

# The Free Thinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

## THE BIBLE IN BOARD SCHOOLS.

(Concluded from page 722.)

In criticising this London School Board syllabus of religious lessons from the point of view of the "loftiest ethics"—to use Dr. Clifford's expression—we will take it standard by standard, in order that we may do it the fullest possible justice.

Standard One comprises very young children. These are first to learn the Lord's Prayer, which we have already dealt with, its ethical value to little boys and girls being quite infinitesimal. Next they are to learn the twenty-third Psalm. Now, from a child's point of view, the only merit of this Psalm is its brevity. It contains nothing suitable to a little child's comprehension. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," which is the opening verse, is a strange irony, or a strange optimism, to din into the ears of all the half-fed children in the first standard. Even in the ears of the well-fed ones it can have but little meaning—their knowledge of shepherds being mainly confined to rough men who drive sheep through the streets with the aid of a dog and a stick. And what can a first-standard child make of the fifth verse?—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." This is what Dr. Clifford calls the "loftiest ethics." In truth it is nothing of the sort, nor is it intelligible to little Londoners who have just left the infant school. The only other item in the syllabus for Standard One is "Leading facts in the life of our Lord, told in simple language." Upon which we have to say (1) that the ethical value of this cannot be estimated without at least a sample of the "simple language" which is prescribed and expected, and (2) that nearly every leading fact in the life of Jesus Christ is a miracle.

Thus far we have not found the "loftiest ethics." Let us now turn to Standard Two. Here again we have the Lord's Prayer and the twenty-third Psalm. These are followed by the Ten Commandments. Now, the major portion of this code is ecclesiastical, such as worshipping Jehovah exclusively and keeping the Sabbath holy. And as for the ethical part, does Dr. Clifford really believe that second-standard children should first of all be told not to steal, not to kill, and not to commit adultery? Are these the failings most common to their "age and capacity"? As for the Beatitudes from Matthew (v. 1-12), they are in good in their way, but, unfortunately, every moral injunction in them is coupled with a bribe. The proper ground and sanction of morality are not indicated. The ethic throughout is personal, selfish, and supernatural. And the concluding promise, "Great is your reward in heaven," is at an infinite distance from earthly welfare and human solidarity.

This is followed by another portion of Matthew (xxii. 35-40), in which Jesus tells the lawyer that the first commandment is to love God, the second to love one's neighbor as oneself, and that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. But supposing Theism be true, is this the proper order of teaching for small children? Can a child begin by loving God? Does not the love of father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and relatives and friends, come first? Then again, is it possible to love one's neighbor as oneself—meaning by "neighbor" any person with whom one comes into any

sort of contact? Can love be taught at all? Can love be commanded? Is it not a spontaneous emotion? Will it ever heed the prescriptions of moralists and pedagogues? And if it cannot be forced in any case, how doubly absurd it seems to teach people to love indiscriminately, even to the extent of loving a stranger as well as themselves. Is not this *lofty ethics* in the sense of being transcendental, impracticable, and therefore not sublime, but ridiculous?

The next item is "Lessons from the Life of Moses." Now we have said that Moses is in all probability a legendary personage. But even if he be an historical character, what lessons are derivable from his career to a little child? His public career, beginning at eighty and ending at a hundred and twenty, was a long record of warfare and massacre. Goethe's opinion of him is well known, and should be refuted before his life is held up to children in public schools, supported by those who agree with Goethe as well by those who differ from him. Moses gave the following order as to the disposition of female and youthful captives: "Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves" (Numbers xxxi. 17, 18). Is this one of the lofty ethical lessons for the children in Standard Two?

"Simple lessons from the life of our Lord" is the only other item in the syllabus for this standard, and this has already fallen under observation. We therefore turn to Standard Three. Here we have the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments again, with the two selections from Matthew. These are followed by this item: "Learn Deuteronomy xxviii., verses 1-14." We have read those fourteen verses carefully, and we should like to examine the bumps of the man who finds any "lofty ethics" in them for third-standard children in London Board schools. The whole passage is without appropriateness except to the ancient Jews, and only to them in view of the insulating character of the so-called Mosaic law, and of the national necessity, real or presumed, of making Jahweh-worship their universal religion. If the passage has any relevance to English boys, its morality is of the "Rule Britannia" order. "God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth." "The Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail." "Thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow." "The Lord shall cause thine enemies to be smitten before thy face." All this stuff is on a par with the wretched language of our National Anthem, which as literature and morality is a disgrace to our civilization.

The next item is—"Lessons from the lives of Samuel and David, together with the story of Ruth." Now we admit that lessons may be derived from the lives of Samuel and David, but they are mostly of a negative character. Just because David was pious, and Jesus is called the son of David, the Christians have been religiously blind to his intrigues, his duplicity, his sensuality, and his cruelty. Nor is the story of Ruth quite the most decorous in its implications for Board school girls. Her adventure in the barn is at least ambiguous, and if it was legitimate enough in ancient Palestine, it would hardly be proper in England in the nineteenth century. Adults may admire the pathetic and idyllic aspects of the narrative, but it is not in any sense a book for children.

Next we have "lessons" drawn from six "parables"—"The Talents," "The Good Samaritan," "The Lost Sheep," "The Lost Piece of Money," "The Prodigal Son," "The

Pharisee and the Publican." We are not told what the lessons are. The teachers are to deduce them themselves. And as far as they do contain moral lessons, they might just as well figure in a collection of parables from various sources. As they stand, however, three of them (the first, third, and fourth) are strictly religious. The fifth is far from being beyond ethical criticism. The sixth teaches humility, at the cost of the Pharisees, who have been insulted and traduced by Christianity and its Scriptures, so that their very name has become a byword of contempt. The second, the Good Samaritan, is a beautiful story, but it also is marred by further contumely on the religious adversaries of Jesus Christ—men whom he denounced (as Professor Newman observed) with a savage bitterness that outdoes the most passionate invectives of Tacitus and Suetonius.

Standard Four syllabus contains some fresh items. The first is "Learn St. John xiv., verses 1-15, and Psalm cxxv." Now let any candid reader turn to the indicated portion of the Fourth Gospel and see whether he can find in it any ethical lesson whatsoever. It is a curious conversation about the deity of Jesus Christ. It does not contain a single moral idea from beginning to end. As for the indicated Psalm, it was presumably chosen for its brevity. Its five verses could be easily learnt—and as easily forgotten. Once more we ask the candid reader to say what ethical lesson it contains for Board School children.

Another fresh item is "Lessons from the Pentateuch," with special reference to the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. These personages, we have already said, are in all probability as legendary as the personal "founders" of other nations. But whether they are so or not, we fail to see what ethical lessons, suitable to children, can be derived from the Bible story of their careers. We had said enough about Moses. Let us now say a little about Abraham. This patriarch twice passed his wife off as his sister, and made a handsome profit on each transaction. He turned his boy and his mother out into the desert to live or die as it happened. He raised the knife to kill another son, preparatory to offering him as a burnt sacrifice to the Lord. As for Isaac, he was a chip of the old block, with the hereditary trick of wife-juggling. Jacob was a terrible sneak and a desperate coward, though God "loved" him and "hated" the brave, magnanimous Esau. Joseph's story is more interesting, but he was only on trial once in his life, and that was with a passionate and impetuous lady enamored of his charms. He resisted her temptation, which is narrated with great crudity, and his virtue may be intelligible enough to adolescents. But can it be made intelligible to fourth-standard children? And if it could be, is it worth while to begin their sexual education so early? For our part, we do not want Board School teachers to be engaged in teaching the young idea how to shoot in this particular direction.

The next item is "the teaching of the Law of Moses"—which was *not* the Law of Moses—with reference to the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, parents, and children. This is an extensive subject, and we prefer to pass it by, only saying that the so-called Law of Moses is not the Law of England, and that domestic and social duties should be taught with a view to the existing conditions of human society.

"Lessons from the Gospel according to St. Luke" is too general for criticism. We therefore proceed to Standard Five. This syllabus includes a good deal of that of the other standards. The first new item is "Learn the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians." Here at last we come to a real ethical lesson. It is the finest thing in the New Testament. Paul's praise of charity is nobly conceived and splendidly expressed. If the Bible had contained nothing but such writing, there would have been very few sceptics. Psalm ninety one, however, is purely Jewish. Some of the Proverbs referred to are good in their way, though proverbs are nearly always lost on children. Proverbs xxiii. 20-21 is referred to as teaching temperance, which it does. But suppose the children light upon Proverbs xxxi. 7, and read: "Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." What will become of Bible temperance then?

Standard Six syllabus says: "Learn Isaiah liii." This contains no ethical lesson. It is generally considered a Messianic prophecy. The two Psalms (hundred and twenty-first and twenty-second) are also religious, and not ethical. In Standard Seven we have the first chapter of Hebrews to be learnt. This is a dissertation on the

Father and the Son. Other chapters of Isaiah and Jeremiah are referred to, but they have the remotest (if any) connection with child-morality in London. We might also ask what ethical lessons for children are to be found in a "Study of the Acts of the Apostles." Standard Seven syllabus has but one fresh item, besides more references to Isaiah and the Psalms—namely, "Lessons from the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah." Now, we beg Dr. Clifford to show us the "loftiest ethics," especially for London children, in these rather dreary books.

In the whole mountain of this Syllabus we have dug out but one piece of "loftiest ethics"—St. Paul's panegyric on charity. All the rest might be dropped with considerable advantage. It is perfectly idle to put the Bible forward as a text-book of morality for England in the nineteenth century. Scientific and secular ethics cannot be taught from it at all. And the cultured "Progressives" must be well aware of the fact. In supporting the Compromise, they are maintaining the Bible in the schools, not really as a text-book of ethics—which it never was, and never can be—but as the sacred Scriptures of the Christian religion. This is what they are doing, and in the case of Agnostic Fabians, like Mr. Graham Wallas, it is a flagrant intellectual dishonesty. In the case of Nonconformist ministers, like Dr. Clifford, it is more intelligible and even more excusable. Nature has endowed every species, including preachers, with the instinct of self-preservation. By keeping the Bible in the Board schools, Christian ministers secure a fine start in the handicap. Instead of persuading grown-up people to become Christians, they have merely to receive ready-made Christians from the elementary schools. It is impossible for them to be blind to this great advantage, and it is natural that they should strain every nerve to retain it.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### A WALK THROUGH HIGHGATE CEMETERY.

I HAVE no morbid delight in grave prowling. All that I cared for in the dead is not to be found in cemeteries or recorded on tombstones. Yet do I sometimes stroll through Highgate Cemetery partly because it is near and lies between Waterlow Park and Parliament Hill, at either of which places I would far rather see living children at play than indulge in meditations among the tombs; partly perhaps because I used to go thither when young with my own mother, who was buried there, and because I have attended there the funerals of several Freethinking friends. Here were deposited the remains of Austin Holyoake, one of the hardest working of the band who helped first his brother, the still living Nestor of Secularism, and after Charles Bradlaugh, its indomitable Achilles. Ever willing, ever active, Austin's life was truly given for others. How I recall his telling me of the incessant pressure of editorial work. He died young, worn out by service. That same grave, eight years later, I saw reopened to receive the corpse of another I knew and esteemed in life—the ill-fated genius, James Thomson. I saw the author of *The City of Dreadful Night* only in his happy moods. Well do I remember how sunny and pleasant the sombre poet of pessimism could be. Yet as I think of his end I cannot avoid repeating his lines:—

Weary of living isolated life,  
Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,  
Weary of struggling in all sterile strife,  
Weary of thought which maketh nothing plain,  
I close my eyes and hush my panting breath,  
And yearn for thee, divinely tranquil Death,  
To come and soothe away my bitter pain.

