

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE FARCE OF FAITH.

Two "Peculiar People"—Thomas George Senior and George Vince—have been tried at the Old Bailey, and found guilty of manslaughter. When their children were afflicted with pneumonia, they called in an elder of their Church, who prayed over the little sufferers and anointed them with oil, in conformity with directions given in the New Testament. Medical aid was not resorted to, and for this "neglect" the defendants found themselves in the criminal dock, and liable (as the judge told them) to a long term of imprisonment.

Now, before we go any further let us deal with that same "neglect." According to the *Times* report, Mr. Avory, the counsel for the prosecution, admitted that Senior was "a very kind father, and his home was very comfortable," and that Vince was "a respectable man and a kind father." Clearly, then, there was no neglect, in the ordinary sense of the word. They did not act negligently, but deliberately on the ground of a religious persuasion. It was indeed urged that six of Senior's eleven children had died of "ordinary infantile complaints." But that is not uncommon in very large families; if it were, there would soon be no standing room.

Mr. Avory pointed out that as far back as 1868 a statute was passed enacting that every parent should provide medical aid for his sick child. This appears to be the law of the land. But these two Peculiar People, sincere Christians as they are, recognise a higher authority than the law of England. Senior, in his defence, said that he relied upon the Scripture, and gave many instances of his sickness being cured by following its precepts. His conscience was clear. He had done all that a Christian should do, and he could exclaim with Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Vince followed the same line of defence. He also referred to cures that had been effected in answer to prayer. When the jury, under the judge's direction, found them both *Guilty*, they were asked whether they would give a pledge that if any of their children were taken ill in future they would call in medical aid. With the gaol door staring them in the face, they courteously but firmly declined to give such a pledge. Right or wrong, they are men of principle; and, whatever we may think of their intelligence, we have a much higher admiration for their character than we have for that of the mass of hypocritical Christians by whom they are surrounded.

According to the *Daily News* report, when Senior was asked to give this pledge, he answered that he could not disobey Jesus Christ; whereupon the judge said: "You know the law tells you to do so." His lordship did not mean that exactly; nevertheless, it was exactly true. The law of Christian England commands us to disobey Christ.

Strange contradiction! It is a crime in this country to "bring the Holy Scripture into disbelief and contempt." It is also a crime to believe the Scripture up to the point of acting upon it. Believe it sincerely, or disbelieve it sincerely, and you are equally in danger. There is the gaol for honesty, and the rogues hold the keys.

The prosecution of these Peculiar People was official; that is to say, it was a police prosecution in the name of the Crown. From this point of view, Mr. Avory's arguments are of very considerable importance; and one of them is well worth a little close attention. Mr. Avory found fault with these men for "pinning their faith literally" to the

passage in St. James, which plainly orders all good and faithful Christians to call in the elders of the Church when anyone is sick, the duty of the said elders being to "pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Mr. Avory forgot to add what follows—namely, that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick." But this clause is of the greatest significance. It is indeed the governing factor in the case. Without it, there would be room to argue that medical aid was taken for granted. But when it is said that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick," this is impossible; and if the Bible be the Word of God, and St. James was inspired, these Peculiar People are indisputably right. And it is perfectly idle to find fault with them for taking the passage "literally." Words could not be plainer; they do not admit of a double interpretation; and if they do not mean what they say, the Bible should be cast aside altogether as a meaningless volume.

It is urged against the Peculiar People that Jesus Christ said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," and that this implies the necessity of medical attendance. But let us look at the context. Jesus was sitting down at meat with publicans and sinners, for which the Pharisees rebuked him; and he answered them in the words just quoted. Probably the expression was proverbial; but, whether it was so or not, two things must be noted: first, that Jesus was not acting just then as a bodily physician, but as a spiritual physician, so that these words, at the very utmost, are merely in the nature of an illustration; secondly, Jesus was addressing his enemies, who did not accept his doctrine, and not giving directions to his own followers. Such a text cannot be held to outweigh the express declaration of Jesus to his disciples, after the resurrection, when founding his Church on earth, that one sign of faith in those who accepted his gospel should be that "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Nor can it outweigh the precise command given by St. James, one of the inspired twelve apostles, and by repute a brother of Jesus Christ.

Whichever way you read the Bible on this matter you are in the wrong, according to the law and the magistrates. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," was recently cited by William Walker, of Newark, as a reason why his healthy child should not be vaccinated. The magistrate, however, did not consider this a satisfactory defence, and gave judgment against the defendant. Clearly, then, the Bible is an utterly unsafe guide for those who want to keep out of prison. It is the Word of God; the oath is taken upon it by witnesses, jurors, legislators, and public functionaries; it is thrust into the hands of the children in our elementary schools, and you are liable to severe penalties as a "blasphemer" for criticising it like any other volume. Yet if you take it "literally" as the Word of God, and act upon its instructions, you are also liable to severe penalties for that. And the judge who is sworn to administer justice upon that very book will treat you as a vicious criminal. Such is the farce of faith.

Mr. Justice Ridley, who presided at the trial of these two Peculiar People, is presumably a Christian. He admitted that they had been "actuated by religious convictions," but he declined to discuss the subject with them—which a good many people will regard as an evasion of the difficulty. His lordship proceeded to rate these men soundly. He accused them of belonging to a sect which "arrogated to itself the idea that it alone among

all the millions of Christians rightly understood the Word of God." But with all due deference to his lordship, out of court, we beg to ask him whether that is not the peculiarity of every Protestant sect? Why otherwise do they divide and separate? Is it really possible for any man who understands the Bible in one sense not to think that those who understand it in another sense are wrong? And is there any arrogance in his acting upon his own conviction, while respecting the right of his neighbors to act upon theirs? Mr. Justice Ridley's remark, that these men "desired to force their belief upon the rest of mankind," is fudge and fustian. It is the rest of mankind who are trying to force their belief upon the Peculiar People.

The judge told the prisoners that they were "liable to long terms of imprisonment," but he need not have insulted their honest simplicity by telling them that he would not make martyrs of them, and they were not worthy of it. They were not seeking martyrdom; they only desired to be let alone, and to follow Jesus Christ in their own humble way. Sneers were also cast at the elder who prayed over the sick children. Mr. Avory pointed out that he was a laborer, and Mr. Justice Ridley referred to him as "an ignorant man, consulted probably because of his ignorance." Fudge and fustian again! Jesus Christ was a laboring man; so were many of the apostles; and a laboring man can pray as well as a judge, and just as effectually. Finally, these men were bound over in their own recognisances, and warned not to commit their offence again. It would not do to imprison them after all—which is the acme of this farce of faith. G. W. FOOTE.

INTELLECTUAL EVOLUTION.

(Concluded from page 690.)

DR. CROZIER, in seeking to justify the past method of giving medicinal truths covered with a thick sugar-coating of lies, reminds us that "at the present day, when good men and women become fired with a noble enthusiasm to leave the world better than they found it, they set to work to accomplish their object by the direct propaganda of the reforms they wish to see established; advocating them and urging their acceptance, not because they are prescribed by any religious code, but for their power to lead naturally and inevitably to the higher life they have in view." "But in ancient times," he says, "no one would have dreamt of trying to carry any serious social, moral, or political reform by the mere demonstration of its power to correct some abuse, or to promote human welfare generally. For morality in ancient times was as intimately bound up with religion as is an infant with its mother; and you could no more reach morality without first striking at religion than you could reach an infant without first striking at the mother on whose breast it hung. To inculcate a higher morality, therefore, you had to begin by destroying the old religion which safeguarded and sanctioned the inferior morality and customs you wished to reform, and by putting a new religion in its place, making the practice of a new morality, which it was your object to introduce, the indispensable condition to the entrance on the supernatural joys which the new religion held out to its votaries."

This is intended as a sort of defence for all the incredible things found in Christianity. But it will hardly bear scrutiny. Why could not Providence have taught the direct method at first? As a matter of fact, Gotama Buddha, Confucius, and Aristotle had taught morality apart from supernaturalism. The best Pagan teachers had no double doctrine, and it was left to the Fathers of the Christian Church to erect lying for god's glory into an acknowledged principle of conduct. In Dr. Crozier's view, Christianity was such an immense improvement on paganism that all its falsities—such as the Mosaic cosmogony, its countenance of the slave system, its prohibition of usury, and its dogmas as incarnated in the mediæval Catholic Church—were all, so to speak, sanctified by the moral code which these husks tended to preserve.

In my judgment, a much sounder view is put forward by Mr. Edward Clodd in his *Pioneers of Evolution—from Thales to Huxley*. In the judgment of that gentleman, Christianity, centering, as Dr. Crozier admits it did centre, its thoughts on another world and the near approach of the end of this one was really a retrogression. It brought a

fanatical intolerance which overcame Pagan learning and Pagan science. To take but one item. Although the Pagan Hippocrates had long before refuted the notion that disease and madness are the work of demons, that belief is countenanced throughout the Gospels, which thus gave warrant for the unspeakable cruelties perpetrated against those stigmatized as in league with demons or possessed by devils. It has been computed that nine millions of lives were taken by the divinely-directed persecution of witchcraft.

Dr. Crozier, like so many other writers, has an ideal Jesus of his own, and he fancies he can set before us "Christianity in its essential spirit and genius as it existed in its Founder's mind." Yet he is bound to admit that Jesus fancied himself the Messiah, believed in the activity of devils, and taught that the kingdom of God on earth was close at hand. His contention is, indeed, that Christian morality grew up under the wing and protection of religion; and it is not too much to say that, without the burning hopes aroused by the belief in the coming of the kingdom of God in the lifetime of men then alive, it could never have got a foothold with the masses of men at all. To put it plainly, the falsity was necessary for the preservation of the truth.

Dr. Crozier points out the error of supposing that "the sublime ethics of the Sermon on the Mount was the chief cause of the rise and triumph of Christianity." "In reality," he says, "the chief cause of that rise was the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and that his followers would sit with him, in their own lifetime, perhaps, in his earthly kingdom of God." Further on he says: "Most of the early converts to the new religion were either Jews or Greek proselytes to Judaism—and indeed, but for the influence of St. Paul, who threw open Christianity to all the world, the broad emancipating spirit of the Gospel would have been crushed under the weight of Jewish tradition." Well, it was Paul who brought the emancipating spirit, for Jesus is represented as saying he came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law, and that he was but sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Yet it was this same Paul who made the false doctrine of the Fall of man one of the pillars of his great "Scheme of Redemption." (As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.) On it, as our author observes, he "founded that doctrine of the Atonement which, the same in substance though slightly different in form, was passed on from himself to St. Augustine, from St. Augustine to Calvin, and from Calvin again down to the orthodox believer of our own time; and it is only within recent years [and through the efforts of Freethinkers, Dr. Crozier] that this harsh and gloomy doctrine, which overshadowed the Christian conscience for centuries, has been discarded by the best minds in the Church, and allowed quietly to drop into oblivion." Here, as in so many other cases, we have "Providence," or the "genius of the world," permitting a falsehood to endure till it perishes of its own rottenness.

