman, who appears to be the vicar of St. Mark's, made what the *Observer* calls "a halting sort of reply."

The Camberwell Branch holds its Annual General Meeting on Sunday, November 7, at 3.30. It is hoped that all members will try to attend.

The Liberal Jews of New York, like their brethren in England, celebrated Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) as a festival of Free-thought and social recreation.

We have received a handsome volume from the New York Truthseeker Company. It is entitled *Union and Federation*, and contains a report of the Liberal Congress at Chicago in November, 1896. Its sub-title is "Memorial Volume to Samuel P. Putnam and May L. Collins." Tributes to both appear from the pens of well-known Free-thinkers. The book is adorned with several portraits, and a Preface is contributed by Judge Waite, who writes as follows about Messrs. Foote and Watts, who represented the Free-thinkers of Great Britain at the Chicago Congress: "By their courteous and gentlemanly bearing, and by their considerate regard for the rights of every member, they have endeared themselves to us all, while by their powerful and unanswerable arguments they have given our common cause a stronger hold upon the public mind." We do not know the price of this volume, but we fancy it is a dollar. No doubt it will have a large sale in America. Copies may be ordered in England through Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

It has been decided that the Chicago Public Library, which is one of the finest in the world, shall be opened seven days in the week. This is a good example to other American cities.

The Bazaar in aid of the Failsforth Secular Schools opens on Saturday, October 30, at 3 o'clock. The Mayor of Heywood (Alderman Healey) will deliver the opening address. On Monday, November 1, at 2 o'clock, an opening address will be delivered by James Aldred, Esq. Free-thinkers in the neighborhood are earnestly invited to attend. They

should also be provided with as much cash as possible for the purchase of articles. To get your money's worth, and at the same time to help a good cause, is a rare way of combining economy with enthusiasm. We shall be glad to hear that the Bazaar has been a great success.

The Hull *Daily News* inserts an excellent letter from Esau Reason on the question, Are Christianity and morality independent of each other?

THE DUTY OF REVOLT.

Preface to a work on "Sky Pilots and Devil Dodgers."

THE real hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is Satan. After addressing the fallen angels, he appeals to them for support in his warfare against the Bible Deity, who had overwhelmed him by brute force:—

He spake, and to confirm his words outflow
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty cherubim.

Prometheus, bound to the rock by the gods for having stolen the sacred fire and given it to man, is another mythical hero. He at last is unbound and triumphs.

Satan and Prometheus are typical characters representative of the struggles of genius against the brute forces of nature, and illustrate the fearful character of the dreadful combat. But the sacred fire is now in the possession of man, and genius, with science, will ultimately triumph over the brute forces of nature, and will drive before them, in headlong flight, the dark superstitions of the past as the sun of truth rises over the horizon of the human mind.

However much the susceptibilities of many persons, unaccustomed to examine and think for themselves, may be wounded, and the vested interests of the paid advocates of a false and cruel faith may be endangered, the author of the following pages is himself thoroughly convinced of the truth of the propositions he therein advances. He desires, above all things, the triumph of truth, justice, freedom, and the happiness of mankind, and, therefore, desires the destruction of falsehood, injustice, and tyranny, which are the enemies of happiness.

Gambetta's most celebrated saying was: "*Le Clericalisme voilà l'ennemi.*" He was right. All history points to superstition and its attendant minister, priestcraft, as the deadliest enemies of human progress, and, therefore, of human happiness. Therefore, I appeal to all the courageous spirits, who are not afraid to think for themselves, to rally round the standard of revolt, wherever and whenever it may be raised, against superstition and tyranny, whether ecclesiastical or political.

Those gallant spirits may rest assured that, though the battle may be prolonged and arduous, against the serried ranks of those who are interested in the continuance of the present rotten condition of affairs, both ecclesiastical and political, the ultimate triumph of right against wrong is as certain as the daily rising of the sun. *Magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

VARÓN.

How it was Done.