What a contrast was my old friend, Ernestine Louisa Rose, who, loving America, her adopted country, yet stayed in England to be placed with her devoted husband in a grave hard by. This brave woman, who had preached Freethought and woman's emancipation in the pioneering days, had denounced slavery in the slave-holding States. I knew her only in age and infirmity. Yet how her kindly face lighted when she spoke of the past, and said, a little before her death, "I have lived." The thought takes me to the grave of William Kingdon Clifford, another brave and ardent Freethinker. How touching and meaning-fraught, to those who knew his gallant spirit and brief career, are the words which form his epitaph: "I was not,

and was conceived; I loved, and did a little work; I am not, and grieve not." Clifford, devoted to the exactest of the sciences, never stood aloof from humanity. He linked science with love of truth and mental emancipation. Truth he proclaimed from the housetops, and burnt with apostolic zeal to carry its gospel to the benighted. Not far off is the obelisk over the remains of "George Eliot," laid to rest near the grave of her first husband, George Henry Lewes, the acute critic, philosopher, and historian of philosophy, and since joined by her friend, Dr. John Chapman, long-time editor of the *Westminster Review*. On George Eliot's stone may be read her lines:—

O may I join the choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence.....  
.....feed pure love,  
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,  
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense.  
So shall I join the choir invisible  
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

But I wish to join the choir visible, or at least to listen to the birds and the young children. So Hey for Hampstead Heath!

J. M. WHEELER.

### "HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT."

THERE are three important facts in connection with Christianity which must necessarily limit its power and the number of its adherents. These facts are:—Its vague and indefinite character, its compulsory belief, and the threatened penalty for rejecting its demands. When the consequences of not accepting a faith are as serious as those which are taught in the New Testament, the nature of the faith should be quite clear, and its meaning apparent alike to all to whom it appeals. That this is not so with Christianity is evident from the hundreds of different sects existing in the Church, the members of each professing to be the true followers of Christ, although they are unable to agree among themselves as to what Christianity really is. Shall we peruse the history of the early Church, in which the most violent disputes and bitter persecutions were carried on by its various members in consequence of the difference of opinion as to which garb Christianity should wear? If a Protestant's attention is drawn to the long catalogue of black crimes which were practised in the name of religion during the Middle Ages, when the vilest deeds were considered justifiable, so long as they tended to advance the faith and uphold the Church; when murder was a virtue, and lying a creditable accomplishment, what is his answer? "Oh, that was not Christianity." It was, however, unfortunately, the Christianity of that day. Like Proteus, Christianity has changed since that time, and now wears "a new garb in which it may be more acceptable to the people." In fact, no sooner do we catch hold of the Christian's garb to examine its texture than, *quick, presto*, it is transformed into something else. If we show the absurdity of supposing that a few drops of water sprinkled on a child's face can purify its heart, we are told by the Evangelists that this is no part of Christianity. Point out the ridiculous character of immersing an adult female in a bath as an initiation into the Church, and the Independents, Wesleyans, and Churchmen state, That is not Christianity. Attack the horrible doctrines of eternal torments, and the Universalists exclaim, That is not Christianity. Demonstrate the irrational nature of the Trinity, and the Unitarians answer at once, That is not Christianity. Portray the horrors of war, the Quaker asserts that Christianity is peace, and that all war is anti-Christian. Avow that sometimes war has a high and noble mission, that of destroying despotism, breaking up long-standing tyrannies, and freeing down-trodden peoples; intimate that any religion which would stand in the way of a battle fought for truth and freedom cannot be good, and we shall instantly be told that Christianity does nothing of the kind, but that, on the contrary, it sends its disciples to fight, appoints chaplains to the army, and consecrates the weapons of destruction. Thus, at whatever point we attack this system, its adherents shift their ground.

The same perplexity obtains in reference to the means to be employed to secure Christian salvation. It is said that we should "strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able"

(Luke xiii. 24). "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew xxii. 14). We are also told in Ephesians that some were predestined to be the children of Christ; and in Romans (ix. 22) it is said that others were made "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." In the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England it is stated: "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his council, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind." We are also informed "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves" (2 Corinthians iii. 5): "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James i. 17). "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians ii. 13). "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans iii. 28). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians ii. 8, 9; see Galatians iii.). A still greater difficulty is presented in the Gospel ascribed to St. John. There we read (xiv. 6): "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" [Christ]; and in chapter vi. 44 it is stated: "No man can come to me [Christ] except the Father draw him"; which amounts to this: If the Father draw us, we must go; and if he does not draw us, we cannot go, and then we are to be damned for not doing what God has prevented us from accomplishing. This is "glad tidings" with a vengeance! Briefly, the matter stands thus: We cannot do good if we would, for there is no help in us; we cannot be saved unless we have faith; but we cannot have faith unless we pray for it; but we cannot pray unless we have grace; but we cannot have grace unless God gives it; but he will not give it unless we ask it; and we cannot ask it unless he inclines us to do so.

This is the kind of faith which Christianity tries to enforce upon us all, despite our inability either to understand it or to endorse it. "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). Upon the question of belief the New Testament is emphatic. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Neither is there salvation in any other [than Christ]; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). It is said that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. i. 7, 8). A humane gospel truly! And in Revelation, chapter xxi., verse 8, we are informed that the "unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Is it not a farce to call such teachings as these "a gospel of salvation"? It is, in fact, a gospel (to use a Scriptural phrase) of "damnation." This penalty, be it observed, is to be inflicted upon those who cannot believe in this orthodox conglomeration of nonsense, cruelty, and injustice. It is a fact that thousands cannot believe this Gospel, and to damn them for not doing what, to them, is impossible is revolting, and the faith that teaches it deserves our severest condemnation.

No wonder that Christianity has made such slow progress among the nations of the world. It is stated by the Christian author of the *Conquests of the Cross*, "that up to the present time the professed Christians of the globe number, all told, 415,000,000; while non-Christians number 1,047,000,000" (p. 542). The following figures, published in *The Coming Day*, edited by the Rev. John Page Hopps, for September last, are very significant: "The earth's computed population to-day is 1,400,000,000 or 1,500,000,000. 400,000,000 are Buddhists; 250,000,000 are Brahmins; 110,000,000 are Mohammedans; 8,000,000 are Jews; 150,000,000 are termed idolaters; 62,000,000 are classed as various; 175,000,000 are set down as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church; 110,000,000 are accredited to belong to the Protestant denominations; 90,000,000 are classed as Greek Catholics, and are sometimes called the old Greek Armenian Church—and the religion, or the prevailing religion of Russia, is of this Greek Armenian persuasion, and it is contemporaneous with the old Roman Catholic Church which uses the same Bible; 25,000,000 are classed as various again. So you can really see that out of this 1,450,000,000 of a population there is only one-fourth that are 'nominally' Christians,

and there is only one-fourteenth that are 'nominally' 'Protestant' Christians. The one-fourth that are called nominally Christians are made up by counting the whole population as Christian wherever the Christian religion has a foothold. For instance, take the population of the United States and Canada; the population is estimated at 72,000,000, and, in making up the one-fourth and one-fourteenth as being Christians, this whole 72,000,000 is counted in, while the last estimate of the Catholic Church only claims between 9,000,000 and 10,000,000 of an actual membership in the United States, and Protestants claim 12,000,000 to 15,000,000 actual membership; so that actual count only shows about one-third of our home population as actual Christians. And this proportion would not hold good in any other country but this one. The intelligence of our home country really does not make a favorable showing for the Christian religion, and leaves but very few Christians among us."

CHARLES WATTS.

### CHAPLAIN AND PATIENTS.

REVERTING to some experiences of mine in a great West-end hospital, I am surprised—the more I think of it—at the amount of persecution to which the poor patients were subjected—not by the doctors to whom they had gone, but by the "spiritual pastor and master" who, uninvited, came to them. It might have been thought that these caged and helpless sufferers had enough to endure in their mere physical ailments. But apparently it was deemed necessary by the hospital management to badger and bewilder them with theological dogmas and creeds, about which nine out of ten patients knew little and cared less. The system, as carried out, resolved itself into a form of gratuitous torture. There was little to distinguish it from aimless vivisection.

At some hospitals, I believe, the army of district visitors and Bible readers are let in without restraint. Like vultures, they pounce upon the occupants of the sick-beds, whom they smother with tracts, adjuring them to "Prepare to meet thy God," or otherwise to anticipate a speedy end, which the intrusion often accelerates. At the particular hospital I speak of the fanatical crowd are excluded, but it is only, I verily believe, to give the salaried Church of England chaplain a clear field and undisputed sway.

The performances of that zealous servant of the Lord engaged a great deal of my attention—when I was able to attend to anything at all. The interest I took in him might, had he known of it, disturbed a less complacent man. He was a study, a problem, a type; and his movements and utterances became, in time, a daily source of wonder and surmise. As he flitted about the ward during the day, I found my eyes instinctively following him; at night he haunted me in my dreams. I have not yet made up my mind about him. I am still undecided whether he was a sadly-misguided enthusiast, blind to the real effects of his ministrations, or a functionary stonily indifferent to consequences in the fulfilment of his office. Though personally inoffensive, and less obtrusive than the hospital regulations would have allowed him to be, he was still a nightmare on the institution, and I fear was actually, though not of course wilfully, the means of undoing some of the good the doctors had achieved.

Heine has said that the era of the Cross of Christ will eventually be recognised as the "hypochondriacal period" in the world's history. The sermons of our chaplain were mostly on the Cross, on the Calvary sufferings, on the Blood of the Lamb, on its sin-cleansing qualities. There was a great deal, of course, about the love of God, the tender mercy and care of the Father for his children—which the patients could appreciate by looking at their own sorry plights. But, somehow or other, we always got back to the old painful and repulsive topic—the Cross and the Blood. Apparently, it was of no consequence to the chaplain that this surgical ward and its adjoining operating theatre were reeking with the sanguineous fluid. There must be constant references in prayers, hymns, discourses, and tracts to "the blood," which references were still further emphasized on certain occasions by celebrations of the Holy Communion, when such patients as were willing made up for their lack of the vital current by imbibing the blood of Jesus. This, and constant allusions to Eternity,

and our problematic fate when launched therein, tended, in the chaplain's idea, to serenity of mind and the peace which passeth understanding. But the doctors, I fancy, thought differently.

Some of the patients, during these religious exercises, saved themselves from hypochondria by sleep.

The bulk of the inmates of the ward who came and went during a period of five months exhibited no overpowering desire for the rev. gentleman's ministrations. In regard to the exceptions, I hope it is not uncharitable to mention the fact that they seemed very anxious to secure ultimate transference to the Convalescent Home to which the chaplain's good word was a safe passport. These patients, and one or two who were undoubtedly disinterested and sincere, so exerted themselves at morning and evening prayers as to give to the ward what might be considered a devotional tone. The majority, however, regarded the services as a daily infliction necessary to be borne like the bodily aches and pains which had brought them thither. Some of their comments were amusing, and occasionally more forcible than polite. "Why," queried one patient after a Sunday sermon, "does the chaplain walk out of the ward so quickly?" "Because," said another, "he is ashamed of the lies he has been telling us."

The bedside visitations of the rev. gentleman seemed not to be productive of better fruit than his formal discourses. From some special knowledge of his own, he informed me that my ailment was a "visitation of God." I suggested that that was not the diagnosis of the surgeons. If he would look at the inscription on the head-board, he would see what it was. As, in some further conversation, he found that I was endeavoring to convert *him*, instead of allowing him to convert me, he passed on to a more tractable patient, whose powers of assent were not limited by any preconceived opinions.