Dr. Crozier admits that very much of the morality of Christianity had been taught previously by Buddhism, but without the husk of supernaturalism, which he deems necessary to preserve the kernel of ethics. Our contention is that supernaturalism ever warps natural morality. The spread of Christianity was, in some respects at least, disastrous to the race, and the historical fact is that its triumph was followed by the decline of science, art, and learning. The success of the Christian Church was the advent of the Dark Ages. On the one hand, Christianity withdrew the thoughts of its votaries from the things of this world, and left the race impoverished by retiring the most refined natures from a secular to a celibate life. On the other, its claim of being a divine revelation made it intolerant of all opposing systems, and of all free criticism within its own ranks. Persecution of heretics and Jews, Crusades and wars of religion were the natural result of its claim to the exclusive possession of divine truth. From the beginning it warred against the secular spirit and free inquiry, and it is to these factors rather than to supernaturalism that all progress is to be ascribed. The belief in gods and devils, in heaven and hell, has ever been a curse to humanity, keeping up a vast black army of parasites on the commonwealth, and absorbing time, money, and devotion that would be better utilized in the direct service of Humanity.

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRISTIANS IN CONGRESS.

MUCH capital is sought to be made, by some professing Christians, of the differences of opinion which obtain among Free-thinkers upon questions of policy and methods of organization. Such differences are cited as furnishing an argument against the efficiency, or completeness, of Secularism as a philosophy of life. A little reflection, however, upon the part of impartial observers will show how fallacious such a conclusion is. As Secularists, we do not indulge in the error that all persons can agree upon details. There is much truth in the words of Calamy—namely, "That all men should be of the same mind, and agree in the same conceptions and apprehensions of things, is impossible, and no more to be expected in this life than that all men's faces and complexions should be alike." But, be it observed, the points of disagreement with Secularists in no way affect the truth of their philosophy. The avowed object of every member of the National Secular Society is to combat the evils of theology, to supplant ignorance with knowledge, to vindicate the right of mental freedom, and to recognise the possibility of properly regulating daily conduct by purely natural means, without the aid of the professed supernatural religions of the world. In reference to these features of Secular propaganda, there is no conflict of opinion among the members of our Society. But, of all persons, Christians should not urge or make such an accusation against their opponents. The various Christian sects are actually based upon disagreement, and that not merely upon minor points. They differ among themselves as to what Christianity really is, what constitutes the true Church, the position of the Bible and the meaning of its teachings, the nature and mission of Christ, the requirements of salvation, the freedom of the will, and man's condition after death.

Persons who desire to be reminded of the indefinite and contradictory character of Christian teachings, and the inharmonious influences those teachings exercise upon those who profess them, should study the reports published in orthodox papers of the various Christian congresses that are held from time to time. From these reports will be seen the dissensions that reign within the Christian fold, the hollowness of the pretension of unity, the lack of consistency between profession and conduct, the despair manifested at the slow "spiritual" progress that has been made, and at the utter chaotic condition of the entire theological organization. If it be true, as stated in the New Testament, that "a house divided against itself shall not stand," then the Christian Church is doomed. Its wealth, its traditional influence over the minds of the weak and credulous, its alliance with the various pecuniary interests of society, which was made in times of mental serfdom and intellectual apathy, and its throats of hell-fire, which still appal those of the masses who are ignorant and non-self-reliant, may uphold the Church for a time; but, to our mind, it is evident that, with the progress of modern thought, the further spread of true education, the continual development of science, and the acquirement of a higher ethical tone, the Church of the past and of the present will be replaced by institutions wherein the secular needs of mankind will be considered, and the religion of humanity expounded. Then we hope and believe the churches will be converted into temples of science and philosophy, and instead of priests, who thrive through appealing to the lowest passions of their victims, there will be honest teachers, whose functions shall be to expound those secular agencies which contribute to personal happiness and the general well-being.

We have been induced to write thus in consequence of reading in that pious Protestant paper, the *Rock*, dated October 22, a report of the meeting of the "National Protestant Congress" held at Blackburn on October 19, 20, and 21. It was attended by clergymen and ministers of various denominations, and the principal subjects spoken to were "The Church of Christ," "The Bible," "The Roman Catholic Church," and "Modern Unbelief." The general tone of the speakers did not, as we shall presently see, verify the avowed object of the gathering, which was said to be a manifestation of "unity" among Christians. The editor of the *Rock*, referring to the Congress, says: "Few have the least idea of how far treacherous or fanatical priests have gone in betraying our Church to the enemy, with the tacit sanction of the Bishops.....The plain

fact is that thousands of clergymen of the Established Church are deliberately teaching nearly the whole of the Roman heresy, and scarcely a dogma of the wholesome doctrine of the Church to whose formularies they swore to adhere. The ritual symbolical of these errors is practised, and the bishops not only take no steps, even when their attention is called to it, to vindicate the truth and the laws they solemnly swore to administer, but promote the heresy-mongers." This is a severe impeachment of the honesty of the clergy belonging to the "National religion" of Christian England. If the indictment be true, their faith has not had a very beneficial effect upon their conduct. If such hypocrisy and disregard to oath-taking were found among Secularists, we should have long pulpit exhortations as to the lack of the moral force of our principles.

The chairman of the Congress commenced by avowing that, although the rev. gentlemen present were of different denominations, they were "united on the Scriptural basis of unity." Then he inveighed most severely against the sacerdotalism of the Roman Catholic Church, which he denounced as "a mockery and delusion." This may be true; but cannot a similar charge be urged against the priestcraft of the Protestant Church? It is six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. It is clear, according to the rev. gentlemen who composed the Congress, that there is to be no "unity" between the Catholic and Protestant followers of Christ, and, what is more, not much love, for the Catholics and Ritualists are alike condemned as concealing "the cloven foot," as being "false teachers," and "in a thousand ways" spreading "deadly error." We are told that, under their influence, for "four hundred years preceding the Reformation morality and spirituality were at their lowest ebb," and that "no man can be a priest without exercising a pernicious influence." The Rev. T. Davis went so far as to say that "he could not conceive a Christian who is not a Protestant." According to this notion, Roman Catholics are not Christians, and in that case the number of the professed followers of Christ is considerably reduced; and as time goes on it will become less and less, for the rapid progress of Catholicism was sorrowfully admitted by more than one speaker at the Congress. A truly "happy family" this Congress presented! Here we have one section of Christians denouncing their co-religionists as hypocrites, impostors, and as teaching "abominable doctrines" which were "a conglomeration of nonsense which could only be written in a lunatic asylum." The amusing feature in this Christian family quarrel is that the Catholics entertain a like opinion of the Protestants, looking upon them as "heretics." The movement which has recently been started by the "Mother Church" for the "conversion of England" to the true Catholic faith is an indication that distrust and the conviction that the other side is in error are not confined to one side. The conflict within the Christian fold must go on, for it is the legitimate outcome of the faith professed by both—a faith minus that cohesive principle which is necessary to establish and promote the real brotherhood of man. So far as we are concerned, we say to each, "A plague o' both your houses."

The subject of "The Church of Christ," as dealt with at the Congress, has but little interest for us except to note that Christians are not in agreement as to what it really means. The Rev. C. F. Ward, of Manchester, alleged that they were "indebted to Holy Scripture for a definition of the Church"; but it is palpable that the definition given there is far from being clear; hence, the rev. gentleman said: "The word Church is one of the best abused, for it can be twisted to the sweet will of each who uses it. The evangelical would regard it as a mystical, spiritual, and, so far as man is concerned, an invisible body. A sacerdotalist would tell you this is too narrow, and that it signifies an outward organized body. If a Romanist, he would add, And we are the Church; while the Ritualist would say, No, we are the Church. He advised the use of a new terminology." Why, Christians are not even agreed as to which existed first, the Bible or the Church. Mr. Vernon Staley declares "the Bible is the child of the Church"; while the Rev. Dr. Wright observes: "Historically, as well as dogmatically, the Bible is prior to the Church." If we take the entire Christian propaganda, from the teachings of the alleged fall of man to his supposed redemption through Christ, and the nature of a future state of existence, we find

differences of opinion entertained by believers therein as to what should be understood by each doctrine. Recognising this fact, we cannot accept Christianity as a perfect system emanating from an all-wise and all-powerful Being; on the contrary, we regard it as a combination of teachings and doctrines born at different periods, of minds swayed by theological emotions, and deteriorated by priestly influence.

We must defer until next week our comments upon other subjects dealt with at this Congress.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

TO SKY-PILOTS AND DEVIL-DODGERS.

MIRACLES.

LET us examine a few of the most prominent features of your Bible narratives, doctrines, and alleged "Divine Commands." First take *Miracles*. The Bible statements upon which you parsons place so much reliance, as evidences of supernatural interference, to support the truth and authority of various so-called revelations and commands of God, are contrary to all known facts and to the unvarying order of nature, which is the only positive expression we possess of the will or existence of a supposed God, who is said to hide himself behind the phenomena of material existence. Everything else is human, and is produced by and comes to us through human agency, such as scriptures, dreams, visions, and other unreliable and, in their nature, uncertain and illusory operations of the imagination. We therefore decline to believe in the stories of miracles, said to have occurred in the dark, ignorant, credulous, child-like ages of the human race, as we now decline to believe in the miracles foisted upon the world by the Roman Catholic Church, such as the apparition of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in France. Though there may be scores of fools and rogues prepared to swear to that miracle, or anything else, to support a cherished belief or to make money, no reasonable man, educated on scientific principles, at this era of the world's history, believes that such a phenomenon as a miracle ever existed or ever will exist. Moreover, millions of miracles cannot sustain an evident falsity—such as $2 + 2 = 5$, or justify to man's conscience any outrage on humanity committed by charlatans and oppressors. No miracle can ever excuse or justify palpable moral wrong. The first miracle recorded in your Bible comes under the latter category. The appearance of Satan in the form of a serpent was a rascally and dishonest miracle, performed for the base purpose of seducing Eve, by the unfair employment of a superior intelligence against a weak woman. We therefore say that the legend is a myth and a lie, because a good God could never have permitted any such action against an innocent and foolish creature. As for Balaam and his ass, Jonah and the whale, Samson and his tricks, Noah's Ark, the fiery furnace of Ashach, Meschach, etc., they have been the laughing-stock of the really educated for centuries. So much for your miracles.

WITCHCRAFT.

The ignorant, blind credulity given to Bible assertions, not only about miracles, but also about many other matters, has produced infinite mischief and misery. Take, for instance, the belief in witchcraft. The Bible says: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus xxii. 18), thereby implying, as a matter of course, the existence of witches as a well-known fact. As killing supposed witches is now fully recognised by all civilized nations as murder, the Bible ascribes the crime of commanding murder to God. The fact is, the Bible only and solely represents the ignorance and brutal cruelty of the persons who wrote it, and this ignorance and brutal cruelty they blasphemously describe as attributes of God. But John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said in his journal under date May 25, 1768: "The giving up of the belief in witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible"; therefore, if John Wesley was correct, we must give up the Bible, for we have given up witchcraft—John Wesley was correct. From the Egyptian magicians, who performed like unto Moses and Aaron with their enchantments, and the witch of Endor,

who raised the dead Samuel, to the demoniacs of the Gospels, and the sorcerers mentioned in the fifteenth verse of the last chapter of Revelation, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures abound in references to and stories about witchcraft under all its forms, and injunctions to destroy it. What was the consequence of this absurd belief, and of the wicked command contained in the Bible? The learned Dr. Zachary Grey states that between three and four thousand persons suffered death for witchcraft in Europe from the year A.D. 1640 to 1660. In Leith, Scotland, nine women were burnt together as witches in A.D. 1664. In Italy, in the province of Como, 1,000 persons were executed for witchcraft in a single year. In one province of Sweden 2,500 witches were burnt in A.D. 1670. True accounts of the horrid tortures which accompanied "witch finding" would fill the eyes of any humane person with tears, and excite the most intense indignation against this ferocious, bloodthirsty, monstrous Bible superstition. They can be found in the writings of Dalryell, Lecky, Michelet, and other historians. So much for witchcraft, witches, and the Bible command to kill witches. Is it not disgusting and horrid?

WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER, RAPINE, AND SLAVERY PERMITTED—NAY, COMMANDED AND ENCOURAGED—AND HUMAN SACRIFICES TO THE JEW GOD NOT FORBIDDEN, IN THE BIBLE.

Witchcraft is not the only superstition in the Bible which the stupid credulity of past ages has turned into an instrument to torture and outrage human beings. Take the institution of bloody sacrifices to the bloodthirsty God of the Jews and the Christians—"the same yesterday, today, and for ever"—not only of the first-born and choicest specimens of many species of birds and animals, but also of men, women, and children. You understand that the priests fed on the sacrificed birds and animals after they were cooked, and therefore took very good care to demand from the ignorant people the choicest of what they possessed. Priests have always taken precious good care of their own personal interests and pleasures.

In Judges (xi. 29) Jephthah made a vow to this God of the Hebrews (who was their own counterpart in all their ignorance and brutality), the carrying out of which necessitated the sacrifice, to the Old Testament Deity, of his own daughter. Not a word of disapproval came from this Deity to Jephthah; no refusal to accept this human sacrifice. Smith's *Concise Dictionary of the Bible* has the following: "That the daughter of Jephthah was really offered up to God in sacrifice, slain by the hand of her father, and then burnt, is a horrible conclusion, but one which it is impossible to avoid." Yes, no doubt it is horrible. But the most horrible view is the most probable, for the Bible is so full of horrors that we need never feel surprised at its contents, except when we stumble across a story of mercy. Very few people read the Bible throughout, and with honest, clear, discerning eyes; but those who have done so know that this is the truth.

Is there any cruelty which Jehovah did not commit? He who could drown the whole world was not likely to pity Jephthah's daughter. The God who told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, who murdered the first-born of Egypt for Pharaoh's fault, who commanded the wholesale destruction of the Canaanites, the babes and sucklings of the Amalekites, who stopped sun and moon (what a likely thing to happen, Stiggins!) to enable Joshua to kill innocent people, who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven; men, women, and children being whelmed in one horrible destruction—this God would have violated the most prominent element of his character if he had refused Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter. What was that element? I will tell you. It was malignant cruelty. Therefore, your Bible blasphemously insults the Eternal Majesty of the Supreme in ascribing to him the worst of crimes—namely, malignant cruelty.

In Exodus (xxii.) men and animals are alike devoted to Jehovah. "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me" (verse 29). In the time of Micah the horrid practice was dying out, though he evidently was well acquainted with it. In Micah (v.) you have: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with tens of thousands of rivers of

oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Now, a good and holy God would have refused the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, and even prevented by force, if necessary, the murder of a human being as a sacrifice to himself as a deity, because that sacrifice, being accepted by him as God, disgraced for all eternity his character as a benevolent deity. But the Jew-God said nothing, did nothing to prevent it, but silently acquiesced. An innocent maiden was butchered to please the grim and ghastly Jewish Deity, compared to whom the Hindoo God, Juggernaut, was as merciful and peaceful as a lamb. The Bible exhibits its own shame and the character of its authors in every line of the hideous story. VARÓN.

WAS JAHVEH A MOON-GOD?

SOME writers, like S. F. Dunlap and J. D. Parsons, have argued that the God of the Jews was originally a sun-god; but I know of none who have contended that he was a moon-god; though Ignaz Goldziher, in his book on *Mythology among the Hebrews*, has recognised the importance of moon-worship among all Semitic, and, indeed, all nomadic, people. It used to be thought that the superior light and heat of the sun made it a primary object of worship. No doubt it was so when its importance was recognised; but a study of savage mythology shows that it is not the regular and usual which attracted attention, but rather the uncommon and changing aspects of environment. Savages were struck by the phases of the moon as well as by the daily rising and setting of the sun; while an eclipse was a dread and awful event, which registered itself on their minds and in their observances. Beyond the mere day and night the first time-keeper was the moon. Roughly speaking, people in the pastoral stage are moon-worshippers; while early agriculturists are sun-worshippers. Lunar reckoning times the birth of offspring, human and animal, but is not accurate enough for the rotation of crops on which the sun's influence is apparent.

The name of Jehovah, יהוה, has been identified with the Akkadian Hea.* Hea is usually regarded as the deity of the waters. But it is evident he had other attributes, as he is "lord of the harvest" and father of Marduk, or Merodach, the sun-god, who acts as mediator between god and man. The worship of the moon has always preceded that of the sun among nomads, and the moon-god is called the father of the sun-god. There is nothing unusual in transplanted deities taking on new attributes; and as Asshur became the tutelary god of Assyria, and Bel-Merodach of Babylon, so Jahveh became the national God of the Jews.

At Ur of the Kaldees, whence Abram, the father of the faithful, came, the chief worship was that of the moon-god in his temple "of the great light," under the names of Aku, "the disk," Nannar, "the bright one," or Sin, "the shining one"—a name preserved in Mount Sinai, the wilderness of Sin, and in such names as Sennacherib. It is notable that the law of Jahveh, the Enduring or Eternal, was by tradition given from the mountain of the moon.

Here is a portion of an Assyrian hymn to the moon-god, given by Mr. Boissacawen:—

Father, long-suffering and full of forgiveness, whose hand upholds the life of all mankind:
 Lord, Thy divinity fills the far-distant heaven and the widespread sea with reverence.
 On the surface of the peopled earth he bids sanctuaries be placed, and proclaims for (each) its name.
 Father, creator of gods and men, who causes the shrine to be founded, who establishes his offering.
 In Heaven who is supreme? Thou alone art supreme!
 In Earth who is supreme? Thou alone art supreme!
 As for thee, thy will is made known in heaven, and the angels bow down their faces.
 As for thee, thy will is made known in earth, and the spirits kiss the ground.
 As for thee, thy will is spread on high as the wind, the stall, and the fold bring forth.
 As for thee, thy will is declared on earth, and the green herb grows.
 As for thee, thy will is made known in the resting-place, and the shepcote, and all living things increase.
 As for thee, thy will has created law and justice, in that man by it has made a law.

* The Accadians were probably Turanians, and in Turanian language we have Ah and Ai as names of the moon.

As for thee, thy will is as the far-distant heaven and the inner-most parts of the earth; no man hath known it.
 As for thee, who can explain thy will; what can rival it?

This hymn is sufficient evidence that the moon, to whom it is addressed, was regarded as the being which caused to be, and this, according to some of our best scholars, is the meaning of יהוה. The component Jah is found among the Hittites, and its original meaning is lost in the mists of antiquity.

It is when we look into the structure of the Jewish faith that we may see that, however removed from moon-worship were its later phases, as represented in its written literature, yet luniolatry lay near the base of the faith. The Sabbath is the sacred fourth of a lunation. The earliest Jewish festivals were those of the new moon. In Numbers xxviii. the new moon offerings are prescribed. The sacred Passover begins on the fourteenth day of the first moon, and sacred seven is found everywhere in the Bible.* The Lord of the Sabbath is the moon.

Jahveh Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts, is surely the moon, which appears commander of the heavenly bodies. In early times the moon was masculine, as it still is with Hindus and Germans. In nomadic days it was the father and brother of the sun. But in settled communities it becomes the woman's time-keeper, and its worship tends to become feminine. The moon becomes the sun's sister and the queen of heaven. Jeremiah (vii. 18) complains of the offerings to the queen of heaven; but Psalm lxxxii. says: "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon in the time appointed on our solemn feast-day; for this was a statute for Israel and a law of the God of Jacob." Even Paul says: "Let no man judge you in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. ii. 16); so that the festival lasted till his time.

The moon, being the first timekeeper of gestation, becomes the deity of growth, as it still is in folk-lore superstitions. Now, Jahveh in the early traditions had the same gynecological functions as Lucina, the moon-goddess, among the Greeks and Romans (Genesis xx. 18; xxix. 31; Exodus i. 17, 21). Note, too, the applicability to the moon of the phrases about dwelling in clouds and thick darkness.

The crescent banner which floats over adherents of Islam takes us back to moon-worship. The Arabic Alahat is a moon-goddess, doubtless allied to the Alytta of Herodotus, and cognate with the words "Elohim" and "Allah." The Elohim, or gods, I conjecture, were the stars (though, doubtless, the term was applied to all that was mysterious); but above the stars was the Lord of Hosts, the eternal God, who appeared in the day as the sun and at night as the moon, the chief lightener of our darkness. In a sultry clime its moon aspect of the sky-god appears the more beneficent, especially when the service of the sun to agriculture was unknown.

It should be understood that this theory is not intended to apply to the Jehovah of the late date when the Bible was composed. It is only held that moon-worship found place among the ideas which lay at the base of the conception of the deity who, gathering up many elements, evolved into the Bible Jehovah.

LUCIANUS.

THE CHRISTIAN CURSE.

THERE is a tradition that, a year before the conversion of Constantine, the son of the prophetess Sospitira was praying in the Temple of Serapis, when the spirit of his mother came over him, and the veil of the future was withdrawn. "Woe to our children!" he exclaimed, when he awakened from his trance; "I see a cloud approaching; a great darkness is going to spread over the face of the world." That darkness proved a thirteen hundred years' eclipse of common sense and reason. There is a doubt if the total destruction of all cities of the civilized world could have struck a more cruel blow to science than the dogma of salvation by faith and abstinence from the pursuit of free inquiry. The ethics of the world-renouncing fanatic condemned the love of secular knowledge as they condemned the love of health and the pursuit of physical prosperity, and the children of the next fifty generations were systematically trained to despise the highest attribute of the

* See Bible Studies, by J. M. Wheeler.

human spirit. Spiritual poverty became a test of moral worth; philosophers and free inquirers were banished, while mental castrates were fattened at the expense of the toiling rustics and mechanics; science was dreaded as an ally of scepticism, if not of the arch-fiend in person; the suspicion of sorcery attached to the cultivation of almost any intellectual pursuit, and the Emperor Justinian actually passed a law for the "suppression of mathematicians."

When the tyranny of the Church reached the zenith of its power, natural science became almost a tradition of the past. The pedants of the convent schools divided their time between the forgery of miracle legends and the elaboration of insane dogmas. The most extravagant absurdities were propagated under the name of historical records; medleys of nursery-foes and ghost-stories, which the poorest village school-teacher of pagan Rome would have rejected with disgust, were gravely discussed by so-called scholars. Buckle, in his *History of Civilization*, quotes samples of such chronicles which might be mistaken for products of satire, if abundant evidence of contemporary writers did not prove them to have been the current staple of mediæval science.

When the gloom of the dreadful night was broken by the first gleam of modern science, every torch-bearer was persecuted as an incendiary. Astronomers were forced to recant their heresies on their bended knees. Philosophers were caged like wild beasts. Religious sceptics were burnt at the stake, as enemies of God and the human race. It was, indeed, almost impossible to enunciate any scientific axiom that did not conflict with the dogmas of the revelation-mongers, who had for centuries subordinated the evidence of their own senses to the rant of epileptic monks and maniacs. And when the sun of Reason rose visibly above the horizon of the intellectual world, its rays struggled distorted through the dense mist of superstition which continued to brood over the face of the earth, and was only partially dispersed even by the storms of the Protestant revolt.