Wrote Professor Clifford, the eminent English scholar: "A man burns your house to the ground, builds a wretched hovel on the ruins, then takes credit for whatever shelter there is about the place."

The Professor used the figure to illustrate the false claim that we derive our learning, literature, and civilization from Christianity. He shows that all through the Middle Ages the priests and monks monopolized learning, and withheld it from the people, keeping the masses in ignorance, to the end that they could the more successfully tyrannize over them, just as the slave-holder governed his menial by keeping him in abject ignorance, even procuring legislation and making it a penal offence to teach a slave how to read or write.—*Progressive Thinker.*

A mind, by knowing itself, and its own proper powers and virtues, becomes free and independent. It sees its hindrances and obstructions, and finds they are wholly from itself, and from opinions wrongly conceived. The more it conquers in this respect (be it in the least particular), the more it is its own master, feels its own natural liberty, and congratulates with itself on its own advancement and prosperity.—*Lord Shaftesbury.*

SOME NOTES ON HALLOWE'EN.

IN the Romish Church the festival of All Saints, or All Hallow Mass, is still an important feast. It is a survival of a general festival of the dead, of which there are traces among many nations. Early man is much troubled with ghosts. No wonder, then, that he sets apart a day to clear them off and light their passage to another world.

It is curious that a festival of the dead was observed at or near the beginning of November by races as far apart as the inhabitants of Hindostan and Peru. Mr. R. G. Haliburton found the solution of this in an early year beginning at that time, its date being determined by the rising of the constellation of the Pleiades. Even the blacks of Australia hold a corroboree at this time—the beginning of their spring—as a festival of the dead, which lasts three days. It begins in the evening, as our festival of Hallowe'en, followed by All Saints' and All Souls'. Mariner tells how, among the Tongans, a vernal first-fruits celebration and commemoration of the dead takes place about the end of October. Rivero and Tschudi, in their *Peruvian Antiquities*, observe that at the festival of the dead it was customary to visit the tombs of relations, and to leave in them food and drink. They add: "It is worthy of remark that the feast was celebrated among the ancient Peruvians at the same period, and on the same day, that Christians solemnize the commemoration of the dead." They tell us that in November took place the terminals of the year and of seed-time.

Hallowe'en seems to have been connected with a harvest home or first-fruits celebration. Apples and nuts still play a large part. As Burns says:—

The auld gudewife's well-hoordet nits
Are round and round divided,
An' monie lads' and lasses' fate
Are there that night decided.

Burning the nut is a famous charm. Two are named as male and female. If they lie and burn together, there will be a happy marriage. If one pops off, the other will be jilted. The first day of November was dedicated to the spirit that presides over fruits and seeds, and was, in Keltic, called "La-mas-abhal" (the day of the apple fruit), pronounced Lamshool. It got corrupted to lambswool, a name given to a compound of apples, sugar, and ale.

An essential part of Hallowe'en ritual was the lighting in each household of a bonfire at nightfall. This points to an ancient practice of kindling sacred fires at certain seasons. Shaw, in his *History of the Province of Moray* (p. 29), says: "A solemnity was kept on the eve of the 1st November, as a thanksgiving for the safe ingathering of the produce of the fields. This, I am told, but have not seen it, is observed in Buchan and other counties by having Hallow Eve fires kindled on some rising ground." The material necessity of preserving the season sacred was the preservation of the kern baby, the sacred sheaf of corn, carried over from year to year. The soul cakes and bone fire of Hallowe'en reappear in our Christmas cakes and Yule log.

The day following All Saints', or All Souls', Day is set by the Church for memorial of the faithful dead, and on this day their souls were supposed to be released from purgatory. Until recent times, in country districts, the village children would go *souling*—that is, getting small contributions on behalf of the souls. But the ordained priests, who live on the same game, have done their best to suppress the juvenile infringement on their perquisites. The children used to sing:—

Soul! soul! for a soul cake!
Pray, good mistress, for a soul cake.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for them that made us all.

