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PRICE TWOPENCE,

FAILURE OF RELIGION.

It must be obvious to the impartial observer of the times that what professing Christians term religion has proved a complete failure as a moral, social, and intellectual regenerating force. The crime, hypocrisy, disregard for truth, commercial dishonesty, and lack of fidelity to principle, which exist in our midst, are a standing refutation of the repeated assertion that the religion of the Cross "makes for righteousness." The boast that the glory of the Christian religion consists in its power to reform mankind, and to win adherents who would honestly be guided by its teachings, is shown, by the condition both of the Churches and of general society, to be utterly groundless. St. John exclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world" (i. 29). But, admitting the advent of Jesus, he did nothing of the kind, for there are more "sins" and greater sinners to-day than there ever were. Let anyone witness the appalling sights to be seen, particularly on Saturday nights, in such cities as Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and then form an opinion as to the efficacy of Christ's mission. What he failed to do in reforming society his followers have also been impotent to accomplish. Although in the places just mentioned churches and chapels abound, with their thousands of clergymen and ministers, drunkenness, dirt, indecency, and the worse kind of every phase of immorality constitute the normal condition of those unfortunate specimens of humanity, whom, we are told, were made in "the image of God."

Before Christian exponents ask, What has Secularism done? they should remember what Christianity has *not* done. For centuries it has claimed to have controlled the nation. It has had unlimited wealth at its command, with fashion and prejudice upon its side, and yet it has failed to remove the vice, inequality, and injustice which are so sadly retarding personal happiness, the development of ethical culture, and national greatness. If Secularism had possessed the advantages for centuries that Christianity has, and had produced no better results, it could then be fairly condemned as being destitute of regenerating power. The truth is that the Christian religion, as a factor in human progress, has been a decided failure. That good has been done by some of its professors may be readily admitted, for there are men and women in whom the love of humanity is so deeply rooted that no theology can prevent them striving to do right. Hence much of the service rendered to the world by religionists is prompted, not by their faith, but by their love for the human family. Christians are continually confessing that their faith fails to inspire them to do the right thing. The Confession to be heard Sunday after Sunday in the churches, when its members acknowledge: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us." Such an admission of perpetual wrongdoing is a humiliating reflection upon the influence of their faith. Out of their own mouths, therefore, comes the condemnation of their religion, which I pronounce, upon their own authority, as being a failure.

But the non-success of the Christian religion, as an incentive to right-doing, is not confined to the secular world; it is also a failure within the Church. Its adherents are growing more and more indifferent as to its teachings upon what are called "spiritual" matters. This was granted

by Bishop Ryle, who, a few weeks ago, in opening his Diocesan Conference in Liverpool, alluded to what he termed "one very unhealthy and painful symptom" which seems to me to characterize the age in which we are living. The symptom I refer to is the increasing indifference to all distinctive doctrines and opinions in religion, in every part of the land. I say emphatically *increasing religious indifference*.....I have not in view those huge masses of people in London, and our large towns, who worship nowhere, and appear to have no religion at all. I refer to those myriads in this age who are to be found in all our churches, who are not communicants, and never exhibit any interest in vital religion.....I declare my belief that the size and rapid growth of the school of indifference is one of the most dangerous signs of the times at the close of the nineteenth century. The multitude who belong to this school are not open opponents of the faith and Christ's cause; but they simply sit still and do nothing for religion at home or abroad. Ask any good clergyman who works his parish, and visits his people, and knows their characters, what is the chief difficulty he has to contend with? I am certain he would tell you that it is neither Romanism, nor extreme Ritualism, nor Erastianism, nor Broad Churchism, nor systematic Scepticism, nor any other 'ism,' but a half-dead torpid indifference about any sort or kind of religion" (*Rock*, November 12, 1897).