The light of modern science has brought its blessings only to the habitants of the social highlands; the valley dwellers still grope their way through the gloom of inveterate superstitions and prejudices, and centuries may pass before the world has entirely emerged from the shadow of the life-blighting cloud which the son of Sospitira recognised in the rise of the Galilean delusion.

FELIX L. OSWALD.

ACID DROPS.

THE Oxford Music Hall management did no good, after all, in engaging Mrs. Chant to spice up the Sunday evening "sacred concert" with a superfluous speech. It only brought the matter before the County Council, and, in consequence of some of the observations made there, the "Oxford" people have decided to stop the experiment. So much for Mrs. Chant's assistance. The lady strikes us as an egotistical busybody. She went off to Greece to nurse the wounded, but we never heard that she got anywhere near the fighting. And as to her boasted "reformation" of the Empire Music Hall, we can only say that her interference has created a fresh nuisance. But every amateur especially among the ladies, fancies it an easy job to supervise and improve public morality.

Rev. Fleming Williams is a member of the London County Council. Ordinarily he is an advanced Radical, and even a bit of a Socialist. But where his own profession is concerned he shows himself a bigot. He waxed wrath over the Oxford "Sunday concerts," and called them "a monstrous defiance of the license."

The Liverpool *Porcupine* relates the following incident. A poor woman's child was dying, and the doctor asked her if it was baptized. It wasn't. So a parson was sent for to sprinkle the little one and make it an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. But before commencing operations he demanded a fee of two shillings. That was the price of a reserved seat in glory. The poor woman said she had only a few shillings in the world, which she wished to pay the doctor with. "Let him wait," said the man of God. So she handed over the two shillings, as it meant heaven or hell for her child; and when the man of God had the money safe in his pocket he baptized the dying infant. *Porcupine* means to keep an eye (two, we hope) on that reverend gentleman. It also hopes it will never have the ill luck to consort with him in Paradise.

Mr. Henry George's death, so suddenly and inopportunistically, is in its way a tragedy. He was a man of undoubted sincerity, with considerable powers of mind, and a lucid and popular style. Of course, there was nothing new in the general doctrine of his chief book, *Progress and Poverty*, but he carried it home to the mind of the multitude more powerfully than any previous writer. He saw in private property in land the root-evil of civilization. What he proposed was a single tax on land values, and absolute free trade all round in everything else. The second part of his program brought him into hostility with the State Socialists, against whom he vigorously defended himself.

There were two marked peculiarities about Mr. Henry George. One was his utter inability to understand the Malthusian law of population. He refuted it, as he thought, most laboriously, but in reality he never touched its essence. "Everywhere," he said, "the vice and misery attributed to over-population can be traced to the warfare, tyranny, and oppression," etc. What he did not perceive is that warfare, tyranny, and oppression are some of the checks to population. Remove these checks, as they should be removed, and other checks will be necessary; wiser and more humane, of course, but still checks.

The other peculiarity of Mr. Henry George was his natural theology. God intended man to be happy, but injustice had filled the world with misery. God meant the land for the people, but the landlords had been too many for him. This is the substance of Mr. George's theology; and what a pitiful position it puts God in! The Governor of the Universe is everywhere opposed, and his wishes are frustrated, by his own creatures. His goodness remains, but his power has vanished; and, instead of an object of reverence, he becomes an object of compassion. Poor God!

Usually good-tempered, Mr. Henry George lost control over himself in his attack on Mr. Herbert Spencer. The volume entitled *A Perplexed Philosopher* is a bad stain on Mr. George's reputation. There was something peculiarly infamous in the extract from Browning's *Lost Leader* on the title-page:—

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote.

This of Mr. Herbert Spencer! Of the philosopher who has devoted his whole life to his philosophy, losing money year after year on his books, until quite recently, and steadily refusing all the honors and decorations that were offered him. Really it was an outrage.

Towards the end of his book Mr. George declared Herbert Spencer to be "as a philosopher ridiculous, as a man contemptible." This is hitting below the belt, with a vengeance! And it was all because the great synthetic philosopher differed from Mr. George on the practical side of the land question, and had besides the effrontery to differ from Mr. George on the two other questions of a Personal God and Human Immortality. It was the *odium theologium* again. And no doubt Herbert Spencer smiled at it, as another illustration of what he had called "the religious bias."

Herbert Spencer's health has always been very delicate, and he has had to husband his strength most carefully. Brain work such as he has done is exhausting, and he was bound to find relaxations. "His recreations," says Professor Youmans, "have been systematic—concerts, operas, theatres, billiards, salmon-fishing, yachting, city rambles, and country excursions; and it has been his fixed rule, when work grew burdensome, to strike his tasks abruptly and go away for pleasure, and amuse himself till work itself again became attractive and enjoyable." A most wise policy, we venture to say; and the proof of it is the enormous amount of work Herbert Spencer has turned out, in spite of his delicate constitution.

Mr. Henry George, however, regarded these innocent recreations with puritanic hatred. It was for such things, he urged, that Herbert Spencer had denied the principles of his youth as expounded in *Social Statics*. At this point the polemic was positively comical. It did not seem to occur to Mr. George that any man could honestly alter his opinion in the course of forty years.

But enough of this. Mr. Henry George did a useful work in popularizing one side of the truth on the land question, and his death amidst the fierce struggle for honest government in the new city of Greater New York was a kind of martyrdom. We wish therefore to end with a tribute of respect and a word of regret.

"Citizen Sunday" was in full swing last "Lord's Day." Scores of London ministers were holding forth on the duties of citizenship, which are just as well understood by

laymen. As the *Daily News* satirically, and even cynically, remarked, the Church never before took such an interest in a single city since its Founder wept over the whole of Jerusalem.

Emperor William is going to Jerusalem—not Jericho, observe, but Jerusalem. A German band is getting ready to go with him. It is to comprise thirty-six picked performers. We suggest that they should play "Will he no come back agen?" Perhaps this tune, vigorously played on the scene of the Ascension, will precipitate the Second Advent; and William will be there to sail up first to meet the Lord in the air, the leading saint in all the holy aerial procession.

Mr. Macnamara has done good work for the Board Schools, and we should be sorry to depreciate his services. But he is not infallible, and we venture to think he takes a too exalted view of the function of Board School teachers. In opposing the suggestion that ministers should come into the schools and give definite religious teaching to the children, according to their parents' denominations, Mr. Macnamara protests against "the function of the permanent teachers being dwarfed by the removal from their hands of religious instruction." After all, however, the vanity, or self-esteem, or *amour propre*, or whatever you like to call it, of the teachers, is not the principal consideration. They may be better qualified to give religious instruction even than the clergy, though on the face of it that does not look reasonable. But a good many of us don't want either the clergy or the teachers to give religious instruction in the public schools. The teachers are really not inspired, and they had better stick to subjects in which they themselves can be accurately tested—such as calligraphy, arithmetic, geography, history, and elocution. Religious oracles are already too abundant. We don't want them multiplied.

Although the London clericals have, for a while, shelved the question of teaching the Apostles' Creed in Board schools, many of the provincial clergy are taking up the matter, and in some places, as for instance Middlesborough, are putting forward candidates who will support the teaching of that forgery in the schools. Minds brought up to believe in the virgin birth and the descent into hell are just what the parsons require to ensure a continuance of living in clover on other people's toil.

The sacerdotalist party is running candidates in most of the London divisions, and Churchmen are urged to plump for them only. "Capture the Board schools" is now the motto and the great hope of clericalism. But the average voter cares nothing for the sacerdotalist.

The Rev. Canon Haig Brown has dropped into a nice little billet by his appointment as Master of the Charterhouse. That excellent and ancient institution is overdosed with religion, having already a well-paid chaplain, and it was hoped that the Governors would have devoted to the increase of the charity the good round sum which goes to a clerical Master whose sermons are not wanted.

Dr. Johnston, the old-fashioned orthodox teacher of Biblical criticism who, at Aberdeen University last year, was retired by the University Court, insists on going on with his lectures to the undergraduates. The proceedings at the opening lectures were of an uproarious character, and orders were given by Professors Reid and Hamilton to clear the room, and although there was practically no audience Dr. Johnston went on with his address. He claimed his right as a Professor in the University to occupy the class-room, and refused to desist from delivering his lecture. Finally, his MS. was seized by a Professor, and the proceedings, which had been marked by great disorder, were thus summarily terminated.

Professor Johnston appeared to be getting on very nicely, despite the rude interruptions; for, according to the report, he stated that the authenticity of the Pentateuch was proved by the end of Deuteronomy, which tells of the death of Moses, while other books were attested by having their authors' names attached to them. It is a pity that such a relic of the old days should be disturbed.

Professor Leitch, who occupies a similar position at the General Assembly College, Belfast, seems to the full as orthodox. His address, as Moderator of the Assembly, was a protest against Rationalism and the anti-supernatural spirit of the age. He said: "The fact that the most celebrated Biblical scholars of Europe are advocating theories that would destroy the Bible as a revelation of the truth from God is exercising an influence on us all. There are many in the Church to-day who, though unable to adopt these destructive theories, are hindered by them from a frank and hearty acceptance of supernatural teaching of the Bible, and so are giving a feeble and hesitating testimony to the most fundamental facts and doctrines of the Christian

faith." He said, further, they should no more be moved by the names of great Rationalists than by those of great popes and cardinals. He forgets one thing: the Rationalists could teach something different, and be just as well off. Not so with popes, cardinals, and Presbyterian professors.

Poor Jesus Christ died, according to the inscription, as King of the Jews, but his throne was a cross. The new Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Forrest Browne, is in a different case. He has just been "enthroned" with much ceremony, and a long report of the proceedings appears in the local press. It took quite half-an-hour to settle Dr. Browne properly in his episcopal chair. Of course there was the regulation speechifying, in which the new Bishop participated. His lordship traced back his ghostly line to Saint Chad 1,250 years ago. Well, there isn't likely to be a successor to Saint Browne 1,250 years hence, nor even 250 years hence. Still, the bishopric will probably last its present occupant's time, and he may consider himself a much luckier man than his unfortunate Master. Jesus Christ *died* upon the cross, and Bishop Browne *lives* upon the cross—which is a vast improvement.

Dr. Brownlow, the Catholic bishop, got his back up over Dr. Browne's enthronement. "You are not the true successor of St. Chad," he says, "for St. Chad was a Catholic." Dr. Brownlow regards himself as the genuine article, and looks forward hopefully (with the aid of prayer, of course) to the Catholic conversion of England. It is a very pretty quarrel as it stands, and 'twould be a pity to spoil it.

"Our prayer is," said President McKinley the other day, "that our heavenly father may have our nation in his sacred keeping." "Our prayer is," says the *New York Truthseeker*, "that our nation may sometime have a president who is not a canting pharisee."

Rev. Dr. McConnell, of Brooklyn, complains that cycling has "depleted the churches." Good news! Good news!

Providence is afflicting Russia with a failure of crops. At New Orleans and Memphis yellow fever has been raging. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

An alarm of fire was raised in a church at Khnieleff, in the Kozloff district, Russia, and in the stampede fifty-four persons were killed and eighty more injured. Even the prospect of going straight to heaven doesn't reconcile Christians to a premature death.

In the Lower Town of Quebec there is a church dedicated to Notre Dame des Victoires. It was so named on account of the defeat of the English expedition in 1690. The Virgin was prayed to for victory, and it was, naturally, ascribed to her, and a well-endowed church built to celebrate her miracle. Of course the English afterwards gained Quebec, so that the miracle-working Virgin fell into some disrepute; but the church is still there to illustrate the way priests work the oracle.