The soul cake referred to was a sign of the communion of the givers with the recipients, and with the communion of the saints. It was a sort of bun, to be offered to all comers at this time. It is worthy of note that English children went "a-souling," praying for "a soul cake for all Christian souls" at the same time of the year as the Hindu offers his funeral cake to the *manes* of his ancestors.

On "All Souls' Day," in some parts of Europe, the high altar is shrouded in black, while over a huge coffin or cenotaph, that is placed in the church, a solemn mass for the dead is performed. This preserved the idea of the old ghost festival.

All Souls in Ireland is called Samhan. It was the last great fire festival. Smiddy says that the ancient Irish celebrated the day with sacrifices and feasts, and that "the horse was offered as a victim to the sun, and, perhaps, the human being too." The national assembly, or Feis, of ancient Ireland is said to have been convoked for the feast of Samhan. At the present day the apple is the great feature of divination for husbands and sweethearts, and ducking for them in a tub of water is a pastime provocative of much mirth.

In County Clare there still exists a more elaborate practice, which shows an astronomic meaning. A contrivance known as the "snap-apple" is suspended from the

loft at the height of an average man's head. It is a wheel with fifty-two spokes, arranged round the hub above one another, and of every three spokes, the first has a short blazing candle, the second is sharpened to a point, and the third has an apple. The wheel is revolved, and the problem is to catch the apple without being burnt by the candle, or scratched by the sharpened stick.

So convinced are the Irish peasantry of the fact that the dead are abroad on Hallowe'en that they discreetly prefer remaining at home on that ill-omened night. Samhan is possibly summer's end. Before the solstices and equinoxes were accurately observed the two chief seasons appeared to have been the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter, represented chiefly by the May-Day festival and All Saints.

Kali Devi, in India, presides over the festival of the dead. She wears a necklace of skulls, and human victims used to be offered to her. This festival of the dead is everywhere largely a woman's festival. It is Catholic women usually who still decorate the tombs at this time. There are two reasons for this. One is that in ancient times, when all men were warriors, it was the women who did agricultural work. Hence, the agricultural deities were feminine. Another is that women, as the least advanced and educated section of the community, have always been the best preservers of old customs.

In Sicily Ceres was worshipped in May, and Kore, her daughter, Proserpine, in autumn, when she is taken by Pluto to the underworld for six months. The mourning of Demeter for Persephone lasted three days. For three days, too, was lamentation of Isis for Osiris, who is found on the third day. All these myths were connected with the great and constant miracle to early man—*viz.*, the death and resurrection of vegetation, and with a period of human mourning lasting for three days, to be sure that the corpse was really dead. J. M. W.

THE MUSICAL CURATE.

"Must be a good intoner" is a not uncommon adjunct to an advertisement for a curate in the *Church Times*. The intoning curate is a sweetly-delicious epicene creature, of great utility in these days when music and ritual have displaced creed and dogma, and when more go to church for the music than for the sermon. He knows nothing of science, and little of literature; but he has cultivated one super-subtle art—the divine and devout art of intoning. The way in which he begins "Dearly-beloved brethren," in the key of A, always reminds you of the tuning of an orchestra. It puts you in the mood for "a musical repast." But "the scripture moveth us" rises in "sundry places" to the key of C, and he varies his pitch throughout, sinking to B flat "with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart," and gradually rising and falling till he ends in a low, melancholy wail, which glides into the solemn response of the organ. To hear him rise to full-sounding G in "O Lord, open thou our lips," is a wonder, if not a delight.

But to know the sweet, musical curate at his sublimest you must hear him intone a Gregorian chant. The monotonous groaning of an animal in extreme pain can never so penetrate to the inner fibres of the feminine heart as the plaintive, sombre, and sonorous sing-song of a Gregorian. It is the concentrated quintessence of æsthetic religiosity. The musical curate is invariably a poor duffer in secular affairs, but the art of intoning gives him something wherewith to occupy what he is pleased to call his mind. To hear him expatiate on the mystic mysteries of musical intonation might make a novice fancy him a philosopher. A minor third, he will tell you, must be dropped at the Confession, indicating the feeling of awe and reverence desired from penitents; while a dominant fifth must be struck at the Absolution, to show the sacerdotal power with which the ministry of God is invested.