In adding, as I believe he did, to the income of the institution from general sources by securing legacies from the piously-disposed—who might or might not have desired their promised "hundred-fold" reward—the chaplain, no doubt, rendered good service. Possibly this was the secret of his appointment by the business men who constituted the Board. It may also be added that probably his ministrations were acceptable to the few devout members of his church who found their way into the institution. But, with every desire to credit him with all that was fairly due, it was but too painfully evident how largely his usefulness was impaired by an overweening desire to sprinkle about the "mummy-dust of dogma," instead of those kindly words of human sympathy, counsel, and encouragement which would have been more acceptable, and would have done infinitely more good.

Inseparable from a consideration of hospital life, in its broader aspects, are several serious speculations. Here, in these institutions, we are brought immediately in contact with what theologians are pleased to call the "problem" of pain, the "mystery" of evil. A little reflection, however, will show that there is no mystery, no problem, except such as theologians make themselves. Pain, or—to speak more widely—evil, is traceable to natural and well-understood causes. It is only when the theologian asserts the existence of a deity with attributes of omnipotence and benevolence that mysteries and problems and difficulties arise. Then it is that we have to cajole ourselves into believing that evil is not evil, but good; that, contrary to all our natural instincts and feelings, pain is not pain, but something entirely different; and that, in short, there is no meaning in the words we employ, but all is confusion, obscurity, and darkness. That is the "explanation" which theology affords, and for which we are expected to be grateful.

Surely it is the veriest mockery in the world to tell any one of these unfortunate sufferers, lying in a hospital bed, that his illness is some special visitation from on High for some mysterious purpose unknown to him, and that it is all for his good. He knows it is not. He knows it has arisen from natural causes, and that he would be quite as good, and better, without it. That, indeed, is why he is trying to get rid of it; that is why he is in a hospital bed.

Doubtless, suffering has, in some cases, a chastening, refining, sweetening effect; and so has the sympathy it excites. But it has entirely opposite results in others, and where does its salutary influence come in when, in so many instances, it almost immediately wipes the sufferer out of existence?

Not only are chaplains and other Christian ministers mistaken in their theories as to the origin and nature of the forms of evil which hospitals endeavor to alleviate and cure, but they are mistaken in their remedy. They know that, according to their Scriptures, the remedy is prayer, and they try it, but with so little faith in its efficacy that they are obliged to add physic to the treatment; and few of them now-a-days are so devoid of common sense as not to be fully aware which is really the active healing agent.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### IN THE DEN OF THE CRITICAL LIONS.

Oh those Logia! What a Daniel come to judgment they are proving themselves to be to those Christian scholars and critics who have undertaken to maintain the early date and genuine authorship of the Canonical Gospels, and the historical fidelity of the Christ who is their subject. Here is Professor Harnack, the great continental critic, lacerating himself terribly in the effort to raise the stone and cleave the wood, that obscure for him the meaning of Logion 5. Again do I, a Freethinker, chivalrously enter the lists to defend the honor of Ecclesiastes against the imputations cast upon it by those who should have been its friends. In my last article I exposed the Rev. Mr. Haweis's egregious misinterpretation of the disputed text in Ecclesiastes x., and I showed, by comparison with its context, that its writer was quite innocent of the charge foisted upon him. As Professor Harnack is in the same case with Mr. Haweis, I propose to make a further analysis of this ecclesiastical chapter, in order to show how heavy the bill of damages really is which Ecclesiastes is entitled to present against these gentlemen. But, pending this, it may be interesting to examine into the logical validity of the thesis which Harnack and Haweis are by implication concerned to defend. That thesis apparently is that there need be no danger of injury in raising stones and cleaving wood if the persons engaged in such occupation only remember that the Lord is present with them in their work. Now, whatever interpretation be put upon the words of Ecclesiastes, it is undeniable that in alluding to the *danger* of handling wood and stones he was merely stating *fact*. Did Christ mean, and do Harnack and the rest intend to represent him as meaning, that the knowledge of his presence in the stone and the wood would constitute a guarantee against physical injury? If this is not the contention, then the assurance of the Christly presence was hardly worth the having. It would be poor consolation to the man who had been fatally injured to be told that the Lord was present in the stone that had mutilated him beyond the recognition of his beloved mother.

But if Christ really wished to paralyze the influence of the supposed erroneous teaching of Ecclesiastes, he could have done so by rendering stone-lifting and wood-chopping innocuous as to danger; but, as we know that accidents have happened, and will continue to happen, the supposed case of Ecclesiastes stands good, and anyone is entitled to shirk his share of stone-lifting and wood-cleaving, on the ground that, though Christ may be present, the danger is still more tangibly in evidence. Will the belief in Christ's presence obviate the necessity of taking care? Who is likely to be the more immune from danger—he who is wisely careful in his work, or he who is so abstracted by thoughts of the Lord's goodness and mercy as to make a false stroke and come within an ace of chopping his digits off? And will it be seriously contended that this obscure little text in Ecclesiastes was exercising such a pernicious influence upon the working men at the time of Christ (in the direction of inducing them to remain idle for the rest of their lives) that it was conceived necessary to stigmatize it then and there? But if there is no reason to suppose that working-men were less industrious then than at any other epoch, there was no reason for Christ to go out of his way to condemn a teaching that had no more effect upon men than though it had never been uttered. By calling attention to it he would probably have caused the very mischief he was trying to counteract. Even if Christ did intend by this saying to antagonize Ecclesiastes, he failed to alter the *status quo*, which was, and is, that the occupation of wood-cutting and stone-lifting is attended with considerable danger. Had he done that, it would

have been more to the point than giving an assurance which was wholly useless. These considerations show that, from whatever point of view we regard it, this thesis fails to bear inspection. *A nos moutons.*

In a article on the Logia, in the current number of the *Expositor*, Professor Harnack, expatiating on Logion fifth, delivers himself thusly: "At the right moment Dr. H. Lisco has drawn my attention to the words in Ecclesiastes (x. 9): 'If he breaks stones, he shall be wounded of them; if he splits logs, he shall be in danger of them.' Our text cannot be without some connection with this passage, and clearly it is an *intentional antithesis to it.*" Note those last words—"clearly it is an intentional antithesis to it." Professor Harnack hasn't any doubt about it. Not the slightest glimmering of an idea has he that his conclusion is based upon false premises. In no way must Christ be associated with Pantheism; perish the divinely-inspired book of Ecclesiastes rather than that. But I hardly think Harnack's devoutly-wished consummation will arrive. Ecclesiastes will stay on, while a vacant place will be left in Professor Harnack's reputation for critical acumen. And it was Dr. H. Lisco who first drew his attention to Ecclesiastes' contumacy. But for that, the preacher might positively have escaped scot free! "And as," says Harnack, "the pessimistic seacher says that a man will find pain and danger in his work, Christ says that he shall find in them himself." Does the Professor really mean that Christ is in the *pain* and *danger*? If he does, then it only makes this mystical muddle more mystifyingly muddlesome. "It is remarkable that in a gospel—in a saying ascribed to Christ—the preacher is referred to," etc. It would indeed be remarkable if it were so, but as the supposed reference has no existence outside Professor Harnack's head (except in Mr. Haweis's), we must reserve our transports of astonishment for something genuinely remarkable when it offers itself.

It is curious, and also vexing, that in the first part of this, the most significant of these Logia, certain words and letters should be missing, which fact renders it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get at its real meaning. Professor Harnack gives a general rendering of what appears to him to be the sense of the whole saying, to the effect that wherever the disciples may be they shall not be without God, and wherever one is working alone Christ will be with him as certainly as the object of his labor is beside him; and he says this rendering excludes any pantheistic interpretation, as well as any interpretation which regards the stone lifting and the wood hewing as anything else than the rough and solitary labor of the day." Still haunted by the fear of this terrible bugbear of Pantheism, you see.

BLOOMFIELD STEVENS.

(To be concluded.)

### TRIED AND FOUND WANTING.

CHRISTIAN atonement has been tried and found wanting. From Constantine to the fall of the Byzantine Empire, Christianity had supreme control, and its fruits were the Dark Ages, ignorance, superstition, and crime. It has opposed science and progress and human liberty at every step. It propagated its tenets with the aid of the dungeon and fagot, thumbscrew and torturing rack; inventing and using no less than thirty-five of the most cruel instruments of torture for heretics that the minds of Christian monsters could conceive. It has sacrificed more lives, shed more innocent blood, than any other system of error that has ever cursed the world. Judaism slayed its thousands. Christianity has slain, according to good authorities, thirty millions. Whatever may be said in defence of some of Christ's teachings, the best of which were uttered before his day, the bloody atonement dogma is vicious and degrading, a product of ignorance and barbarism. Every drop of blood that has been shed for so-called atonements, or to support religious dogmas, was a crime against humanity, justice, and truth.

The expanding intelligence of humanity now demands something more rational and elevating than creeds of savagery, the voice of vengeance, or the barbarous echoes from Calvary's bloody brow. Man has atoned or suffered for mistakes and ignorance in all the bloody past. He has paid the debt himself; all the debt he owed. Man is a product of conditions, a creature of environments. All rational

hope of happiness, all improvement and elevation of humanity, must come of necessity, not from blood atonements of bulls, and goats, and mythic Christs, but from more intelligence, better environments, improved conditions here and now. We do not need blood atonement for our souls. What the toiling and oppressed masses need and demand is bread-and-butter salvation for their bodies. Take good care of the body, and the soul will take care of itself. If one-half the talent and wealth now wasted to perpetuate this barbarous and degrading superstition were expended to emancipate the industrial slave, it would chase away the wolf of want, bring relief and joy to the lank and pleading horde of unrequited toilers, paint athwart the storm clouds of strikes, injunctions, and industrial unrest that threaten the stability of our free institutions, the seven-hued bow of promised relief. It would reveal to our anxious and inquiring gaze into the mists of the future the purpling domes of great possibilities.

GEORGE W. TURRELL.

—*Freethought Magazine.*

### PANTHEISM.

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body nature is, and God the soul."

—*Pope's Essay on Man.*

POPE's authority, then, is in favor of the idea that *nature* is the universe's *body*, and *God* is its *soul*. Odd doctrine. Alarming as odd to the orthodox. One of the conclusions to which it impels its believers is that matter eternally existed. Now, the eternity of matter is a notion which leads directly to the door of Atheism. The idea of an eternal universe is incompatible with the idea of an eternal God, the co-eternity or even co-existence of a "stupendous whole," with anything else, amounting to an *impossibility*. The universe may be an intelligent being—which, of course, may receive names by the score; but it is *impossible* that there can be a God in, out of, or apart from the universe. The whole includes the whole, and is the whole, or there is no sense in language; yet, in the teeth of that truism—a truism standing in no more need of proof than the truism that a triangle is not a square—pantheists gravely assure us matter is the body, God is the soul, of the universe, which amounts just to this: matter is everywhere; God, though not matter, is everywhere too.

The ablest writer may be defied to make clear a philosophy which is obscure by nature. Such a subject is pantheism. It is necessarily obscure, because based on principles purely assumptive, and dark as assumptive. It is necessarily absurd, because all its conclusions are drawn from premises positively false, or, at best, purely imaginary. It is necessarily mischievous, because falsehood is invariably so. Pantheism is, in truth, a senseless superstition; and pantheists may, without injustice, be ranged in two great sections—one of honest simpletons, the other of dishonest Atheists.

C. SOUTHWELL.

### ACID DROPS.

ATHELSTAN RILEY says all children are liars and robbers. He would, therefore, have them instructed from the book which teaches that the Lord sends lying spirits and commanded his chosen people to spoil the Egyptians.