Jose Ruiz y Munoa, the physician of the Spanish line ocean steamer, "Santo Domingo," while suffering under an attack of religious mania, in which he imagined that he saw the Savior of men with his cruel wounds, inflicted the stigmata upon himself with his own lancet, and fought as only a madman can before he was overpowered and taken to the Hudson-street Hospital, New York.

The Presbytery of Kirkcudbright have deposed the Rev. Ireland Gordon. Sixteen charges of drunkenness and impropriety with females were made against him, but only six were declared proven. The rev. gentleman has appealed against the decision.

The Apostolic chief of sinners lays it down that Christians must not go to law with the brethren. "General" Booth, however, has had a case before the Court of Appeal, in which he came off second-best. It seems that his firm, trading as the Salvation Army, made an agreement to purchase, in a period of four years, paper to the value of at least £30,000 from Messrs. Strong and Hanbury, wholesale stationers, and it was not denied that there was a considerable deficiency in the quantity ordered. The arbitrator had been appointed to decide what damages "General" Booth was to pay to Strong and Hanbury on that account. Booth and Co. appealed against having such an arbitrator. The appeal was dismissed with costs.

The Bishop of Coventry attended the meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and when he came to leave he found that his coat and umbrella had been stolen. Instead of giving the thief his apron and gaiters also, he had David William Rees, a local preacher, given into custody.

In the church porch at Chesterfield an umbrella was found one Sunday with the touching inscription: "This umbralar has prayed on my kodshens ever since I stole him."

Mr. Nisbet says in the *Referee*: "Religion has a great many lip-servants. There are few who serve her with their hearts. Men, even professing Christians, seldom act as if the prize of eternal life were as real to them as the possibility of a dividend in a mining company. Look at the trouble they are at to get to Klondike. If they would only put forth half as much effort to get to heaven, the churches would have a good time."

No man was more virulent against the claims of Charles Bradlaugh to his seat in Parliament than Sir Hardinge Giffard, the present Lord Chancellor Halsbury. He it was who denounced the *Freethinker* as "spiritual dynamite." What is the opinion of his own profession on this pious patron of the Christian Evidence Society? A correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette*, who made inquiries recently "in and about the Courts," writes: "There seems to be only one opinion on the subject of Lord Halsbury's latest appointment. It is denounced on all sides as a job surpassing any which even the present Lord Chancellor has previously accomplished."

The *Daily News* says: "The Lord Chancellor has signified his occupancy of the Woolsack by a series of personal and political jobs which have earned for him a very disagreeable nickname. But he may now be congratulated upon having surpassed himself, and thrown all his previous performances into the shade. Mr. Darling is not known to have any qualification whatever for the judicial office."

Among the many religious societies which are lamenting a falling off in funds is the Church Association, which puts itself forward as England's bulwark against a reversion to Popery. The Jubilee junketings are, as usual, made responsible for the diminution of income.

The convict Hall, who has been executed at Melbourne for the murder of his wife, showed much contrition and expectation of meeting his victim safe in the arms of Jesus. The chaplain prepared him for glory by administering the blood of the Savior in the form of good red wine. The incident led to the following lines in the *Sydney Bulletin*:-

Penitent, about to swing,
Let us kneel and pray together;
Then a joyful hymn we'll sing.
Ere, with sturdy bonds of leather,
Hangman binds your limbs in union
You'll be fit to "take Communion."

Penitent, about to swing,
Sure salvation you are seeking;
See that to the Cross you cling
(In a pious way of speaking),
Bound of yore for pit infernal,
Now you're booked to Life Eternal.

All through doing what you did—
Murder, followed by repentance.
Swarms of souls on Satan's grid
Envy you your lawful sentence.
Lost are they beyond retrieving—
They lived and died without *Believing*.

The Bishop of Worcester, at the annual meeting of the Birmingham Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, said he wished to lay great emphasis on the fact that the critical study of the Bible, even when proceeding from those who were not believing Christians, had nevertheless contributed immensely to the more intelligent use of Holy Scripture. In plain terms, Freethinkers have compelled Christians to modify some of their absurdities. The Right Rev. Father-in-God went on to state they lost nothing by the new view. He said: "Let it be granted, for instance, that there were two Isaiahs, and that the work of the first stopped at the thirty-ninth chapter, while the rest of the book was written at the time of the exile. We should lose nothing at all. Take Isaiah liii., which seemed to Paley so remarkable that he staked his whole argument of prophecy on that single chapter. That chapter lost nothing whatever of its prophetic force if they put its authorship in the time of the exile. On the contrary, he believed that it gained in force, because the sufferings of the nation in exile were themselves a kind of feeble foreshadowing of the sufferings of Christ."

If what was written long after was ascribed to Isaiah, this shows what little reliance can be placed on the compilers of these documents. Further, the fact that the fifty-third chapter was written in exile suggests its true interpretation—viz., that it has nothing to do with Jesus Christ, but describes the sufferings of Jacob, the servant of the Lord the personified people of Israel.

Some correspondents of the *Times* have been exercised upon the question, "What are the functions of a Bishop?" It seems that the Bishop of Lichfield recently gave a "dispensation" from fasting for one day to those who attended the opening of a new schoolroom at St. Oswald's College, Ellesmere. It is said that Anglican bishops have no claim or power to grant such "dispensations," and this is but another instance of how naturally the sacerdotalists go on the road to Rome.

Among repartees contributed to the *Daily News* there is the old story of a Dissenting minister, the Rev. Matthew Wilkes. Hearing a drayman calling down imprecations on his horses' eyes and limbs, and thinking to shame him, he tapped him on the shoulder. "My friend," said he, "for that cursing and swearing I will bear evidence against thee on the Great Day of Judgment." "Oh yes," was the retort, "I daresay. The biggest rogue always turns King's evidence."

Another is of a Roman Catholic parish priest, who was well known for his efforts in support of temperance principles, and who had frequently had occasion to admonish one of his parishioners for his studious disregard of them. One day he encountered the individual in question as he was "taking the road at right angles." The good priest addressed him with a distressed air and a shake of the head: "Drunk again, Larry." "So am I, your riverence," was the disconcerting reply, delivered in a sympathetic tone, and accompanied by a reciprocating gesture.

Another Irish one tells how Pat, who had some puppies he was anxious to sell, met his priest and thus accosted him: "Does your riverence want to buy any pups, fine and Catholic pups, your riverence?" "No, thank you, Pat. I do not want them." The Protestant clergyman, happening to be a little way behind, overheard the conversation. Presently Pat thought he would try his chance with him. "Does your honor want to buy any pups this mornin'?" Rael and Protestant pups, yer honor." "But, Pat," said the clergyman, "have I not just heard you offering them to the priest as Catholic pups?" "Shure and I did, yer honor; but that was before their eyes were opened."

The recent commission of inquiry into the condition of the Fijians has had the courage candidly to saddle "Christian civilization" with the moral and physical ruin of the race. "Paganism prevented sexual immorality," and, as Christianity only forbids it, the result is so much human nature that "the chastity which was formerly almost invariable in a bride is now the rare exception." The physical deterioration of the people also is attributed, partly to a filthy habit of living which Christianity doubtless reprehends, but which benighted paganism punished as a crime; and partly to the harder lot of the woman under the "family life," which the gossellers have worked so hard to introduce. Polygamy made it compulsory that an infant-rearing wife should receive the utmost attention from the other wives; the single spouse's maternal duties are so seriously interfered with that the infant mortality rate is now all but half of the birth-rate. The whole miserable business resolves itself into one of two alternatives. Either Christianity—when judged, like other things, by results—is a howling failure, or the Christianity of our sable brother is the merest humbug, and the whole mission business an impudent fraud.—*Bulletin*.

The Rev. C. L. Williams, a Ramsgate vicar, has evidently been reading trashy books. In his sermon on Sunday evening last he told his congregation that he recently bought a book at one of Smith's bookstalls to while away the time during a river trip. After reading it through he was so disgusted with it that he threw it into the stream. Then the seriousness of the act dawned upon him, and, fearing lest someone else should find the book and read it, he fished it out and sunk it in the mud at the bottom of the stream. The rev. gentleman, however, omitted one important point in relating this story, and that was to give the name of the book in question. Probably it was the fear that had he done so his flock would have been shocked at their pastor for having chosen such vile literature that led him to make the omission.

The rev. gentleman expressed disgust that such a respectable institution as Smith's bookstalls should be the means of distributing such rubbishy books, and held that while they continued to do so the moral status of the country would sink lower and lower. He has evidently yet to learn that ninety-nine per cent. of such publications are sought after by members of his own persuasion; and had he had the courage to give the title of that book, the local booksellers would have had such a demand for it during the week that they would have blessed him for the advertisement.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 7, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, subject, "If I were God." Morning lecture (free) at 11.30, Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell, subject, "Church, Chapel, and Common Sense in the Coming School Board Elections."

November 14, Athenæum Hall, London; 28, Leicester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 7, Glasgow; 8, Motherwell; 9, Paisley; 10, Greenock; 14, Edinburgh; 18, Wood Green; 21 and 28, 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.

O. FORD (Derby).—Lecture notices should be sent to the editor.

J. K. MAAGAARD.—Shall appear.

LIVERPOOL WORKING MAN.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

S. G. GRANT.—Thanks for the cutting. See paragraph. Your quotation from Shakespeare is very apposite. The "petty worries" you refer to do not prevent the realization of your good wishes. Mr. Foote does enjoy good health and appetite, and sound sleep.

F. COTTRELL writes: "The Camberwell people had evidently been looking forward to a visit from Mr. Foote, as the hall was crowded last Sunday. The doors were open at 7 o'clock, and we had some good vocal and instrumental music till 7.30, when there was not standing room. We had an extra supply of the *Freethinker*, and were soon sold out. At the close of the lecture we enrolled eleven new members." This is how Branches get on that work instead of gumbling. We congratulate the brave, untiring Camberwell committee on their well-earned success; and we just wish some *Freethinker* with a little money to spare would send them a cheque for encouragement and extension of their propaganda.

J. CHACE.—See our leading article. We appreciate the trouble you have taken.

J. ROTHWELL.—Certainly it would, as you say, be an eye-opener if all who are virtually *Freethinkers*, in every class of society, would speak out boldly; but a correspondence in this journal would hardly bring about that desirable consummation. While men are timid, and Christian society is intolerant, a good deal of *Freethought* will keep itself private. Pleased to hear you hope to do something for the Treasurer's Scheme.

G. BRADY sends another 10s., his monthly contribution towards the Treasurer's Scheme, which he is glad to find is meeting with some measure of success, though not as much as it deserves.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—No one would suspect you of plagiarism. Still, we note that your verses in our last issue were written, exactly as printed, more than three months ago.

H. NICHOLSON.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Watts was in "splendid form" at Stanley, and made such a fine impression; also that there was such a capital attendance on the first night of the debate with Mr. Waldron.

E. H.—(1) We have not heard that Mr. Cox was vanquished by an infidel-slayer at Pontypridd. Nor can we give you Mr. Cox's address, as we do not possess it. (2) The so-called apocryphal books of the Old Testament are included in the Catholic Bible. The so-called apocryphal gospels were used in early Christian churches before the Church settled the Canon, centuries after the time of Christ.