The intoning curate derives immense satisfaction in the contemplation of the subtle beauties of his art, all the more delightful from the reflection that few ears can appreciate them like his. He would go through life as a foretaste of celestial bliss, and verily regard church service as a "little heaven below" but for one great but permanent fear. His constant nightmare is the organist. GILGAL.

To restrain human expectation to what is ascertainable by reason must have the effect of concentrating attention on humanity and intensifying interest in human exertion.—*G. J. Holyoake.*

It is impossible that the sin of one man can be imposed upon another. It is by a fiction not to be realized by the mind that the transference is to be made. Nor can blood of any sort wipe away sin. Sin has to be repented of and turned from, and can be got rid of in no other manner.—*Judge Thomas Lumisden Strange.*

COLORED PIETY.

UNCLE JUPE being once more before the Court, his Honor asked: "Haven't you been in jail for stealing chickens once before?" "No, sah—no, indeed I hain't. Praise de Lawd for his infernite goodness and mussy, nobody hain't cotched me yit. Hit seems as ef I was pertected by de higher powers."

Mr. Johnson—"Speakin' ob de 'complishments of eddy-cated people, what am de use ob learnin' de dead langwidges?" Church Elder—"Use? Use'nuf! What am you goin' to do when you am called to de judgmen' bar ob de Lor? Got to speak de dead langwidges shua."

The revivalist negro is strong in Biblical history. For lively anachronism, the following verse from a genuine camp-meeting melody, quoted from the *American Art Journal*, fairly takes the cake:—

In de days ob de great tribulashun,
On a big desert island de Phillistines put John;
But de ravens dey feed him till de dawn come roun',
Den he gib a big jump and flew up from de groun'.
O, come down, come down, John.

It should be added that the John referred to is not the crack-brain of Patmos, but Johnny the Ducker, otherwise St. John the Baptist.

THE GREAT REVIVAL SCHEME.

"Dis heah is er great 'vival dat we'se got on han', Brother Marcus," said Parson Hickney, addressing a co-laborer in the great cause. "Yas, indeed. Yas, indeed. It do me er heep er good ter see all dese ole sinners 'fessin' de Lawd; sho's yer born'd, it do." "Me, too, Brudder Marcus. It do 'pear like de day o' de penycost hab come at de las', an' I thanks de Lawd fur it. Start up ernuder him, dar," he added, turning to the congregation. "Yas, Brudder Marcus, we'se gwine ter git our 'ward fur all dis good work we'se doin'. Say, deah brudder, what does de c'leckshuns ermount ter dis ebenin'?" "Ten dollars an' er quarter." "I thanks de Lawd fur dat, too. Say, Brudder Marcus, we ain' gwine ter steal dat money, is we?" "No, indeed." "Jes' gwine ter 'joy ourse'fs er lectle arter sarvices, ain' we?" "Dat's all." "Dar's plenty red plan'ation likker down de street, ain' dar?" "Plenty o' hit." "Gwine ter git some, ain' we?" "'Deed we is." "Fine 'vival dis, Brudder Marcus?" "Monstrous." "An' we'se thankful." "We is dat." "Wall, let 'em sing ernuder him, an' den we'll go. Sing ernuder him, please. Brudder Jake, please start de chune, an' de Lawd'll jine in arter er while."

It was in an experience meeting in an African Methodist church over in Virginia, writes a Washington correspondent. They had been singing the well-known lines, "While the lamp holds out to burn the vilest sinner may return." A now convert had been giving in his confession. He had told the brethren and sisters all the sins of his life, and more too, with all their aggravations. He had confessed to every crime known to the statutes and every sin known to the decalogue. When he paused for breath, gasping at his own wickedness, a brother in the gallery shouted solemnly: "Put out dat lamp!" "Wha' for?" asked the pastor. "Coz," said the solemn brother, "de viles' sinner done return!"