Three Middlesborough sky-pilots, of the Church of England species, sign a long-winded public appeal in favor of the School Board candidate who would dose the children with the Apostles' Creed. These gentlemen are horrified at what goes on now. "We can prove a case," they say, "where a child was taught in one of the Middlesborough Board Schools that St. Joseph was Our Lord's *natural father*." The italics are their own, and we can imagine how they are shocked. Still, they might remember that other people may be shocked at having to pay for children to be taught who was "Our Lord's" *unnatural father*. Fancy a young lady teacher having to explain this biological mystery to a class of little girls! But there is nothing which a parson will not face, and make other people face, in the interest of his dogmas—that is to say, in the interest of his profession.

At every School Board election it is only a fraction of the people who trouble to record their votes. The clericals rely on the apathy and indifference of the electorate to "capture the Board schools." The party most active at present is that which has long been working to undermine the Protestantism of the Anglican Church. The priest is naturally

a sacerdotalist seeking his own power through the subordination of women and children. And this is done in the name of religion.

Is it the doctrine of the Trinity which makes so many people confused in their arithmetic? The *Westminster Gazette* gravely prints a grave letter from a correspondent who wishes to set the world right on the question—the silly, addle-pated question—of when one century ends and another begins. This gentleman informs the public that the year 1900 begins the twentieth century, which is as reasonable as saying that Tuesday begins at eleven o'clock on Monday night. Ninety-nine years don't make a century. *Viola tout.*

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes gives a regular Sunday entertainment at St. James's Hall. He calls it a religious service. But what's in a name? Bands and choirs and platform addresses are just the same, whatever you label them.

Mr. Hughes's entertainment last Sunday included a speech against Sunday entertainments. It wouldn't do for him to say plainly that he objects to scientific, philosophical, and literary lectures on Sunday, or even to high-class music. That would look too professional. He takes the ground, therefore, that these things ought not to be allowed for gain—as though that made any difference; as though an act should be made lawful or unlawful according to the motives of the person who performs it. And, after all, what the deuce does Mr. Hughes preach for on Sundays except to gain his living? He may say he does it for the love of Christ, but take away the salary, and how long would he keep at the job?

Mr. Hughes, by advertisement, invited the public to what he facetiously called a "Conference" on Sunday amusement. Mr. Mark Judge attempted to speak after Mr. Hughes had done, but was informed that at the St. James's Hall conferences there was only one speaker. Mr. Judge wrote to the papers and to Mr. Hughes, who made his reply at the last Sunday Conference. He made at least one grave mis-statement of fact, saying it was not fair to be harping upon the Act of George III., as "the Committee of the House of Commons had more recently declared that the law as it stands substantially represents the wishes of the English people." It was a Committee of the House of Lords which made the report which Ananias foisted upon his Conference as from the Commons.

Talmage has a sermon in the *Christian Herald* on Lies and Liars. He is an authority on both.

The Rev. W. Mantle, of Devonport, preaching last Sunday before the Mayor and Corporation, reminded them that their town was the worst in England for overcrowding. Not three hundred yards from the church there was a room in which a bed-ridden girl had been lying for five years. Her mother's corpse had occupied for four days a corner of the same room, and two adults tried to sleep in the same room every night. In Darkest Africa, the preacher said, they would not find so much disrespect and disregard for the feelings of humanity as in Devonport—which we dare say is a good deal truer than the Gospel.

Mr. Mantle is to be commended for speaking out thus boldly. But his boldness is not due to his creed; it is due to his natural manliness. This is a Christian country, and Christianity has long had possession of wealth and power, and control over education; yet there is more vulgarity and degradation here in England than in any "heathen" country in the world. The fact is, we want less religion and more common sense; less kingdom-come and more common humanity.

The Rev. S. C. Walley, vicar of Kirkthorpe, near Wakefield, said a woman came to him and said that she had had twenty-two children, and six were living. "That woman was practically a murderess of sixteen children. It was impossible for one woman to rear such a large number. It was ridiculous for people to imagine that they could breed healthy children more than once in three years." As the men of God become forced to attend to the things of this world, we shall hear less outcry at the Freethinkers who have given grave attention to the population question.

The "strike of a sex" is reported from Nebraska. It differs from the strike treated of in a book having for a title the words quoted, as in this case it is accompanied by a boycott. The Methodist women of Nebraska announce that they are determined to have a voice in the administration of the affairs of their Church commensurate with the amount of service which they perform, and that they will absent themselves from meeting until the general conference accedes to their demand. The loss will not be theirs if they conclude to make the boycott permanent.—*Truthseeker.*

The Churches still have the prestige of wealth and the appearance of power, but candid religionists confess that the secular spirit is getting too strong for the faith. Church-going hardly holds its own by attractive services, but private family worship is almost entirely given up. In nearly every family Sabbath recreation is indulged in on some part of the day, and the good old days when secular papers, magazines, and books were carefully collected on Saturday evening and laid away, have departed never to return. At which we heartily rejoice.

The Protestants of France are wealthy and influential out of all proportion to their numbers. In the large towns to be a Protestant is to share in numerous chances of charity, and as in India and China there are "rice" Christians, so in France there are "dole" Protestants. Thus in some measure the spirit which is excited against the Jews, also falls on the Protestants, who, because they have protested against the high-handed doings of the Jesuits in Madagascar, are held up in Catholic journals as representing the interests of Britain. Religion is such a benevolent promoter of humanity.

The Rev. Arthur Ritchie, rector of St. Ignatius Protestant Episcopal Church, New Oregon, in his organ, *The Catholic Champion*, asks: "Could anything be more utterly contemptible than the great American sects—such low, time-serving, ignorant superstitions as the Baptist Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the like? In the East these parvenu folk do not dare to raise their heads, or, if they do, they are laughed at for their pains. But no doubt in the West it is different, and quite possibly there a Baptist minister or a Methodist minister may consider himself as on an equality with the Church clergyman."

The *Manxman* thus alludes to the recent grand Church bazaar in Douglas, Isle of Man: "Truly, gambling under the guise of raffling attained to a fine art at St. Matthew's bazaar. Christianity! what crimes are perpetrated in thy name!" The extraordinary thing to the Islamic mind is that Christian editors write such paragraphs as the above (with which we cordially agree), and yet the writers thereof remain professing Christians!—*Crescent*.

The words of Jesus, "To him that hath shall be given," are often fulfilled in the Church. Thus the Rev. E. A. Stuart, the vicar of St. Matthew's, Bayswater, whose living is worth £1,699, has just received the appointment of the Jones' Lectureship of the Haberdashers Co., with a stipend attached of £150 per annum.

Mr. A. Benjamin writes to *The Jewish Chronicle* exposing the shady character of alleged Jewish converts to Christianity. He says: "I have repeatedly challenged in print the London, British, and Mildmay head missionaries to produce a single worthy convert they secured during the past two years in return for the £120,000 they received during the same period."

The Berlin Supreme Disciplinary Court for the Colonies has finally found Dr. Peters guilty of having feloniously caused the death of a young native woman with whom he had formerly had sexual relations. He is dismissed from the service. Let us hope the verdict may do something to protect the heathen from Christian brutality.

*Vorwärts*, surveying "Christian Europe," says: "In Russia the trinity which rules is the knout, vodka, and the priesthood. Its work has been to destroy Poland and a dozen other nations, to persecute Catholics and Stundists, and drive out the Jews. Then England's Christian work consists of the coercing and enslaving of Ireland, and the spoliation of India. France massacred thousands for believing in liberty and equality. Germany has her anti-Socialist laws and militarism; Austria, the cat-and-dog life between several nationalities; Italy, persecution and robbery. Spain slaughters her ignorant, starving subjects, and revives the torture."

Curiously similar is Japanese opinion, as given in the English columns of the *Yorodzu Choho*, of Tokio, which says: "In the long history of Christendom we know of not a single case of a country saved by it. With Montezuma's Mexico and the Inca's Peruvian empire the course of Christendom was absorption, destruction, annihilation. It has killed India—politically, at least. It has killed Burmah and Annam. It has killed Hawaii, after keeping it alive some forty years. It has killed Madagascar, and it will yet kill Abyssinia, Egypt, and Morocco. What security have we that Christendom will not kill China, Korea, and even Japan, if the opportunity offers?"

Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, who has spent twenty-five years in India, where she has been an inspectress of girls' schools, expresses some opinions which are calculated to abate the pride of the pious and virtuous Briton who subscribes

towards missionary societies in that great peninsula, with its nearly three hundred millions of inhabitants. Interviewed by Mrs. Tooley, in the *Humanitarian*, Mrs. Steel says that "marriages in India are singularly happy. There are fewer cases of unkindness and violence than in this country. The Hindu has a finer idea of marriage than we have." How strange this sounds when we recollect the loud talk in Christian England about the need of the gospel to elevate the women of India.

Marriages are made in heaven and paid for on earth. A member of the C. of E. Assembly in Melbourne last week tried to secure the reduction of church marriage fees from three guineas to half-a-sovereign. The mover declared that existing fees were so high that church members could not afford to pay, and were forced to go elsewhere to be married. The motion was lost, it being held that the Church could not afford to extend its blessings at less than three guineas a go. So marriages made in heaven will continue to pay big profits to the importers.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The Fijian is dying out. The epidemics of civilization-cum-Christianity are the cause of his extinction. So, at least, says S. M. Herald, who with the next breath observes that, from the missionary point of view, Fiji is the greatest triumph of the century! Cadmean sort of triumph! Eh? Some eighteen hundred years ago a carpenter with the gift of prophecy explained in vigorous speech how the missionary would act; also how said missionary's work would pan out—sea and land compassed to make a proselyte, and the proselyte once made rendered twofold more the child of hell than the missionary. Yes, than the missionary! Irreverent carpenter!—*Ibid*.

Last Sunday one of the pipes in connection with the hot-water heating apparatus for the comfort of the worshippers at the fashionable Marylebone Presbyterian Church, through some diabolical device, burst during prayers. The aspirants for heaven stamped in panic, and in the crush one person was thrown down, trodden on, and hurt. "Providentially" the others were saved, and some few of them remained to the conclusion of divine service.

One hundred and thirteen persons perished in the recent catastrophe in the church at Chmelevo, in the district of Kosloff, Russia, caused by a false alarm of fire. Life is sweet, and when death is in front the instinct of self-preservation shows the impotence of religion. Mothers and fathers may be excused, but what shall be said of celibate priests, dedicated to God? At the awful fire at the religious fancy fair at Paris in the beginning of the year, where the victims were nearly all women, quite a number of clerical hats, more or less damaged, were found among the ruins. Their owners all escaped, and were invited to get their hats, but, for reasons best known to themselves, did not care for these relics.

The Church Army now has forty-three vans to evangelize the rural districts. Who will provide for the spreading of Freethought in the same clergy-cowed quarters?

The theme discussed by the Illinois Conference of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod, at Bloomington, Ill., recently, was "Life Insurance in the Light of the Holy Scriptures." Many of the speakers expressed the view that life insurance is not in accordance with the Scriptural teaching.

The speakers were correct. Nothing was more clearly taught by Jesus than "Take no thought for the morrow"; "Lay not up treasures upon earth"; "Take no thought saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed"; "Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not better than they?" The climax of the whole matter was: "Lay up your treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break in and steal."

Jesus never taught industry, thrift, or the accumulation of capital. How can a Christian, placing trust in the "dear Master," whose words are substantially as quoted, invest in insurance of any kind? The facts are, if he taught anything, Jesus taught that the end was nigh, even at the door within the lifetime of the then generation, some standing near him who should not taste of death until the end comes; then why provide for a period that lay beyond that event? Every true disciple is still expecting the fulfilment of this prediction at any moment. Then why lay up earthly treasures? Those who bank or insure their lives betray, as the good Lutherans declare, a lack of trust in Divine Providence.