T. HOPKINS.—Thanks for your subscription, which is properly acknowledged in another paragraph. Thanks also for your humorous letter. As a matter of fact, Mr. Foote doesn't "want £250 a year." That is what the Treasurer proposes to pay the President some day, if possible; but it may be a very stiff and stubborn "if." Mr. Hartmann's scheme has been adopted; it is his scheme, not the President's, whose only concern is to give it a loyal support in the interest of the Society. Directly the President is a recipient of a penny under it, the party will be apprised of the fact. At the same time, we do not wish it to be understood that we think the President ought not to be paid, if the finances allowed of its being done.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—J. T. Embleton, 10s. (p); Ips, 5s. (p); J. Lambie, 5s. (p); Chatham Branch, £1.

G. R. (per E. Truelove) sends £4, his first year's subscription to the N. S. S. Treasurer's Scheme. We have also received:—T. Hopkins, £1.

THE HOOPER FUND.—Mr. J. Bellamy acknowledges:—F. C. Adams, 2s. 6d.; W. Garloy, 2s.; W. H. Taylor, 1s.; W. Lucas, 1s.; R. W. Dykes, 1s.; C. H. Bull, 1s.; H. Smith, 6d.; R. S. Johnson, 6d.; W. Roberts, 6d.; W. Bryan, 6d.; G. Bryan, 6d.; G. W. Hopper, 6d.; G. Wenborn, 10s.; R. Richards, 10s.; R. Ward, 10s.; H. Paskey, 6s. 5d.; J. Clarkstone, 6d.

A. J. R.—That beautiful passage of Holy Scripture occurs in Jeremiah xxv. 27.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—North Eastern Daily Gazette—Fria Tankar—Birmingham Post—New York Public Opinion—Freidenker—Lucifer—Cheltenham Free Press—Two Worlds—The Conssett Chronicle—Chatham Observer—Progressive Thinker—Ourselves—The New Century—Humanity—Zoophilist—Truthseeker—The Torch of Reason—Dominion Review—Secular Thought—The Northern Whig—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Crescent.

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 lectures this evening (Nov. 7) in the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject "If I were God." This is the title of Mr. Richard Le Gallienne's new book, which will form the basis, or at least the occasion, of Mr. Foote's lecture.

Camberwell Secular Hall was crowded to excess on Sunday evening. Such a crush has not been witnessed there for years. Not only was every chair and form on the premises utilized, but people were standing behind the seats right to the door, and several persons stood all the evening at the back of the platform. Mr. Sabine, who took the chair, made the usual announcements, and congratulated all concerned on the progress the Branch was making. Mr. Foote's rising to begin his lecture was the signal for an enthusiastic demonstration. For nearly an hour-and-a-half he discoursed on "God and the Devil" to an audience that was alert and appreciative to the end of his peroration. Punctuations of laughter or applause were made with great frequency. Everybody seemed delighted with the successful evening, and the lecturer was asked to "come again and oftener." In the ante-room, after the meeting broke up, the secretary enrolled several new members.

Now that the outdoor lecture season is ended, the Camberwell Branch is going to carry on free indoor lectures on Sunday mornings in its own hall. Mr. Foote has promised to open the ball this morning (November 7) at 11.30, taking for his subject "Church, Chapel, and Common Sense, in the Coming School Board Elections." *Freethinkers* in the neighborhood should try to bring their less heterodox friends. There is nothing to pay. It is free salvation this time.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured to a crowded audience in the Co-operative Hall, Stanley, Durham. Quite one-third of those present were ladies. The subject was "The Cradle, the Altar, and the Tomb." It appears to have "caught on," for the large gathering listened with profound attention, and at the close Mr. Watts received quite an ovation. Friends attended from Stockton-on-Tees, Chester-le-Street, and other places within a radius of twenty miles.

The four nights' debate at Stanley, Durham, between Mr. Charles Watts and the Rev. A. J. Waldron, commenced on Saturday, October 30. There was an excellent audience, and the best of order prevailed throughout the evening. Mr. Jonathan Green, a local Justice of the Peace, presided. The discussion was continued last Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

To-day, Sunday, November 7, Mr. Watts lectures three times in Glasgow, and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in Paisley, Greenock, and Motherwell. The last three lectures are given under Mr. Hartmann's Propagandist Scheme.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (Nov. 7) at Blackburn, in Jubilee Hall, Water-street, morning, afternoon, and evening. We hope the local friends will do their best to crowd the hall.

Mr. Cohen has been lecturing at Stanley again, his meetings resulting in seven new members to the local Society. The *Conssett Chronicle* notices his "large audiences" and admits his "eloquence," but thinks he was "too sarcastic." One good Christian, signing himself "Bible Reader," wants to know through the *Chronicle* why such "blasphemy" is allowed in Stanley. "Is there no village pond?" he asks. Perhaps there is, and "Bible Reader" should cool off in it, if he hasn't water enough for the process in his own house.

A good deal more correspondence appears on the same subject, much of it abusive. The Christians are evidently feeling the attack on their superstition.

Mr. W. Heaford occupied the Athenæum Hall platform on Sunday evening. He had a good reception, and his lecture on "The Flight of the Gods" was highly appreciated.

Our East London friends have started well at the King's Hall, 83 Commercial-road, where this Sunday Mr. Heaford takes the platform. Friends in the district should attend and support this effort in a densely populated district.

In view of the importance attaching to the question of Prison Reform, our readers will be interested to learn that Mr. Edward Carpenter will lecture on "Prison Methods Now and in the Future," at Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand, on Wednesday, November 10, at 8 p.m. Admission free.

Every Secularist who is really interested in the movement should purchase a copy of the *Secular Almanack* for 1898, issued by the National Secular Society. All the work on the Almanack—at any rate at present—including Mr. Wheeler's, which is far the heaviest, is done gratuitously, and every penny of profit arising from the sale will go into the Society's exchequer. Besides some interesting and useful articles by leading Freethought writers, the Almanack contains a calendar of the "saints" of human progress, and much other information of service to Secularists.

Mr. Forder reports a fair sale of the new collection of Ingersoll's pieces under the title of *The House of Death*. This little volume only requires to be known to be in extensive demand. It contains some of Ingersoll's tenderest, wisest, and most beautiful utterances; and it is just the thing for a Freethinker to lend to a Christian friend or acquaintance—of course after reading it himself.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, is fixed for Monday, January 10, at the Holborn Restaurant. London friends, and perhaps some country ones, will please note.

The American Secularists will hold their Annual Congress this year at New York. It will extend over three days, from November 19 to 21 inclusive. Hardman Hall has been engaged for the occasion. Messrs. Foote and Watts have been invited to send letters of friendship and encouragement, and have done so.

Lucy N. Colman suggests three nominees for the president's chair of the American Secular Union—Mr. Washburn, Mr. Remsburg, and Mr. Steiner. She would be satisfied with either.

Colonel Ingersoll's health appears to be thoroughly restored. His lecturing engagements are published nearly up to Christmas. We hope the Colonel will be able next year to redeem his promise to visit England. The Freethinkers over here are dying to see and hear him.

Our ever-welcome exchange, the New York *Truthseeker*, reproduces our recent article vindicating Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and David Hume, against the malicious falsehoods of Preacher Talmage. It also prints a long letter from Mr. Wheeler in reply to Mr. Conway's arguments in favor of his "Romney" portrait of Paine. We miss George Macdonald's "Observations" in our gallant contemporary. We hope they are not permanently discontinued.

Friends who have promised subscriptions to the N. S. S. Treasurer's Scheme are requested to remit the same, in whole or in part, at their earliest convenience. Mr. Watts, Mr. Cohen, and other lecturers, are doing good propagandist work already under this scheme. Mr. Foote stands aside for the present. The scheme will have to be much better supported before he feels justified in drawing anything from the Society's exchequer. Perhaps it will interest some of our readers to know that Mr. Foote renders unpaid service as president, and does not even charge for his out-of-pocket expenses.

Obituary.

Two Freethinkers of some note have passed away in America—Professor A. B. Severance, who died in North Chicago on October 8, in his seventy-fourth year; and Mr. Graves, the publisher of the *Little Freethinker*.

The Legitimation League holds a public meeting on Monday, November 8, in the Council Chamber, Holborn Restaurant, at 8 p.m., when Mr. William Platt will read a paper on "Natural Love and Spiritual Needs." Admission is free and discussion is invited.

A NEW BIBLE.

A RECENT number of the *Methodist Times* goes into raptures, exhausting, as usual, its extensive vocabulary of superlatives, over what it describes as a "wonderful and delightful" series of the various books of the Bible. It seems that up to now the Bible has been given to us in an "uncouth, artificial, and misleading" form, and that "it will have almost the startling effect of a new revelation to inform the majority of English readers that the various books of the Bible are not only inspired volumes, but also exquisite illustrations of the highest literary form"!

We confess that this information has not had a particularly startling effect on us, because we had always understood that the Bible was so absolutely perfect in every respect, literary and otherwise, that its pre-eminence was unquestionable. But, according to the Methodist organ of holiness and hysterics, God has only just "raised up," in the person of a devout Methodist, a gentleman who has licked God's word into literary shape, and thereby "rendered a service of inestimable importance to the English Bible.....which in some respects is not less significant or less likely to produce world-wide effects than the re-discovery of the Bible by Martin Luther in a monastic library." It seems to take God such a long time to move. He has "been and gone" and left a matter of such "inestimable importance" to the human race, and resulting, according to this Methodist scribe, in such "disastrous consequences," for ever so many hundreds or thousands of years, and only just set it right! Is it nothing that he has, to again quote the scribe, "made the Bible an unknown book to numerous persons of culture, refinement, and taste"? The wonder is how such people ever got any culture, refinement, or taste without the Bible! And if they did, and others can, then possibly we could manage to get along without it.

However, it will be all right now. We shall be able to have Job, or Jeremiah, to cheer us up when we are in the dumps, in a nice handy little pocket edition, without carrying the whole family Bible about with us. One or two thoughts are suggested to us by the publication of this improved edition of God's infallible word. If we can only get Christians to grasp the fact that the Bible is not a book, properly speaking, but a collection of books written in different countries, in different ages, and by different writers, and that these books have been bound together irrespective of their chronological order, their literary merit, their historical credibility, or their moral excellence, something will have been gained by Freethought. If we had not been taught that the various books which make up the Bible were inspired, should we ever have guessed it? Had our minds been unbiassed by religious education, should we ever have concluded that Jeremiah was inspired, but that Hamlet was not? Have not Christians themselves disputed as to which of the books of the Bible were or were not inspired? What mark or criterion is there by which we can judge of the inspiration of a book?

Of course the inspiration of the Bible was settled for us some centuries ago by a conclave of divines; but many things have been found out since then; biblical criticism has advanced, science has progressed, and much that is in the Bible has been discredited and shown to be false, and it is about time we took another vote on the matter.

H. JONES.

"Endymion" describes in *Secular Thought* how in the market-place, as he stood between the Salvation Army and a pedlar, who told people how they could save their own souls if only they bought his composition, he caught some terribly sacrilegious combinations, of which we note a few of the least blasphemous: "Salvation is free! free to all!—only twenty-five cents a box." "The Lord is our strength!—There's nothing so strong as this cement." "Accept Jesus now! now! now!—Your soles will last out two pairs of uppers." "Christ offers himself to all, without money and—At ten cents a cake, gentlemen, I offer you—God's only son, our blessed redeemer—Why, it would be cheap at a dollar, but I only ask—Where will you spend eternity, in hell or—This cement is stronger than—The Holy Spirit and all the angels of heaven." This sort of thing was in full blast when the correspondent left, and was still going on when he passed half an hour afterwards.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting, held at the Society's office on October 26; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. J. Neate, P. Sabine, M. Loafer, W. Lat, E. W. Quay, C. MacCall, E. Bater, S. Hartmann, G. J. Warren, C. Watts, J. M. Wheeler, W. Heaford, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted. The Treasurer was asked to present a complete financial statement at the next meeting.