Pernicious Belief.

Churchmen claim the Christian religion to be the only one that teaches true morals, that inculcates just manners and proper conduct of men as social beings, in their relation to each other and to God; that, destitute of faith in Jesus, they are whited sepulchres, filled with all manner of corruption. They seem to have no conception of ethics independent of belief in their creed. They class all believers in their theories with heathens and heretics, and brand them with opprobrious epithets. It matters not how worthy a life, without the virtue of faith in the saving grace of the "Lord Jesus" he is necessarily corrupt. Though our prisons are filled with believers, and scarcely an Agnostic has entered those sacred retreats from the cares of the flesh, yet the latter are esteemed immoral, letting the preachers tell the story. Viewed from our standpoint, the belief that the penalty for sin may be condoned by faith in Jesus is an incentive to wrong-doing instead of restraint. Truly taught that every improper act will be punished, that guilt carries with it a sting, that, however trifling the offence, there is no possibility of escaping the consequences, then much is done in the way of true reform. On the contrary, teach that sin is pleasurable, that the penalty is not inherent in the act, but is outside of it, and may be avoided by prayer, faith, and repentance, then the incentive to a good life does not exist. This pernicious belief has contaminated the body politic; it has poisoned all the channels of thought; it has corrupted the young and followed them through life, and filled our prisons with criminals, and loaded the gallows with murderers. This lesson cannot be repeated too often.

—*Progressive Thinker.*

BOOK CHAT.

ACCORDING to Mrs. Tweedie, in her narrative of a journey through Finland, the position of woman there is far superior to that she enjoys in any other country in Europe. She has equal rights with men in every respect. She can choose any kind of labor or profession she pleases, and receives the same price as man for work equally well done. This observing author remarks: "There is no sex—men and women are practically equal—and on that basis society is formed. The University and all schools are as free for women as for men. Boys and girls attend the schools, and are brought up to ignore sex. The chaperon is unknown in Finland, and it is found that this perfect liberty and independence of women is followed by virtuous lives. The number of women exceeds that of men, and the stern climate with its short summer and long winter demands close and arduous labor in season. The women have not shrunk from the necessity, but have bravely met the demands made upon them. They are strong, self-reliant, and able to protect their own rights and interests."

* * *

A gem of a preface to a work by an American Anarchist, a disciple, apparently, of "Dod Grile":—"This Book is Inspired. Anything good in it ascribe to me; anything bad put it on to God." Amen.

* * *

The late Sir Peter le Page Renouf, formerly keeper of the Egyptian antiquities at the British Museum, did some good work in connection with Egyptology, and his Hibbert Lecture on *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians* is well worth reading. He had the misfortune to be born a Roman Catholic, or his statements might have assumed a bolder direction.

* * *

Isabel's Intention, by Mariette (Murdoch & Co.; 1d.), is an extraordinary story of a girl—an innocent, but thinking, sympathetic, and justice-loving girl—who, being told by her mother that society could not get on without prostitutes, and that she herself is indebted to them, determines to take the place of one of the victims, and become the degraded sacrifice for the welfare of society. Twice she attempts the awful task, but happily remains "the woman who didn't." This very unconventional little tract, however apparently absurd its story, is unmistakably from a feminine hand, and an indication that women are bent on squarely facing the facts of life, and will not acquiesce in the degradation of a large number of their sex. The story is graphically written, and calculated to make its readers pause to think.

* * *

The November number of the *University Magazine* opens with a timely article on "Education in Threes," by F. J. Gould. Madame Blavatsky's memoirs are satirized, and Mr. Robertson, in "A Hundred Years of Malthusianism," retorts on the Catholic Professor Nitti as to the relative morality of Catholicism and Neo-Malthusianism. There is an interesting article on "Woman on the Stage." R. de Villiers gives from his diary more reports of conversations with "Cardinal Manning the Sceptic," and there is a lengthy and able review of "Hall Caine and *The Christian*."