The late Mr. Morton, of Leadenhall-street, put a deal of money by for post-mortem fire insurance. He has left the Moravian Church about a quarter of a million. The people

who labored for him week in week out from morn till night get nothing. Even his confidential manager, who served him many years, is in the same case. His secretary (lucky man), however, is not forgotten, for he gets £10, and his cook has as much as twice that sum. His widow, benefiting on the higher scale, has no temptation to extravagance in an annuity of £500. And this clod was almost a millionaire. His annuitants are to have their allowance forfeited if they become bankrupt. But the philanthropist made a very handsome provision for evangelizing the Chinese, and a number of rice-Christian chows may hear of his pious munificence. "These be your gods, O Israel."

We know nothing of the business dealings of Mr. Morton. He was doubtless eminently respectable, "good" on change or in chapel. But his will tells his character. We should like to be able to trace whence came the means for his notable philanthropy reaching to far Cathay, but reckless of those around him in London.

According to *Tit-Bits*, sixteen City of London churches, with yearly revenues amounting to £25,000, cost £12 10s. a year for every member of their congregations. It is doubtful whether some of these expensive souls are worth saving at the price.

In a case heard at Sheerness Police-court it was alleged against the Rev. E. Masson Baston, of Stevenhage, Herts, who is Bishop-designate of Burmah, that he had taken out a marriage license to unite himself with a Miss Gilbert, wherein he described himself as a widower, well knowing that his wife was living. The case was one of assault, the reverend having used his stick on a police-sergeant who was employed to keep him out of the house where his intended resided. He was fined ten shillings and costs for the assault, and the magistrate ordered that the marriage license should be impounded and laid before the Public Prosecutor.

Some time ago we drew attention to the case of Antonia Texeira, a girl who was outraged while in service at Baylor Baptist University at Waco, Texas. W. E. Brann, of the *Iconoclast*, an adept in scathing language, severely roasted the authorities of the University. For this a mob of armed divinity students entered his office, and took him, with drawn revolvers, to the university campus, where, under threats of bodily injury, he was compelled to sign a paper that he would leave the city in twenty-four hours. He went back to his office to indite another scathing attack. In a day or two he was attacked from behind, and brutally treated by some more Baptist ruffians. The upshot of the affair is thus expressed in the *Independent Pulpit*: "Baylor University has suffered irreparable injury, the Baptist Church is in disgrace, shame has been brought upon our community; while Mr. Brann is still on deck, with his pencil in hand, and the *Iconoclast* was never so much in demand."

A colored exhorter, while holding a meeting in Georgia, says the *Atlanta Constitution*, solicited a special collection to defray the expense of the meeting. "We'll pass roun' de hat," he said, "endurin' de singin' of de hymn on page 205—'On Jordan's Stormy Banks.'" And then he proceeded to "line out" the hymn; but so intent was he on the collection that he forgot whole lines of it, and supplied others, with the following result:—

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand  
En cast a wistful eye  
To Canaan's fair on happy land—  
(Don't let dat hat pass by!)

O de transportin', rapturous scene  
Dat rises to my sight!  
(Drap in dat nickel, Brudder Green!)  
En rivers of delight!

Could I but stand whar Moses stood  
En view de landscape o'er,  
Not Jordan's stream, or death's cold flood  
(We want ten dollars mono).

A little while ago, at a church in Georgia, the congregation adjourned for ten minutes to lynch a negro. After jerking the negro to Jesus, they returned to pray and preach as if nothing uncommon had happened. Probably they had an increased sense of devotion.

Q. Meteorologist Wragge is not satisfied with having definitely nicknamed the Almighty the "Infinite Dynamo." After dealing out various smaller baptismal certificates, he has now re-christened Him (or It?) "the great Ego Sum." This is retracking on the trail of the Hebrew. Why not break out into new fields? The "Great Go Forth," the "Pervasive Ubi," the "Infinite Inertia," the "Logocosm," the "Sempivibrant," the "Whatnot Is," or beautiful appellations of that sort? All the same, Wragge had better look out that the Almighty, or someone, doesn't rechristen him, for

playing chuckstones with the names of the variant Joss. "For yet they are not three Josses but one Joss," and a patent trade-label is badly needed, to have force throughout the world.—*Bulletin*.

"Resist not evil" is attributed to Jesus. Few are so foolish as to attempt to follow it out. The Doukhoborts, or spirit-wrestlers, of Russia, unquaking Quakers, who seem to have been Tolstoists before Tolstoi, like the Peculiar People of England attempt to live literally according to the precepts of the New Testament. They hold their goods in common, and refuse to bear arms. In consequence they have been relentlessly persecuted by the most Christian Government of the Czar. Their homes were broken up, and they were deported to Transcaucasia. Since 1895 they have been drastically dealt with—hurried by Cossacks, dispersed among strange villages, banished to Siberia, and placed on the penal battalions. It is hard lines trying to be a Christian under a Christian Government.

Dr. Browne, in his address on Faraday, said that his life was a proof that the deepest science was not incompatible with true Christian belief. But the force of this statement disappears when it is known that Faraday refused to think about his religion at all. He positively refused to reason about it as he reasoned on matters of science. He received Christianity on faith, and he held it on faith, regardless of whether it squared with science or anything else. All this may be learned from Dr. Jones's *Life of Faraday*, and to put one part of the case without the other is a fraud upon the public.

Madame Amy Sherwin, the Tasmanian Nightingale, told a Melbourne *Herald* interviewer that she saw President Kruger while in South Africa. Asked whether he was an enthusiast on music, she replied: "No; but he is an enthusiast on religion, and he would not go to an entertainment of any sort." President Kruger's religion, however, does not interfere with his making the best of this world from a more solid point of view. He is said to have made a tremendous pile.

At Manchester municipal elections every member of the retiring Watch Committee, with one exception, was defeated; while the chairman of the Parks Committee, Mr. Needham, a prominent local Tory, who was mainly responsible for the prosecution and imprisonment of open-air speakers at Boggart Hole, Clough, was soundly beaten in his own stronghold by Mr. Brocklehurst, the Socialist, the chief prisoner in the campaign. This is a magnificent vindication of the right of free speech.

The plague is still prevalent in India. At Poona the hospitals are full, the city deserted, and some of the principal streets closed. The Lord's mercies are over all his works.

The mortality of Spanish soldiers in Cuba has been excessive. According to the official figures, 50,000 have either been killed or invalided; 40,000 more are in hospital; another 90,000 are scattered throughout the island, and respecting this latter number the *Imparcial* significantly remarks that they are distributed among detachments and garrisons of which no particulars are known.

In Tibet, where the Mahatmas come from, according to W. W. Rockhill, the traveller, the women have to do all the hard work from childhood. They are more muscular than the men, and work with the right side of the body completely exposed. The children usually go naked, or with only a pair of boots on, except in the coldest weather.

The article on "Monkeys" in the current *Quarterly Review* concludes that man has not been evolved from any existing form of ape. Nevertheless, the orang, gorilla, chimpanzee, and gibbon each present such specific human characteristics that we should look for the brute ancestor of our species in some form of ape from which they also have been derived, and are thus led to regard, as the original home of our species, some South Asiatic region.

As paradoxical as it may seem, we have good Christian authority that there is not a real Christian in the United States. The Methodists, and others with whom we have conversed, claim that the Catholics are not real Christians, and the Catholics claim that the Protestants are children of the Devil. Adventists, Unitarians, and Universalists are called infidels by most other Christian denominations, and we know of no Christian sect that is not far from being Christian according to some good Christian authority. Brothers and sisters of earth, there is too much to do here to bother about the old dogmas any longer. Let us all help each other to become good, honest, wise men and women. Let us all be Secularists.—*Torch of Reason*.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 21, Town Hall, Porth, South Wales: 10.30, "Prayer and Providence"; 2.30, "Will Christ Save Us?" 6.30, "The Doom of the Gods."

Tuesday and Wednesday, November 23 and 24, Pontypridd: Public Debate.

November 28, Leicester.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. C. WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—November 21 and 23, Athenæum Hall, London. December 5, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

F. J. THURLOW.—We are overset for this number. Your letter shall appear in our next.

V. PAGE.—We do not recollect any debate between Charles Bradlaugh and the Rev. Arthur Girdlestone, either at Stourbridge or elsewhere. That Mr. Bradlaugh "left the platform thoroughly beaten" is too absurd even for contradiction. Christians were always fond of inventing such stories.

DONALD BLACK.—Pleased to hear Mr. Watts had enthusiastic meetings under the new Scheme at Paisley and Motherwell. He has himself written upon his Northern Lecture Tour. We cordially reciprocate your good wishes.

G. W. BLYTHE.—Sorry we have no room for a discussion of the merits and demerits of opium.

E. J. LEES.—It is against the general rule of practice to say anything about particular cases coming under the notice of the National Secular Society's Benevolent Fund Committee. The Committee exercise their own discretion, and relieve distress without publicity. But since Mr. Haslam publicly states that he applied in his necessity for assistance and was refused, he has only himself to thank for the following announcement. Mr. Haslam has never, we believe, been a paying member of the N. S. S. Nevertheless, he has been assisted from the Benevolent Fund at various times for many years. The last time he applied for aid, in November, 1896, he received a grant. Unfortunately, these grants have never deterred Mr. Haslam from defaming the Society which assisted him.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—*Per C. Watts*: A. Ralston, 10s.; J. Ralston, 10s.; George Colquhoun, 10s.; Daniel Watt, 3s.

N. S. S. FINANCIAL REORGANIZATION SCHEME.—Mr. C. Cohen acknowledges the following promise:—A Bradford Friend, £2 2s. (annually). *Per Miss Vance*: Tom Beach, £1; E. L., £5; David Hughes, 5s.; Jas. Thomas, 10s.; A. J. Marriott, 7s. 6d.; James Fulton, £1 5s.; Crowe Friend, 5s. (p).

J. H. FOSTER sends us £1 in redemption of his promise in aid of the new Scheme.

THE HOOPER FUND.—*Per C. Watts*: W. McLean, 5s. *Per Thomas Bellamy*: E. Lawson, 10s.; Anonymous, 5s.; J. Scott, 1s.; W. B. Coppock, 1s.

M. E. PREG.—Date booked.

A. E. E.—Thanks for cuttings. We return (as desired) your extract from *Great Thoughts*. It was George Standing who wrote that unfortunate passage about the superiority of Salvationism over Secularism in its message to the ignorant and degraded. We replied to it at the time, in the *Westminster Gazette*, if we recollect aright—or it may have been the *Pall Mall*.

H. CLOUGH.—Thanks for a copy of the Failsworth Bazaar Program. Glad to know that £300 was realized. We hope the £50 worth of unsold stock will yet bring in its value to the Fund.

A. G. LYE (Coventry) wishes to know what Public Libraries allow the *Freethinker* to be placed on the reading-room tables. We should be glad to receive information on this point from our readers in various parts of the country.

A. HURCUM.—You are about right. Please send orders for books or pamphlets to R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. Perhaps you would find something to your purpose in our little book on *Infidel Death-Beds*.

W. CABELL.—Our attention has been drawn to your letter. We do not wish to be unnecessarily unpleasant, but the least we can say is that you have been inaccurate and inconsiderate. Had you supplied us with the more definite information you now disclose, the matter could have been traced and dealt with satisfactorily—which is now done. We regret that you regard yourself as having lost £1 in connection with the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund. We had two guineas of our money in the same subscription, for we gave something, unlike others who gave nothing and make a great noise at the same time. We are ready to cover your "loss" out of our own pocket and remove your grievance altogether, if you are willing to be so recouped.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—The People's Newspaper—Blackburn Times—Consett Chronicle—Crescent—Progressive Thinker—Torch of Reason—The Truthseeker—Two Worlds—Liberator—Secular Thought—Isle of Man Times—Blackpool Gazette—Fria Tankar—Boston Investigator—Ourselves—Freidenker—Lucifer—Free Thought Magazine—Open Court.