As a matter arising out of the minutes, the President reported upon the case of Mr. F. M. Browne. Mr. Forder, who had the matter in hand, was again making a weekly allowance to Mr. Browne's wife and family.

Some discussion arose as to whether the N. S. S. should support the candidature of Mr. Barwick, a member of the Social Democratic Federation, who was running on the Secular Education ticket for the Finsbury division; and it was moved by Mr. Heaford, seconded by Mr. Hartmann, "That, in view of the forthcoming School Board election, this Executive recommends the Secularists throughout the country to support only those candidates who include Secular Education in their program, meaning by Secular Education the exclusion of Bible reading and all other religious instruction from the school curriculum." Carried unanimously.

Mr. Charles Watts reported further correspondence he had received from the Union of Ethical Societies, and the matter was adjourned for further inquiries.

The resolution which was to define the duties of the sub-committee was then considered, and ran as follows: "The sub-committee appointed re Mr. Hartmann's Scheme shall be called the Propaganda and Finance Committee. Its duties shall be:—(1) To arrange propagandist work under the Scheme in conjunction with the Secretary, and, when necessary, with the President, who will also deal with any sudden and imperative business that may arise between the Committee meetings. (2) To see that the list of subscribers is duly kept posted up in the Society's books. (3) To consider and recommend to the Executive any fresh extension of the Scheme that may seem financially and otherwise advisable. (4) To look after collectors under the Scheme, and make all requisite arrangements with them through the Secretary. (5) To keep a proper minute book of Committee proceedings, and report same, with any explanations, at every ordinary Executive meeting." After a short discussion, this was unanimously adopted.

The Committee then reported the result of lectures delivered by Mr. Cohen at Gateshead and Felling, and by Mr. Heaford, with assistance from the Scheme, at Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse. They also recommended that, for the present, assistance should be given preferentially in towns where branches already existed or needed re-organization.

The expenditure having now exhausted the funds in hand, the Secretary had been instructed to call up promises as far as possible, and to prepare a list of branches which required assistance.

The Committee minutes were then adopted. Messrs. G. J. Warren (East London), C. Stewart (Wood Green), and O. Ford (Derby) were appointed as collectors in their respective districts.

The Editors reported that the *Almanack* for 1898 was now on sale.

The Secretary read correspondence from Bristol, which was ordered to stand over until next meeting; and also reported that the Annual Dinner would take place at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday, January 10.

The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE (Secretary).

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN WOMEN.

IN Pagan Greece woman had better opportunities of self-development than any in distinctively Christian times. Everyone has heard of Aspasia, the consort of Pericles, and of Sappho, whose harmonious verses led to her being designated the tenth Muse. In the literary annals of Greece we read of Aeora Lucana deeply versed in the philosophy of Pythagoras, on which she wrote a treatise; of Areta, the daughter of Aristippus, who was public instructress at Athens, and wrote a life of Socrates and a treatise on the *Miseries of Women*; of Hipparchia, also a writer on philosophy; of Corinna, who in five poetic contests bore away the palm even from Pindar; of Agnocide, who studied medicine, and opened the way for other females to do the like; and last, not least, of Hypatia, the leader of the school at Alexandria, whose skin was torn from her body by a Christian mob hounded on by Saint Cyril. Christianity produced saints and martyrs, but, with a few rare exceptions, we have to come to the days of Freethought to find such women as Harriet Martineau and Mary Ann Evans.

UNCLE BEN.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF HELL.

SPURGEON'S fiery account of the hereafter may be easily paralleled from other noted divines, thus:—Rev. Joseph Benson, Methodist commentator, says: "Infinite justice arrests their guilty souls and confines them in the dark prisons of hell, till they have satisfied all its demands by their personal sufferings, which, alas! they can never do..... He will exert all his divine attributes to make them as wretched as the capacity of their nature will admit..... Number the stars in the firmament, the drops of rain, sand on the seashore; and when thou hast finished the calculation, sit down and number up the ages of woe. Let every star, every drop, every grain of sand, represent one million of tormenting ages, and know that as many more millions still remain behind, and yet as many more behind these, and so on without end."

Rev. Ambrose, in a discourse entitled "Doomsday," pictures the torments of lost souls thus: "When the damned have drunken down whole draughts of brimstone one day, they must do the same another day. The eye shall be tormented with the sight of devils, the ears with hideous yellings and outcries of the damned in flames, the nostrils shall be smothered, as it were, with brimstone: the tongue, the hand, the foot, and every part, shall fry in flames."

Rev. Mr. Emmons wrote in his series of sermons (sermon xvi.): "The happiness of the elect in heaven will, in part, consist in witnessing the torments of the damned in hell; among these may be their own children, parents, husbands, wives, and friends on earth. One part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of those miserable objects, will say, Amen! hallelujah! praise God!"

"When they (the saints) shall see how great the misery is from which God hath saved them, and how great a difference he hath made between their state and the state of others who were by nature, and perhaps by practice, no more sinful and ill-deserving than they, it will give them more a sense of wonderfulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God in making them so to differ. The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever."

Rev. Jonathan Edwards, in his *Practical Sermons*, says: "The saints in glory will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them, but rejoicing. They will not be sorry for the damned, it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but, on the contrary, when they see this sight it will occasion rejoicing, and excite them to joyful praise."

Rev. Thomas Boston, in his *Fourfold State*, informs us that "the godly wife shall applaud the justice of the judge in the condemnation of her ungodly husband. The godly husband shall say Amen! to the damnation of her who lay in his bosom! The godly parent say Hallelujah! at the passing of the sentence of their ungodly child, and the godly child from the heart approve the damnation of his wicked parents who begot him and the mother who bare him" (p. 336).

Rev. Thomas Vincent, a Calvinistic clergyman of the past, indulges in the following pleasant thoughts: "This will fill them (the saints) with astonishing admiration and wondering joy, when they see some of their near relatives going to hell, their fathers, their mothers, their children, their husbands, their wives, their intimate friends and companions, while they themselves are saved. Those affections they now have for relatives out of Christ will cease, and they will not have the least trouble to see them sentenced to hell and thrust into the fiery furnace."

Such are the views of some of the teachers of the past.

Prayer Answered.

Dear *Bulletin*.—Prayer for rain does sometimes answer, despite the scoffing of *The Bulletin* and other unbelievers. We had a drought recently in Maoriland—not much of a drought, perhaps, but a very good one for us. One Methodist sect in a Hawkes Bay township proposed having a school-picnic, and a rival Dipper sect prayed for rain—presumably to spoil the show. But the weather kept fine, and as the next best thing the Dippers arranged a picnic of their own for the same day, to keep their people away from the opposition orgy. It was held in a secluded gully, and that afternoon, just as the shivoo was in full blast, it rained like H—anything. The moist saints started for home with torrents rushing off their monkey beards, and as they hoisted the heavy saintesses over streams of rain-water, and feasted their eyes on Sister Mary Hann's muddy underskirts and skinny ankles, they realized the efficacy of prayer, and were not at all comforted.—R. T.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

THE MODERN SHEPHERD.

THE parson rose from his downy bed at the break of the Sabbath Day,
He dressed himself and decked himself in the chaste æsthetic way—

Lavender-scented was his garb, rings graced his lily hand ;
In truth, he was a goodly sight—the parson of the land.

The parson drove to the temple fair, where the Lord of Hosts abode,
And his carriage flew, at a rattling pace, on the wide and dusty road
(’Tis true the master went afoot, in the days of long ago,
Nor purse nor scrip His followers bore ; but the times have altered so).

The parson rose in the pulpit then and gazed upon his flock—
The big land-sharks and the business men (the Church rests on a rock !);
The big, fat paunch, and the big, gold guard and the broad-cloth, shone so sleek—
’Twas a sight divine, the stately shrine of the Lowly and the Meek.

The parson waved his lily hand and raised his mellow voice :
“The Lord hath been exceeding good. Rejoice, my friends, rejoice !
The oil of gladness hath he poured in fulness on each head,
His little lambs, in pastures green, by running waters led.

“Let the men of substance raise the hymn, the upper orders sing ;
Ye bankers ! make the holy aisles of the sanctuary ring ;
Ye landlords ! join the tuneful throng, and laud Him loud who said
The landlords had not left Him where to lay His precious head.

“Lift up the psalm, ye usurers ! the New Day doth begin ;
Christ turned the money-changers out—but now we take them in ;
The creed was somewhat narrow which the Savior preached of old,
The simple Galilean—but we’re making wide the fold.

“Lift up your song, ye men of pelf—ye burly men of beer !
And sing, in soft, respectful tones, ye poor folks in the rear !
Lo ! there be many mansions in the Father’s House on High—
E’en the poor man, if respectful, hath a lodging in the sky.

“Lord ! strike the sons of Belial low who dare to rise and kick ;
Lord ! smite the Agitator home and touch him to the quick ;
Lord ! guard full well the powers that be—keep thou our pastures green,
Our people meek and humble, as they hitherto have been.

“Oh, Lord ! the discontented—they be many in the land ;
They love not us, the sanctified, thine own anointed band.
Make bare thy strong right arm and help thy chosen in this town—
Christ ‘stirred the people up’ of old—but do thou keep them down.”

Lord ! Send thy choicest blessings down on all who have a stake
In this Thy blessed vineyard. Let the scoffer fear and quake.

Lord ! prosper all our little specs, let corner ’lotments rise ;
So shall we win our way at last to “corners” in the skies.

At last the shepherd ended. Then out the bankers hied :
The land-sharks and the usurers they followed side by side ;
The fat man with the stake came next, and then the man of beer,
And lastly came the poor man, so respectful, in the rear.

Then the parson left the holy place, and gat him home with speed,
And he sate him down to a royal feast (the wine was choice indeed) ;
And the servants bowed to every beck of the shepherd’s lily hand—

In truth, he was a goodly sight, the parson of the land !
—*Sydney Bulletin.* P. LUFTIG.

I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. ’Tis the business of little minds to shrink ; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.—*Thomas Paine.*

BOOK CHAT.

MARY BENNETT DUKES, a Christian lady of Kobe, Japan, writes a pamphlet on *Money and the Church*, in which she says: “It is without exaggeration to say that, of every dollar given to the cause of foreign missions in England and America, only ten cents is used for direct Gospel work on the field.”

Miss Constance E. Plumtre contributes to the *New Century Review* an account of the *Tragedy* of Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), one of the early Italian Freethinkers, who in this work exposed the wickedness of the Papacy. Miss Plumtre recommends its republication. Another article is on the philosophy of Empedokles, so remarkably versified by Matthew Arnold. Mr. W. B. Wallace, who writes the article, contends that Empedokles was an early teacher of the doctrine of evolution. A brilliant sketch of the varied career of the *Saturday Review*, by Dyke Rhoads, concludes by observing that the opportunities of the Churchman and theologian seem to have been lost for ever.