* * *

The name of Mark Twain's new book is to be *The Surviving Innocent Abroad*. Mrs. Clemens said, "It's not true for you to call yourself 'The Surviving Innocent Abroad,' because there's so-and-so in Cleveland, and that and the other in Philadelphia." "Oh," replied Mark Twain, "I'll fix that." So, in the new book, there will be an explanatory note pointing out that, although there are still in existence some eight or ten of the pilgrims who went on the Quaker City expedition some twenty years ago, the author is the only surviving one who has remained innocent.

Freethinkers have yet an immense task to perform—namely, to destroy the power of priest and parson, by ridicule, exposure, and incessant attack. We have also the task of rousing a credulous populace from their blind, groping course of life, and the initiation of honest and impartial governments. The task is enormous, but we must do our best. All Freethinkers should unite in this great work—to sweep away the refuge of lies, to expose the liars, and to spread the truth.

Delusion and error perish under the slow and silent operation of changes to which they are unable to adapt themselves. The atmosphere is altered; the organism can neither respond nor respire; therefore it dies. Thus, save where lurks the ignorance which is its breath of life, has wholly perished belief in witchcraft; thus, too, is slowly perishing belief in miracles—and, with this, belief in the miraculous events—the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus—on which the fundamental tenets of Christianity are based, and in which lies so largely the secret of its long hostility to knowledge.—*Edward Clodd.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

ROMNEY'S PORTRAIT OF PAINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. J. M. Wheeler, in your paper of October 3, says he has "no axes to grind." I never supposed he had, and I can hardly believe that his remark is meant as an insinuation that I have some pecuniary interest in the picture or in its sale. I have not the slightest pecuniary interest in the portrait, nor in the negotiations for its sale, present or prospective; on the contrary, it has cost me a good deal in gratuitous time and writing.

Whether the painting is a Romney or not will be determined by persons of more knowledge than myself—perhaps of more even than Mr. Wheeler. I have no desire to argue that matter with him, and had he not undertaken to speak for me in contradiction to what I had printed, and insulted all who believe it a Romney, I should not have replied to his paragraph.

Mr. Wheeler is perfectly correct in saying that my frontispiece in the *Life of Paine* is a blunder. He and Mr. Burr could easily point that out after I had freely announced it myself. Since the publication of that biography I have steadily pursued my researches, and in my introductions and annotations to the *Writings of Paine* I have published scores of facts about Paine unknown to me when I wrote his *Life*, and in some cases corrective of *errata* in the *Life*. I am still investigating the subject, and have now many new and interesting facts, which will appear in a future edition of the *Life*.

The portrait which I now believe the long-lost Romney Mr. Wheeler seems still to ascribe to J. W. Jarvis. I am now able to satisfy him on that point. Gilbert Vale, the biographer of Paine and editor of the *Beacon* (New York), was a personal friend of J. W. Jarvis. In the *Beacon* of October 16, 1841, he mentions seeing at Albany "an excellent likeness of Mr. Thomas Paine, taken in *old age*, by Jarvis" (italics are Vale's). In the *Beacon* of May 3, 1845, he announces this picture for sale, and declares it to be "the only one which Mr. Jarvis ever painted of him." Where this picture now is no one can tell me; but I have a lithograph of it, which is carefully described in my *Life of Paine* (ii., pp. 478-9). Beneath is printed: "Jarvis *pinxit*, 1805." It is a directly front face, and in hair, dress, age, so entirely different from the Romney, or any other portrait of Paine, that few could recognise it as meant for him if the name under it was concealed. It is probably hanging somewhere here, and not produced because not recognised as Paine. Gilbert Vale, the friend of Jarvis, declares this the only portrait of Paine he ever painted. There could not be better authority.