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.

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

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 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.

THERE was an excellent audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Philosophy of Hamlet" was listened to with deep and flattering attention, while his rendering of illustrative selections was warmly applauded. Mr. White occupied the chair.

In response to repeated and pressing invitations, Mr. Foote is paying a flying visit to South Wales. He delivers three lectures to-day (November 21) in the Town Hall, Porth, and on Tuesday and Wednesday he holds a public debate at Pontypridd, returning to London on Thursday in time for the monthly N. S. S. Executive meeting.

Mr. Charles Watts gives a free lecture at the Secular Hall, New Church-street, Camberwell, this Sunday morning (November 21), subject, "The School Board Fight: A Final Appeal." In the evening Mr. Watts lectures at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, subject, "Christian Tactics Exposed."

That plucky veteran, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, speaks out in the *Arena* against Bible-teaching in schools. True morality, she contends, cannot be learned in our schools by reading the Old Testament, "containing as it does a very revolting history of tribes always at war, of arbitrary rulers, and of men and women who violated all the moralities in ordinary life."

Mrs. Stanton cites "the Devil scare" at New York as a lesson to Bible teachers. She contends that neither the Old nor the New Testament is suitable as a text-book. Neither in spirit, letter, nor example are children taught in either book to reverence the mother of the race. "In all the revisions of texts and discussions on translations the degraded position of women has thus far had no notice. I doubt whether a theological student ever arose from the study of the Scriptures with a higher respect for women than he found in ordinary life, or in the laws and constitutions of the state."

Our French Freethought friends discussed at their annual Congress their rôle in the approaching elections. The Congress was presided over by M. Durandel, of Dreux, and delegates were present from Bordeaux, Lille, Lyons, Rouen, Nancy, Nimes, Orleans, and other towns.

The *Freethought Magazine*, of Chicago, in its November number, gives as frontispiece a very life-like portrait of Moncure D. Conway, and in the magazine is a good sketch of that gentleman's career, from the pen of Thaddeus B. Wakeman, which he describes as "a most interesting pilgrimage of one of the clear-brained and true-hearted men from Methodism to Unitarianism, thence to Straussism, thence to pure Theism, thence to Humanitarianism, leading to the broader Evolutional Rationalism." Among other notable articles are "Theology: Its Origin, Career, and Destiny," by D. K. Tenney, and an account of Stephen Girard, the Freethinking philanthropist.

We are pleased to note that the *Little Freethinker* is to be revived, and published by H. L. Green, of Chicago.

This Sunday Mr. Forder occupies the King's Hall, Commercial Road, E., where he lectures on "Gospel History."

Mr. Cohen's lectures in the Jubilee Hall, Blackburn, were fairly reported in the local press. He was opposed by the Rev. Mr. Fox. In the *Consett Chronicle* a deluge of correspondence has followed Mr. Cohen's debate with Mr. Waldron, and the editor says: "Twelve columns of letters stare us in the face."

Mr. C. Cohen lectured to improved audiences at Manchester on Sunday. There were good meetings in the morning and afternoon, and the hall was full in the evening. Several new members were enrolled. Mr. Cohen lectures at Huddersfield to-day (November 21).

A correspondent calls our attention to a new Spanish Freethought paper published in Valencia. It is entitled *La Conciencia Libre* (Free Conscience), and has for its mottoes "War on Hypocrisy and Ignorance" and "Walk with Science and Truth."

Referring to the attempt to introduce religion in the Victorian schools, Mr. Symes says in the *Liberator*: "It used to be the Bible in the schools, the whole Bible; but Freethinkers have made it impossible for the clergy to plead for that now. They urge that selected portions of 'God's most holy word' shall be used in schools, not all the God of holiness and purity inspired! Oh, no! 'God' never had the advantage of good society, you understand, and so inserted pages and pages of Billingsgate, of pothouse and street-corner slang and ribaldry, into his book of morals (!). The clergy are not ashamed, of course, of what 'God' wrote; still, for trade reasons, they will not recommend it at present. We have made that impossible for them, and we shall make the Bible and the holy quacks themselves impossible before we have done with them."

### A FORTNIGHT IN THE NORTH.

I HAVE just spent a fortnight of "active service" in the North of England, and in Scotland. During that time I have debated four nights and delivered ten lectures. All my evening audiences have been exceedingly good, and the meetings have proved successful in every particular. There is, beyond doubt, more activity being displayed in the Secular movement at the present time than I have observed for the last four or five years. At least that is my experience at the places which I have recently visited. There are two pleasing features in connection with our Societies that appear to me to be very encouraging, affording as they do grounds for hope for the permanent success of Secular propaganda. These features are, the acquisition to our organization of intelligent and earnest young men, and the co-operation of thoughtful and energetic women. The services of men who are advanced in life are, of course, desirable, inasmuch as the advantages of their experience, when judiciously rendered, are most valuable. But more than that is required in our active movement—namely, the alliance of the energy of youth, and the inspiring influence of wives, daughters, and sweethearts. And this is just what we are rapidly securing, not only in London, but also in many of the provincial towns. At Stanley and in Glasgow the women were well to the front, aiding, by their presence and practical work, the efforts of their respective societies. In Paisley, Greenock, and Motherwell the propaganda is carried on principally by young men, who seem to me to be exceedingly thoughtful, and who regard their work as a labor of love. If any of our friends are inclined to despair, they should visit the brave workers in the North, and the activity in local propagandism which is there going on ought to be sufficient to remove any gloomy apprehensions that may be felt in consequence of a lack of knowledge as to what is really being done.

While what is here stated is quite accurate in reference to the places mentioned, it is only fair to say that there are other towns where improvement is necessary. Just now, through special causes, much apathy prevails in Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen. Freethinkers are numerous in each of these places, but they lack cohesion of purpose, and while one party is waiting for others to do something, nothing is done. Unfortunately, those who are willing to work lack the means to carry out their desires, and many of those who could give pecuniary help are indifferent in the matter, and thus the cause suffers in consequence. Still, there is no reason to despair at this drawback, for with the aid of the Treasurer's Scheme it will be overcome. I am very pleased to record the fact that, without one exception, at every place I have visited during this tour all friends agree that the Scheme is a good one, and that it deserves the hearty support of the entire Freethought party. In this I entirely concur, and it is to be hoped that those who can will send their subscriptions at once. Within the past fortnight I have

received contributions in aid of the Scheme, and many other friends have promised further donations. It will be pleasing to me to see the promises fulfilled at an early date. So convinced am I of the utility of the Scheme that I venture to assert that, if funds would permit, branches of the N. S. S. could be formed and placed in a flourishing condition in every principal town in the North of England and in Scotland. The material is there waiting to be utilized, which can only be done by propagandist efforts, supplemented by proper organized work. My lectures at Paisley, Greenock, and Motherwell were given under the Treasurer's Scheme. The audiences were excellent, and the lectures highly appreciated. At Greenock and Motherwell the halls were filled, and the utmost enthusiasm was evinced at the marked success of the meetings. Many were the inquiries: "When are you coming again?" The local friends have promised to proceed with organization in all earnestness. There was but little debate; many questions, however, were put, which indicated the interest taken in the subjects dealt with. At each meeting the best attention was given, and the strictest order was observed. Mr. Lindsey, the local newsagent in Glasgow, attended each meeting, and had a capital sale of Freethought literature. Those staunch workers in the cause, Messrs. Black and MacLish, presided at Paisley and Motherwell.

My four nights' debate at Stanley was, to me, highly satisfactory. The audiences were good, and, with one exception, those present showed by their conduct that they came to hear both sides. The one exception was on the second night, when the members of the Salvation Army mustered in force. My opponent, the Rev. A. J. Waldron, had preached for them on the Sunday night, and, upon the principle that "one good turn deserves another," a crowd of these disciples of the Cross attended the debate the following evening and responded to Mr. Waldron's appeals to the emotions in a style more enthusiastic than discreet. However, they ultimately cooled down and listened with a patience that evidently taxed their religious power of endurance. The last audience was the best of the four, and all parties appeared pleased with the encounter. The Secularists were clearly so, and not without reason, for twelve new members were added to their Society. The local clergy and ministers were opposed to the discussion, and not one of them supported Mr. Waldron by appearing with him on the platform. The Primitive Methodist minister attended the first night, which, I presume, was too much for him, for he did not put in a second appearance.

Mr. Waldron behaved in a gentlemanly manner on the whole, although, like most Christian defenders, he preferred resorting to the emotional, rather than confining himself to argument. He did one very undignified act. One of our young Freethought lecturers has written a pamphlet upon Atheism, and Mr. Waldron, with a view of showing there was "nothing in it," had removed the inner pages, and put in their place blank leaves. He then exhibited the sham pamphlet to the audience, saying to them: "Do you want to know what argument is here? Here it is—*nothing*." This was gaining applause at a cheap rate; and so the thoughtful part of the audience thought. Apart from this "playing to the gods," my opponent fought better in this debate than in any of the previous encounters that I have had with him. The two pleasing features of the discussion were the good feeling exhibited on both sides, and the opportunity it gave me to show professed Christians the weakness of their faith and the nature and force of Secular principles. Christian disputants have of late changed their tactics in controversy; and I intend to deal with this subject in my lecture at the Athenæum Hall, London, this Sunday evening, November 21.

Having given two lectures last Sunday at Edinburgh, I returned to London on Monday, having done a fairly hard fortnight's work.

CHARLES WATTS.

There are a good many people who think it obvious that Christianity also inherited a good deal from Paganism and Judaism, and that, if the Stoics and the Jews revoked their bequest, the moral property of Christianity would realize very little. And if morality has survived the stripping off of several sets of clothes which have been found to fit badly, why should it not be able to get on very well in the light and handy garments which science is ready to provide?  
—T. H. Huxley.

## THE ORIGIN OF ALL THINGS.

EARLY man found himself surrounded on every hand by the mysteries and manifestations of nature, which were to him totally inexplicable. He saw the mighty forests with their majestic trees reaching—so it seemed to him—to heaven; with their resounding echoes, sublime quietude, mysterious animals, and creeping serpents. To him they often formed hiding-places in war or bad weather; they furnished fuel for the winter, and protection from heat and cold. In winter they threw off their garments, and resumed them, more beautiful than ever, in spring. It was but natural for the savage, with these phenomena before him, to bow down in reverence and awe, and worship the great unseen power. He looked at the sea with its hidden and immeasurable depths, its diving monsters, and good and bad luck when he was engaged in fishing, its wild fury or serene calmness, and its prey upon human life. And he was overawed, and prayed. And again he observed how, when the sun hid its countenance behind black clouds on the western horizon, everything became dark, cold, and damp; the flowers bowed their heads and closed, or dropped their crowns, the birds were silent, and nature slumbered, but resumed her activity and normal condition at the reappearance of the King of Day.

He noted how it grew colder and colder as the sun retreated towards the southern hemisphere, how nature gradually went to rest, the earth growing bare, until all life finally lay as in a trance during the long winter months beneath a pall of ice and snow; and, as he observed how the whole nature slowly awakened as the sun returned, what wonder, from his standpoint, that he fell prostrate and worshipped the great, golden Sovereign, the giver of life, the source of light, warmth, and growth! It was entirely excusable, his experience being but scanty, and his reasoning faculty being almost *nil*. His nature consisted but of animal instincts and passions, hope, fear, and the sense of imitation; and anything living, which was greater than him, or not subject to his control, he considered to be a personal entity, as he himself was, only greater, wherefore he deemed it wise to solicit its sympathy. Having no resource in science, and being ignorant of the nature of the phenomena around him, they seemed mysterious to him, and he was overawed. Our early ancestors personified the elements and prayed to dead objects. They worshipped the real: their deities were tangible and visible. The modern Christian says, How absurd! leaves the real alone, and grasps after the shadow of it. His deity is an intangible, invisible, abstract, airy phantom of the imagination.