The *Vegetarian* of October 30 gives a portrait of Mr. H. Salt, the author of the *Life of James Thomson*, the *Life of H. D. Thoreau*, *Literary Sketches*, *P. B. Shelley*, *Richard Jefferies*, etc. Mr. Salt is a strenuous literary worker, of clear, logical mind and fine taste, whose services to the Humanitarian League, of which he is secretary, are beyond praise. He has just sent us a reprint of a reply to the Right Reverend Monsignor J. S. Vaughan, entitled *Vaughan on Vivisection*. The Catholic priest gives his pious benison on the practice of dissecting live animals for purposes of research, and the Freethinking *littérateur* exposes his sophistry very ably.

The article on “The Minor Poets,” in the new *Quarterly*, is calculated to make those gentlemen writhe, some because they are, and some because they are not, included. Le Gallienne gets it especially hot. The writer says: “He apes Keats, and disgraces him by rant and frippery that befit a third-rate actor or a second-rate property-monger ; his frenzies are those of a penny-reading reciter ; he gushes over a picked blossom ; he is a mass of sickly affectations. We have waded through them all.” As for Alfred the Little Laureate, “he seems to us a lady-like painter in water-colors.”

G. Margoliouth, writing in the *Guardian*, October 27, on Dr. Ginsburg’s edition of the *Massoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible*, incidentally mentions some alterations the scribes permitted themselves in transcribing and touching up the words of the Lord. Thus the present reading of Genesis xviii. 22 is: “But Abraham stood yet before the Lord.” It is traditionally recorded that the original text had: “But the Lord stood yet before Abraham.” The fastidious Soferim thought it would please the deity to transpose them. So in Numbers xi. 15 Moses originally said to Jahveh: “Kill me, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, so that I may not see thy evil.” But the Soferim preferred to have it: “That I may not see my evil.” Another instance is the last clause in Job xxxii. 3. The present text has: “And because they [i.e., Job’s friends] had condemned Job.” But tradition affirms that the phrase which originally stood in the text was: “And because they condemned God.”

BUDDHISM.

THE Buddhists number 400,000,000, or one-third of the human race. Buddha lived about 500 or 600 years before our era. Buddhists do not believe in any god or gods as being pleased or displeased by their actions, and as assigning to the actors their future condition by way of punishment or of reward. The very idea of a God as creating, or in any way ruling, the world is utterly absurd in the Buddhist system. God is not so much as denied ; he is simply not known. Contrary to the opinion once confidently and generally held, that a nation of Atheists never existed, it is no longer to be disputed that the numerous Buddhist nations are essentially Atheist ; for they know no beings with greater supernatural power than any man is supposed capable of attaining to by virtue, by austerity, and by science ; and a remarkable indication of this startling fact is to be seen in the circumstance that some at least of the Buddhist nations—the Chinese, the Mongols, and the Thibetans—have no word in their languages to express the notion of God. The future condition of the Buddhist, then, is not assigned to him by the Ruler of the Universe ; but his actions determine it by a sort of virtue inherent in the nature of things, by the blind and unconscious conca-tentation of cause and effect.

—*Chambers’s Encyclopædia.*

SECULARISM IN BIRMINGHAM.

THE present session of the Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. partaking somewhat of the nature of an experiment in propaganda, it may be of interest to Freethinkers generally if I give a short account of the work of the past month.

For some years past the Branch has had to struggle against a difficulty common to our party in many other towns. The only hall available for Sunday lectures was situated on the outskirts of the town, and was not easily accessible to the public. The Committee decided to approach the School Board authorities for permission to use one of the large rooms in the most central school. This having been obtained, Mr. Foote opened our campaign. The large audiences attracted by his well-known ability served as a splendid advertisement. He was followed by Mr. Stephen Armfield, who gave two excellent lectures. Mr. Armfield has a splendid delivery and a good platform style. His services should be utilized by all the Midland Branches.

Mr. Charles Watts, who came next, had crowded houses. He is always a popular visitor to Birmingham. The next Sunday Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, who appeared for the first time as a lecturer for our Branch, had between five hundred and six hundred people to listen to her, and this despite the fact that the Sunday Lecture Society was holding its opening meeting in the largest theatre, where a lecture was delivered on "Our Colonies."

In addition to these meetings, Mr. Watts gave two week-night addresses (under the Treasurer's Scheme), which were well attended, and held a two-nights' debate with the Rev. A. J. Waldron. The debate was a thorough success in every way, and all our friends expressed the greatest satisfaction at the manner in which Mr. Watts represented our views. The following Sunday Mr. Stanley Jones was with us, and met with a good reception. All the lectures have been thrown open to the public free of charge, and, as a consequence, the sale of literature has been more than doubled. The collections have been good, and the Committee are satisfied with the financial results of the month's work.

If the new scheme of the N.S.S. Treasurer is only supported by the more wealthy members of the party, the experiment of free lectures on Sundays could be extended. Judging from the good results in Birmingham, I believe therein lies our greatest prospect of success as a party organization.

C. H. CATTELL.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SECULAR POLICY AND THE SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Secularists have no cause to uphold supporters of the Compromise. It was formed despite them, and it has been carried out to their disadvantage, leaving them to pay for teaching what they hold to be false and pernicious, and offering the rotten consolation of a conscience clause. The so-called Progressives, having pledged themselves to support the Compromise, are the worst foes of a purely secular education. Better friends are those who re-open the religious difficulty. The experience of the Colonies, and of those countries where secular education prevails, proves that it is the strife of the sects which gives the children a chance of learning what is useful, without their minds being warped by religious lies. Ex-parson Diggle, who is an intelligent man of the world as well as an astute tactician, is aware of this. He has done his utmost to let his fellow Churchmen know it would, in the long run, be a mistake to re-open the controversy. But the average fat-headed parson, whose ignorance is only excelled by his arrogance, elated by dipping his hands into John Bull's pocket for his Church schools, hopes also to capture the Board schools, and have the Apostles' Creed taught therein. I venture to think that the teaching of that forgery would be a sure preparative for secular education. At the same time, I cannot counsel the support of candidates who would do their worst to thwart education, as against those who at least stand for efficient teaching, ample school accommodation, and a liberal life-equipment for the coming generation.

What should Secularists do at this juncture? Evidently what, I understand, is advised by the Executive of the National Secular Society—plump for those only who would exclude Bible teaching and religious education from the schools. It is true most of these candidates are Socialists, which many Secularists are not, and they have a millennial plan of free maintenance with which many disagree. But no such projects are possible until the assent of Parliament is obtained.

I expected the Ethical Culturists would have put forward Mr. Gould and Dr. Coit. But the last-named gentleman says he fears "a century will not be time enough" to bring about his views. If the matter be left in the hands of

invertebrate Ethical Culturists, I feel sure he underestimates the time. It seems that even their manifesto is going to appear *after* the election is over! Let Secularists work and vote for those, and those only, who go in for their program. This is the one way for a minority to make its influence felt.

PLAINSPEAKER.

THE SCHOOLS AND POPULAR CONTROL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The age-enduring struggle for national education has been a struggle to compel the interested clergy to allow the children of the nation to be properly educated and able to compete with those of other nations of the earth. The vested interests of the blackcoats made them at first oppose education, and then seek to control it. In 1807 the House of Commons passed a Bill enabling the ratepayers to set up a school in each parish. The House of Lords threw it out on the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The House of Commons then affirmed the principle that the State ought to be responsible for the education of the people, under local public control, while the Archbishops and clergy affirmed their hostility to any national education which was not completely under their own direction. Until 1870 they were successful. Then a national system was started which has virtually made education a great department of the State; the denominational schools, no less than the Board schools, being, to the extent of four-fifths of their income, supported from the national purse. Yet, whereas in every other department of the State religious tests have been abolished, and a Catholic, a Jew, or a Freethinker may occupy the highest positions, the teaching profession is so abjectly under clerical control that in country districts it is considered imperative that teachers shall serve in Sunday-school or play the organ. When will the people awake and claim that all schools shall be under public management? Voluntary contributions to denominational schools, which in 1851 were fifty per cent. of their total, have shrunk to seven per cent.; yet, on the strength of this paltry pittance, the clericals pretend to control education exactly as they like. The immense bulk of the income of training colleges is derived from Government grants; yet each and all have religious tests, straight-waistcoats with which the students must fetter their brains and cramp their consciences. It should be the condition of all Government grants that they should be open to all comers, irrespective of sect or creed. The training colleges should be national institutions, as much as the British Museum, in which nothing save merit is regarded. They should be at least as open as the universities to members of every sect, and of none. Freethinkers should take every opportunity of urging that what is paid for by all should be open to all, and that schools of every kind should be wrested from the management of the clergy and placed under popular control.

L. WILLIAMS.

PROFANE JOKES.

A MAN, in passing a country graveyard, saw the sexton digging a grave, and inquired, "Who's dead?" Sexton—"Why, old parson Prosy, to be sure." Man—"What complaint?" Sexton—"No complaint; every body's satisfied."

I dearly love the Jews, upon my word;

They played the second part in our salvation.

Had they refused to crucify the Lord,

We sons of Eve had not escaped damnation;

So, having thank'd his Savior, who'd refuse

His thanks to Pontius Pilate and the Jews?

SHOOTING EAGLEHAWKS.—"Oh, daddy, don't shoot straight up; you might shoot Dod!"

Dean Burgon once, in a sermon on the transcendent merits of the High Anglican school of theology, exclaimed, with a fervor which was all his own: "May I live the life of a Taylor, and die the death of a Bull!"

Mr. Anstey Guthrie has some pleasant instances of texts misapplied. He was staying once in a Scotch country house where, over his bed, hung an illuminated scroll with the inscription, "Occupy till I come," which, as Mr. Guthrie justly observes, is an unusually extended invitation, even for Scottish notions of hospitality. According to the same authority, the leading citizen of a seaside town erected some iron benches on the sea front, and, with the view of at once commemorating his own munificence and giving a profitable turn to the thoughts of the sitters, inscribed on the backs:—

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "If I were God."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, E. Calvert, "John Howard and Prison Reform." November 6, at 8.30, Grand Ballad Concert. November 9, at 8.30, Fancy Dress Ball.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, G. W. Foote; 3.30, General meeting; 7, Dance and entertainment.

EAST LONDON BRANCH (King's Hall, 83 and 85, Commercial-road): 7.30, W. Heaford, "Secularism a Better Creed than Christianity."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7.30, J. C. Millington, "Goethe." Followed by an address by F. J. Gould.

KINGSLAND: 12, Meeting at the Bradlaugh Club.

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, "Men, Women, and Priests."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (341 Harrow-road, near Westbourne Park): November 8, at 9, Business meeting.

WOOD GREEN (Station road Hall): 7, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

BRISTOL BRANCH (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, J. Keast, "Secular Reformers."

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 7, S. Armfield, "An Hour with Christ and the Devil."

DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, Social gathering.

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Charles Watts—11.30, "Sin and Salvation"; 2.30, "The Drawbacks of Christianity"; 6.30, "The Cradle, the Altar, and the Tomb."

HULL (Obden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Recitations and Readings.

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. Eleanor Marx Aveling, "Christianity, Secularism, Socialism."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, F. Woollett, "The Bible and Modern Science."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rushome-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Evans, "The Frog and Cockroach"—lantern illustrations.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "The Transformation of Christianity." Members' and friends' Social Dance Wednesday evenings at 8.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King's-street): 7, Business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—November 7, Blackburn; 14, Manchester; 21, Huddersfield.

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

A. B. Moss, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—November 28, 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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