This, of course, I did not know when the Paine exhibition catalogue (Dec., 1895) was made up. Before that I had doubted whether Jarvis painted the picture, and had made what investigations I could. My doubts were temporarily allayed by the opinions of others, which originally misled me; and I was 3,000 miles away from the picture. Nobody in America imagined it was a Romney until I said so. I am responsible for the whole thing, and it took long to persuade the owner that it is such, and should be sent to England.

I hope to publish an extended statement about the picture, with some account of Dr. Cooper, whose Will (of which I have a copy) says nothing about the portrait. I must for the present part from the subject. But I will add that this portrait can certainly not be described in the glowing terms quoted by Mr. Wheeler from Romney's *Memoir*. Whether John Romney ever saw the original, or got his impressions from engravings, I know not; but, in any case, this portrait has suffered much in its hundred years. It has been gashed, mended, frayed, and a new background unskilfully painted in. Although I believe the face to be intact, the various "restorations" detract from the best effect even of that. Those who examine it must make allowances for these misfortunes. And they had better also get rid of the superstitious veneration for Sharp, which seems to possess some Freethinkers. Sharp was a frantic devotee of Joanna Southcott, and could hardly appreciate either Paine or Romney. The head and face of the portrait at the National Gallery is certainly not after Sharp; the head is more inclined, the expression different, and, as I think, far more powerful. The younger Jarvis, in his portrait of 1857, though following Sharp in details of dress, etc., improved the face; and, since writing my article for the *Athenaeum*, I incline to the belief that he had seen and been impressed by the Romney, although he had forgotten the color of the eyes.

MONCURE D. CONWAY.

MR. WHEELER'S REJOINDER.

I beg to disclaim having sought to speak for Mr. Conway, or to insult those who hold that the work is Romney's.

Doubting its genuineness, I shall yet be pleased if they turn out to be right. When I first wrote I had not Mr. Conway's *Athenaeum* article before me, or might have modified the strong expression of my opinion, given with the special view of deterring American Freethinkers from considering the matter finally settled. The settlement I am very content to leave to experts.

DR. COIT REPLIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I do not for a moment assume, as the *Freethinker* of this week declares, that the leaders of religion, Church and Nonconformist alike, are going to allow the *natural* instead of the *supernatural* sanction of morality to be taught in the schools. Never has anyone heard me say anything to that effect. And if I do not assume such an improbability at all, then I cannot assume it in a "light and airy way," as the *Freethinker* says. If buoyancy of manner is at all characteristic of my treatment of the School Board controversy, it is only that I laugh to keep from weeping. For I have no hope of near success for our cause. A century will not be time enough, I fear. I am working for what I count to be the *final* settlement of the religious controversy about the State schools. But that settlement *cannot* come until at least a large and powerful minority of voters have been converted from belief in supernaturalistic to belief in naturalistic sanctions of right conduct. And such a conversion, in turn, cannot be brought about except by a unified, systematized, and strenuous effort for years on the part of the thousands of Freethinkers now scattered and isolated—and therefore ineffective—throughout the United Kingdom. Such an organization, again, can only be the result of a profoundly and finely-thought-out policy, balanced and tempered with statesman-like wisdom, so that it will challenge the free assent and ready support of the most uncompromising of Rationalists. This conversion may come in our day; it may never come at all. But if it ever comes, it will come by us.

I note with satisfaction that the *Freethinker* confirms my opinion, that the leaders of religion, Church and Nonconformist alike, would go in for a purely scientific curriculum sooner than allow only natural sanctions of morality to be taught. Of course they would. They see, plainly enough, that a purely scientific curriculum in no wise attacks or replaces the supernaturalistic sanctions, but, on the other hand, would leave in the hands of the priests in chapel, church, and voluntary school the entire control of the child's moral conceptions. There would be no longer any lay teachers of morality, or only such as were puppets of priests. And that is what the priests want; and that is what we might easily bring about. It is, however, unusual to hear the *Freethinker* commending any policy on the ground that Church and Nonconformity alike would go in for it, sooner than for something else. The policy of the Moral Instruction Conference is more radical, and has little chance of speedy success. But that is the more reason why we should set to quickly. I shall be glad if you can find space for this letter in your esteemed paper.