Then came a time when our early forefathers began to conjecture as to the cause of phenomena, and thus originated all our religions. In our Bible we have a good summary of these conjectures, and some fine specimens we have of them. Take, for instance, the following free quotation: "Once upon a time there was but one people with one language. So they said one to another, 'Lo, we will never part, but we will build a tower which shall reach unto heaven, and we will live in it as one people.' They started the job, and got a good way up above the earth, when God got news of the matter, and he murmured to himself: 'What the deuce are the miserable ants up to? Lo and behold! They want to get into heaven that way, contrary to my pronouncement for Eve's eating the apple in olden time. That won't do.' And God, who knows everything, did not know that there is no air above four miles over the earth; God, who is everywhere, came down to see what his people were doing, and, perceiving that there was something wrong, caught hold of a brilliant idea. He confounded the people's tongues, and so, when one shouted for bricks in Latin, the other swore in Hindustani, and brought up the mortar in Dutch; and this is why we speak German, French, English, and Danish to this day."

This might be credible enough if it were not for the similarity of this tale with another one which I read in a school-reader when a child, but which I was not asked to believe in. It ran as follows: "Once upon a time, in the midst of winter, being a very frosty day, a hungry bear met a fox, the latter having a stolen fish in his mouth. 'Hullo,' said the bear, 'how came you to that? I wish I could make a catch like that. I haven't had anything to eat for three consecutive days.' 'It's easily done,' said the fox; 'come with me, and I'll show you.' And he took him out on a frozen pond, where a hole had just been made in the ice. 'Here,' said the malicious vagabond, 'I put my tail down this hole, and the fish clung to it. You do likewise; but don't be too hasty, for they don't bite immediately.' Mr. Willy went his way, the credulous bear did as he had been told, the water froze around his tail, and when he noticed it he tried to pull it up, and lost it in the effort. And the bear walketh the earth without a tail unto this day."

These two fables are so much alike that whenever I think of one I cannot help thinking of the other also. They each profess to explain the origin of a certain phenomenon, and

each has been written after the phenomenon originated. One is as erroneous and ridiculous as the other, and the only difference is that one appears in "Holy Writ," and is being taught to the child as God's word under pains of eternal damnation for disbelieving it, and the other is in a common school reader. A man who has the least acquaintance with the pages of history, and who says that language has arisen in the manner described in Genesis, must be deliberately lying. Language is as much a growth as anything else. As far as history carries us back we can trace the development, step by step, of every tongue on the face of the earth, as now every schoolboy knows. The evolution is still going on, and it has been estimated that the English language adds on the average a hundred words per year.

The Christian accounts for the existence of the universe by saying "God made it," and he argues that, as clocks and chairs and tables are made, everything is made; as man's handiwork could not make itself, neither could man himself make himself, therefore there must be a creator, with a still greater intelligence than ours, who has made us. But there he stops, and leaves it to me to take up the chain of logic; and I will do so, by saying (by the same mode of reasoning): And as God is so infinitely great that he can make wonderful man, there must be a being infinitely greater still to make him. If not, why not? It is just as logical to say that the universe has always existed as it is to say that God has always existed. And so we might go on *ad infinitum*. But if God made everything, everything includes time and space, and if not, why the rest? Can our Christian friends imagine a time when there was no time, and a place where there was no space? Let them exert their unpractised reason and dull imagination a little upon this.

"Oh, but there must be some being who regulates the planets and balances them in their orbits, who makes nature's laws." Incidentally spoken, "law" is in that sense a misnomer; it should be "order." But let us for a moment consider the so-called "laws of nature." Let us take the (to us) simplest we know of. Two and two make four. Can anybody make it more or less? Can any Christian conceive a time when two and two made five? No, it is so by the very nature of it, and it could never be otherwise. Take half a cup of milk and pour it into half a cup of water, and what is the result? Why, milk and water. Put oxygen and hydrogen together, and you have water. Certain chemical substances together produce a certain mixture. Certain causes combined under certain circumstances will have a certain effect. But these simple natural laws only appear to us easy to comprehend because they come within our daily experience. The greater and more incomprehensible laws only seem mysterious because we know less about them.

The Freethinker's position concerning this is quite clear. He has learnt at least one thing more than the religionist. He has learnt to confess his own ignorance. He has learnt to pronounce the sentence, "I do not know," at the right time, and at the right place; and that is something. Where he knows nothing he seldom guesses, and when he does he says so honestly; he certainly does not threaten with eternal damnation in case people do not believe his theories; and last, but not least, his conjectures are generally based upon scientific research.

J. K. MAAGAARD.

## ASSYRIAN HYMN TO THE SUN.

THE Rev. H. M. Baum, editor of *Monumental Records*, translates the following psalm from one of the Nineveh tablets. Some of its expressions may remind us of the compositions once ascribed to David:—

O Lord, Illuminator of the Darkness, opener of the face of the sky.  
 Merciful God, who setteth up the fallen, who keepeth the weak,  
 Into Thy light turn the great gods.  
 The spirits of earth gaze towards Thy face,  
 The tongues of the hosts, as one cry: Thou rulest.  
 Smiling, they turn their faces toward the light of the Sun.  
 Like a wife Thou art: glad and making glad.  
 Thou art the light in the vault of the far-off heavens.  
 Thou art the eye-centre of all the wide-spread lands.  
 Men from far and near behold Thee and rejoice.  
 The great gods smell the sweet savor, the food of the smiling heavens.  
 He who hath not turned his head to sin, thou wilt prosper;  
 He shall eat of Thy food and be blessed by thee.

'Tis well, sometimes, for man to be at bay;  
 Cornered, bereft of friends, or hope, or faith.  
 Thrown sheer on one's own self; the voice which saith:  
 "Courage, fight on, 'tis best to die this way."

## WILLIAM PLATT AND HIS MESSAGE.

I OWE the *amende honorable* to William Platt, author of *Women, Love, and Life*. Noticing a single poem of his in our number for July 25, I said: "The writer of *Hope's Brotherhood* can evidently do something still better. He should be able to soar away from all suspicion of belonging to the erotic, neurotic, and tommyrotic schools, and become himself an inspiration of love, trust, and high endeavor to others." This was not unkindly meant. But the silly words used in the attempt to be smart have made me smart since. Levity in connection with Platt's work is impudent and unjust. I tender my apology. This is the more necessary, as a careless reader may fancy flippant words hit the mark; nay, think that impure, insane, and decadent which I find pure, sane, and wholesome. Why I say this now may be worth the telling, if but as a caution *re* critics and new poets.

In July I had seen none of Platt's work save the short poem sent for review. I noticed "its frankness and originality," its "flaming light and aspiration, love of nature and love of humanity." I said of the author: "He is evidently endowed with the poet's master-keys of sympathy and melodious expression." But I fancied an air of juvenility, and flung in a word of warning which, had I known his other work, would have been impertinent. Glancing afterwards at *Women, Love, and Life* (Hirsch, 1895), I was slightly "scunnered." My eye caught an attack on Shelley, an attempt to wrestle with Shakespeare in "Goneril's Defence." When I read in the Introduction, "A stronger pulse beats in these pages than ever did in your heart," I smiled. The book has since wrung the tribute of my tears. I turned to the end:—

Look!  
I have writ a rich book—  
Verse with the spring of the lion,  
Prose with sinews of steel!  
So!  
Great is the show!  
As I think! as I feel—  
Raptured and ringing land real!

That, methought, might be left for some other first to say. Now, I would I were that other—able to express my thought as finely. A glimpse at *Women, Love, and Life* gave the impression of juvenile power seeking to force attention by singularity, posing as a lion at bay, perhaps ready to shatter nerves in a vain attempt to get from Long Acre to Westminster Abbey. I thought of the sad fate of a singer intense, proud, sweet, and true—the living Anarchist poet, John Barlas ("Evelyn Douglas"), a little-known genius who outstripped most contemporaries, and bade fair to be a poet of all time.

A sense that I had not been quite just to the young egoist of my fancy made me gladly go last week to hear William Platt lecture before the Legitimation League on "Natural Love and Spiritual Needs." Of course I took my wife. The flaunting poet turned out to be a modest, grave, plodding, little man of perhaps thirty-five, who, in a crowd, might pass as insignificant; though, when he lighted up, he was anything but that. His speech, from its opening words, "Woman is the altruist of the race," to its abrupt but eloquent close, was significant enough. He spoke frankly, fluently, fervently of the sublimity of building up a new race, of the immeasurable meaning of fatherhood and motherhood, of the necessity of a high ideal of honor and constancy, of subordinating all for the children. Love must be free from baseness, before it could be freed from legal ties. He preached the beautiful building of the race by men and women who had learnt to live, not by external laws, but by their ideals. His utterance had the ready serenity of one who had long thought and deeply felt on sexual problems; nervous sensibility impelled his hand to wander as over the keys of an invisible instrument, but there was no affectation. Strenuous sincerity was the keynote of the man. He was most severely criticised in discussion. Socialists, Individualists, Anarchist-Communists, Freelovers, Conservatives, were dissatisfied. Some titterers had come to scoff. Platt did not writhe under the lash, but smiled lovingly, as with a heart big enough to understand them all. I thought the poet the sanest of the speakers, and wished to take his hand; but I felt that I, too, had done him an injustice, and must first make public reparation.

I am thus personal, for personality gives life to dry bones. The man gave me the key to his work. I went home and read it through, mostly aloud to my wife. A friend who spoke described it as "idle." We found it beautiful, vibrant with one vital and vitalizing idea—Love as the pivot of the world's onward course. The evident purpose of every page is to ennoble life by intensifying generous emotions. If this be idle, all art is idle. Here is an extract, showing less of the artist than his dominant motive. Let the reader judge:—

"I dream of a world built of Love, well built (a nation and a nation's purity and a nation's honor depend on this) and

if men regarded it as their duty of duties to leave behind them children better than themselves had been, were not a nation then at once saved—all politics, ethics, science, and whatsoever you will of no potency to the potency that love can wield!"

William Platt, if I understand him—it still is an *if*—is one who has been stripped of every faith but just this. In human love, deriving all its law from what is necessary to the children, he finds philosophy, art, science, ethics, and religion. He would place our most imperious instinct under severest self-control; raise love so high it cannot be base, make it so ardent as to burn out all brutality, lust, and selfishness. He would make it do for every individual what in the long run it is doing for the race. He would have children nobly conceived, nobly born, and nobly bred, and birth and its cause ever worthily spoken of. With Walt Whitman, he regards every inch of the human body as holy, and, above all, reverences woman and motherhood. What child of woman can sneer at such a faith? To mock at it were to despise oneself. When amid the battle of life, bloody and brutal, a passionate figure is seen bearing proudly the pure white flag of love, may my face lie buried in the mire ere I fling mud at such an ensign. Poet, dreamer, idealist, I do not jeer; I think nobly of you.

J. M. WHEELER.

## BOOK CHAT.

It is stated that there are 3,000 languages into which not even a fragment of the Bible has been translated. Most of these are decaying dialects. On the other hand, the Bible has been translated into several languages of which the speakers are all extinct.

\* \* \*

In the library of Glasgow University there is a rhyming Bible, the work of the eccentric old divine, Zachary Boyd. He conceived the idea of rendering the sacred book in rhyme, a task which had to some extent been undertaken by several writers, among whom may be mentioned the Saxon Cadmon, and Tate and Boyd's rhyming version of the Psalms. Zachary Boyd gave full reign to his imagination, and produced a work of much interest and curiosity, though it has never yet been printed.

\* \* \*

The American papers are making much fuss over Miss Ellen Glasgow, a young Virginian, whose anonymous novel, *The Descendant*, is said to show Freethought proclivities.

\* \* \*

In the *Positivist Review* Frederic Harrison writes on the late F. W. Newman, who is compared at length with the Cardinal. Mr. Harrison remarks: "The elder brother mounts on the top of the wave of Catholic reaction, and becomes a foremost pillar of a vast religious organization. The younger brother leads a far-reaching movement of thought which is destined in one form or other to undermine the very foundations of that Church; he ends in obscurity, and with hardly any personal following or influence. Yet the Cardinal represents only a discredited Past, and Francis did something to bring us nearer to a Greater Future." A notice of Professor Newman is also given in the *Vegetarian Messenger*.

\* \* \*

In Commander Bacon's *Benin, the City of Blood*, one may read many horrors of the bloody sacrifices perpetrated in the name of religion. A not uncommon form in some parts is for a chief at times to kill a slave to take a message to his father, or some revered person, in the land of shades. On these occasions a slave is sent for and given the message, and told when he gets to the next world to give it to the chief's father. The slave repeats the message, absolutely believes that when he dies he will find the old chief, give him the message, and then enter his service in the far-off world. He is then killed quite willingly and peaceably, for the confidence of the black slave in his chief is unbounded.

\* \* \*

*Theosophy* has changed its name to *Universal Brotherhood*. It is under the editorship of Mrs. Kate Tingley. The alteration of title is significant.

\* \* \*

*Ourselves*, which calls itself "The People's Theosophic Monthly," has a sensible article on "Religious Instruction in Schools." It remarks on the absurdity and worse of Bible teaching, imposing upon the child's mind the words of a book which in many parts is as unintelligible as the Greek language would be, and tells of a teacher who dilated on the horrors of the fiery serpents which bit the children of Israel, to a class of infants. The writer says: "One teacher has a class of ninety girls whom she has constantly to put off with a subterfuge, because she dare not avow her real opinion on a question of 'belief.' And another, who conscientiously teaches the Christian faith, confessed to me in a private

conversation that she often wished she had been born a heathen, because then she could have followed *her own* conscience."

\* \* \*

The *New Age*, noticing volume iii. of the Humanitarian League's publications, says: "Mr. G. W. Foote has a really eloquent plea for universal peace. If the appeal could only have been made to the nations, how many of our European wars of the last fifty years would have taken place?"

\* \* \*

Mr. C. W. Heckethorn's standard work on *Secret Societies* has long been out of print. He has replaced it with a new and fuller one, entitled *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries*, which is now published by Redway.

\* \* \*

In noticing Dr. C. P. Tiele's lectures on *Elements of the Science of Religion*, delivered under the terms of Lord Gifford's will, the *Academy* is constrained to ask: "What about the Gifford bequest, which was not to be used for the teaching of the creed of any Church or sect?"

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### CLERICALS AND TOLERANCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The following personal incident, I think, will be of interest to readers of the *Freethinker*:—At Birmingham, last Monday evening, I went with a Freethought friend (Mr. H. Lees Sumner) to a meeting held by the Church party in the St. James's Schools, Aston, in support of their local candidate for the coming School Board Election. The chair was taken by a Rev. Mr. Orr, who opened and closed the proceedings with prayer. About seventy persons were present, including half-a-dozen clergymen. At the conclusion of the speeches I asked permission to speak for a short time. This request the chairman readily granted. The audience received me with hearty applause, evidently thinking that it was my intention to support their candidate. I began my remarks by saying that, although my views differed from those of most present, I had no doubt that they would show towards me that spirit of fairplay for which Englishmen in general, and Christians in particular, were so famous. I then went on to say that those impressions made on the child's brain in its earliest years were, as a rule, the most lasting and the most difficult to remove. This statement was applauded. They evidently knew its truth too well. I then said that, to my mind, it was *cowardly* of them to take a mean advantage of the innocence of childhood by endeavoring to cramp the young mind by theological dogmas; that if their religion was true there would be no need for them to resort to such despicable trickery. This remark was more than Christian flesh and blood could endure. The rev. chairman and another rev. ambassador of God jumped up as though they had suddenly sat down on "the business end of a tin-tack." I was politely told to resume my seat. I had "injured" the "feelings" of those present, and could not expect that mine would be respected; but if I wished I could "ask a question." I then said: "The candidate has asked what better book could be put into the hands of a child than the Bible; I should like to know what *worse* book could possibly be given to a child." This question was met by derisive laughter. Some enthusiastic Churchman yelled, "Turn him out." One kind-hearted God-supporter shouted, "Lynch him." The chairman considered the question "blasphemous." The candidate, the best behaved among the lot, like his master on a particular occasion, answered not a word. Before I sat down, however, I said that if the conduct of those present was a specimen of the effect Bible-teaching produced on the mind, it did not say much for its value.

And yet there are a number of Freethinkers dreaming away their time in a fool's paradise, fondly imagining that the persecuting spirit of Christianity is dying, and that the time for iconoclastic work has gone. Let them attend some Church-meeting, similar to the one my friend and I visited, and in a courteous manner endeavor to express their honest thought about religion. Their apathy would receive a rude awakening, and perhaps they would not be so ready afterwards to condemn the "mere puller-down."

H. PERCY WARD.

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—*Apropos* of your remarks on Dr. Clifford's letter, I would like to mention an incident which occurred some years ago in the family of a friend of mine. His daughter attended a local school (not a Board school), and the story of Joseph was the religious subject for study. Each girl in

the class was given a few verses to write out as a home lesson. An innocent inquiry made by my friend's child at home led to the discovery that her section included Genesis xxxviii. 9; and on inquiry at the school it transpired that the pupil teacher had carelessly apportioned the thirty-eighth chapter among two or three of the girls. The teacher was, of course, severely reprimanded for her thoughtlessness; but as this chapter is sandwiched in between two others relating to the story of Joseph—a narrative which is continually being put before children—it is to be feared that it does something to counteract the "lofty ethics" (!) of this "inspiring history."

CH. EDWARDS.

### THE VOICE FROM OVER YONDER.

"DID she care as much as I did  
When our paths of Fate divided?  
Was the love, then, all onesided—  
Did she understand or care?"  
Slowly fall the moments leaden,  
And the silence seems to deaden;  
And a voice from over yonder answers sadly:  
"I've been there."

"Have you tramped the streets of cities  
Poor? And do you know what it is—  
While no mortal cares or pities—  
To have drifted past ambition;  
To have sunk below despair?  
Doomed to slave and stint and borrow;  
Ever haunted in your sorrow  
By the spectre of To-morrow?"  
And the voice from over yonder answers sadly:  
"I've been there."

"Surely in the wide Hereafter  
There's a land of love and laughter?  
Say: Is this life all we live for—  
Say it! think it, if you dare!  
Have you ever thought or wondered  
Why the Man and God were sundered?  
Do you think the Maker blundered?"  
And the voice, in mocking accents, answered only:  
"I've been there."

—*Sydney Bulletin*.

HENRY LAWSON.

### THE INNOCENTS.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER—"Who was king after Saul?" Scholar—"David." S. S. T.—"Who followed David?" S.—"Solomon." S. S. T.—"And who came after Solomon?" Little Girl (out of turn)—"Oh, please, miss, I know." "Who, then, Dottie?" "The queen of Sheba."

The conversation among the older people was in relation to heaven, and some asked the little miss if she did not want to go to heaven when she died. The young girl turned, looked at her father, and said: "No; I don't want to go to heaven. I want to go where papa goes."

Nurse—"Good-bye, Freddy; I am going to church. Freddy (aged three-and-a-half years)—"Tell God I was a good boy." Nurse—"But I cannot; you were not a good boy." Freddy (after meditation)—"Well, fool him!"

"Mother, I wish I was God!" "Why, my dear?" "I would say, 'Let there be oranges,' and there *would* be oranges!"

### The Evangelical Clergy.

In the face of physical science, of modern Biblical criticism, and of all the light which history and comparative mythology have of late years thrown on the genesis of religions, the old theory of verbal inspiration, the old methods of Biblical interpretation, and the old pre-scientific conception of a world governed by perpetual acts of supernatural interference, still hold their ground in the evangelical pulpit. The incursions of erudite science have been met by the barrier of an invincible prejudice—by the belief, sedulously inculcated from childhood, that what are termed orthodox opinions are essential to salvation, and that doubt, and every course of inquiry that leads to doubt, should be avoided as a crime. It is a belief which is not only fatal to habits of intellectual honesty and independence in those who accept it, but is also a serious obstacle in the path of those who do not. The knowledge that many about him will regard any deviation from the traditional cast of opinions as the greatest calamities and crimes seldom fails, according to the disposition of the inquirer, to drive him into hypocritical concealments, or into extreme and exaggerated bitterness.—*W. E. Lecky, "History of the Eighteenth Century," vol. ii., pp. 640, 641.*

## 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, C. Watts, "Christian Tactics Exposed."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTION (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): George Eliot's Birthday—Tea at 6, Speeches at 7.30, Dramatic Performance and Dance at 9. November 23, at 8.15, Mrs. Annie Besant, "Theosophy in its Bearings on Life." November 27, at 8.30, Concert and Dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, C. Watts, "The School Board Fight: A Final Appeal"; 7, Musical selections; 7.30, E. Pack, "The Curse of the Cross."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (King's Hall, 83 Commercial-road): 7.30, R. Forder, "The Gospel History: Is it True?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion, "The Value of Discussion"—opener, V. A. Cope; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Children's Fear of Hell and Hope of Heaven."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Heaven and Hell as Motives for Children."

WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, G. Standing, "A Freethinker's View of the Bible."

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 11, Committee meeting; 7, W. J. Russell, "Comrade Jesus."

BRISTOL (St. James's Hall, Cumberland-street): 3, Discussion Class—J. Keast, "Philosophy of Secularism."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Stanley Jones, "What is Christianity?"

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—"The Bible and Witchcraft"; 6.30, P. McGivern, "Christianity and Secularism."

Huddersfield (Friendly and Trades' Societies' Hall, Northumberland-street): C. Cohen—11, "Why Should we Follow Jesus?" 3, "The Priest and the Child"; 6.45, "Christ and Democracy."

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, F. H. Perry Coste, B.Sc., "The Christian Worship of Brute Force."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, "The Meaning of Anarchism."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Evans, "Flowering and Flowerless Plants: A Study in Development." Lantern Views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "Henry George: His Life and Work." Members' and friends' Social Dance, Wednesday evenings at 8.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Special meeting; important business.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—November 21, Huddersfield; 23 and 29, Birmingham; 30, Derby. December 3, Preston; 6, Bradford; 8, Blackburn; 19, Leicester.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Orndon-road, London, S.E.—November 23, m., Camberwell Radical Club. December 12, Camberwell Radical Club.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—November 28, a., Edmonton; 6, Bradlaugh Club. December 12, Sheffield. January 30, Stanley.

## 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 2.45.

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

BATLEY.—Positivist Meeting at Mr. Joseph Walker's, Primrose Hill, Lady Anne-road, every Sunday afternoon at 2.30.

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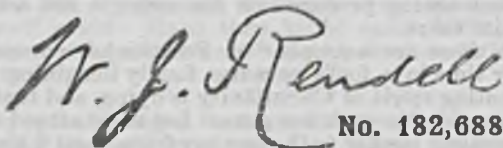
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  - Full Length.....
  - Half Width of Back .....
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