STANTON COIT.

PROFANE JOKES.

ONE of the justices of the Maine Supreme Court was holding court at Ellsworth, and, according to honored custom, called in a local clergyman to open the session with a supplication to heaven. This worthy gentleman came, and, after a chat with the justice, proceeded to address the giver of all good and perfect things thus: "Almighty God, we beseech thee to bestow upon the presiding justice the wisdom which he so greatly needs!" It is said that the same judge once opened court after prayer, which began this way: "O Lord, we pray thee to overrule the decisions of the court to thine own honor and glory."

Pease—"Well, there's the church-bell. Castleton will be around in a minute." Hubbard—"What, are you going to church?" Pease—"Oh, no; but that was to be the signal for our century run."

Christian Friend—"Yes, my dear friends, even the doctrine of the Trinity may be explained in sweet reasonableness. Do you perceive, for instance, the *three* men in that cart? There you have a symbol of that holy mystery, the *three* in one." First Sceptic—"I think I might begin to understand the sweet reasonableness if you would show me *one* man in *three* carts." Second Sceptic—"The matter would, I think, be simplified if we could see *three* carts in *one* man." Third Sceptic—"All my wavering faith demands is, to see *one* cart in *three* men." Fourth Sceptic—"I want three carts who are one man, or three men who are one cart. The 'Carmen' who is one girl is the only approach to a solution I know of."

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, W. Heaford, "The Flight of the Gods."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, A. B. Moss, "Shakespeare" (with selections). October 30, at 8.30, Concert and Dance.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "God and the Devil."
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7.30, F. J. Gould, "The Moral Judgment."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Sunday-school; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Poem of Job."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Masses."
WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7, Debate—Messrs. Blanchard and Herzfeld, "Is Over-Population the Cause of Poverty and other Evils?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, E. Pack.
CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): 3.15, E. Pack.
LIMEHOUSE (Triangle, Salmon-lane): 11.30, A. B. Moss.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards, "Evidences from Monuments."
WEST LONDON BRANCH (Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30, A. lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): Percy Ward—11, "Secularism and Woman"; 3, "What will you Give us in the Place of Christianity?" 7, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform."
CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, An Entertainment. High-class talent engaged.
GATESHEAD (Co-operative Hall, Whitehall-road): H. Bradlaugh Bonner—3, "School-taught Morality"; 7, "Some Plain Words about India."
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—J. Culligan, "The Inquisition"; 6.30, A. G. Nostock, "Norway: Its Scenery and People"—with lantern illustrations.
HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Recitations and Readings.
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): Touzeau Paris—"Facts About the Bible Everyone should Know"; 6.30, "Diabolism, or the Evolution of the Devil."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Smith, "The Word and the Spirit—John xvi. 63."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, L. Small, B.Sc., "Nature Myths."
PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, Special meeting.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Cohen—11, "Crime and Criminals"; 3, "The Dream of Immortality"; 7, "The Case for Secularism." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-alley): 7, H. Snell, "Palestine and Arabia"—lantern lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place): 11.30, H. Snell, An Address.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—October 31, Sheffield. November 7, Blackburn; 14, Manchester; 21, Huddersfield.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—October 31, Birmingham. November 7 to 14, Mission at Plymouth.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—October 31, m., Limehouse; e., Ball's Pond. 23, m., Camberwell Radical Club. December 12, Camberwell Radical Club.

POSITIVISM.

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

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

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

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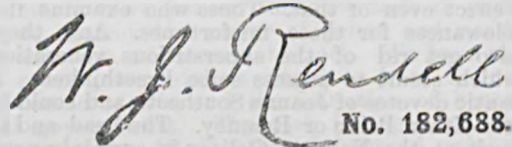
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