Here we have a plain statement from "one who knows," in which he avows his recognition of the failure of his religion to secure the consistent obedience to Christian teaching. In my opinion, the Church has become but little more than a political institution, a home for "spiritual" imbeciles, and a refuge for those who are either too lazy to think for themselves, or too weak to withstand the assaults of "Mrs. Grundy." It is with the great majority of professors of Christianity either a question of obtaining the means of living, or a desire to be in the fashion. Unfortunately, the time is not quite gone when "respectability" is estimated from a theological standpoint. My wish and hope are to see the period arrive when respectability shall be acknowledged as belonging to no creed or avowal of religious belief, but when it shall be regarded as the emblem of truth, honor, and sincerity. Hypocrisy reigns in the religious world to a terrible extent, and nothing will so effectually remove it as practically carrying out the Secular principle, that every individual should be permitted to openly avow his or her views upon religious questions without running the risk of being exposed to social ostracism. No religion ought to be encouraged which tends to prevent a man from saying what he means.

The religion taught by Bishop Ryle does not, it is evident, inspire him to grant this intellectual liberty, which is undoubtedly the birthright of every human being. For in his speech at the Conference, above referred to, he condemns the claim that "all sects should be equal," and that "all creeds should be regarded with equal favor and respect," as "the spurious liberality of the day." To his mind, "the adoption of a general policy of toleration and forbearance within the pale of the Church of England" would be fraught with indescribable danger. He says: "The mere fact that such a monstrous policy finds acceptance with many Churchmen is, to my mind, one of the greatest perils of the Church of England, and its adoption could only have one result. That result would ultimately be, disruption, disintegration, and disestablishment. You could not possibly have two or three distinct Churches within one communion. It is amazing to me that the

advocates of this notable policy of universal toleration do not see that it would infallibly end in our Church being broken to pieces."

If this is the spirit of England's "national religion," the sooner it falls to pieces the better. It has always been a barrier to human progress, and has never succeeded in proving itself a friend of the people. The Bishop, like most of the clergy, is a persistent foe to mental freedom. He would tolerate only those who think as he thinks. Well might Buckle write: "A careful study of the history of religious toleration will prove that in every Christian country where it has been adopted it has been forced upon the clergy by the authority of the secular classes" (*History of Civilization*, vol. i., p. 310). It is worthy of note that the only time the Church opposed the injustice of the Crown was, says Buckle, "when the Crown had declared its intention of tolerating, and in some degree protecting, the rival religions of the country" (*ibid.*, p. 366). But "scarcely had the clergy succeeded in expelling James when the greater number of them repented of their own act" (*ibid.*, p. 369). To the shame of the Church, be it said, its clergy have opposed almost every reform that has tended to promote the happiness of the masses, establish the principle of justice, and enhance the dignity and honor of the nation.

The voice of history and the lessons from personal experience corroborate my allegation, that religion has failed to relieve society of the evils under which for centuries it has suffered. Its impotency is apparent alike in the social, moral, intellectual, and political world. Happily, while this religious decline is going on, there is being consolidated in our midst a power born of human genius, and fostered by human requirements, that shall prove a potent regenerating force. It has made itself felt in the secular ranks of life, it has firmly impressed its influence upon the intellect of the age, and it is now shaking the citadel of theology to its very foundation. It has even penetrated the domain of pious Scotland, where, says the *Rock* (dated Nov. 5), "the Higher Criticism has become firmly rooted in her teaching centres, and a laxity of thought, dangerously approaching Socinianism, if not downright Rationalism, is spreading with considerable rapidity."

CHARLES WATTS.

BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

It is an astonishment to many good Christians to learn that over five hundred years before Christ a faith arose in India with many striking resemblances to Christianity. Buddhism taught what are popularly supposed to be the Christian moral monopoly, the mild and unobtrusive virtues of self-control, long suffering, and the forgiveness of enemies. "Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality; the liar by truth," was said by Buddha long before Jesus introduced the impracticable precept, "Resist not evil." Nay, more; he sent out missionaries to carry his doctrines to the then known world. My doctrine is like the sky, he said; "it covers all."

In the *Outlook* "The Angarika H. Dharmapala," a Buddhist missionary from Ceylon to the United States, gives his view that Buddhism has the best claim of all faiths to be a universal religion. Buddha alone set up ostensibly as a universal teacher, for Jesus said he was but sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. At the time of Gotama Buddha's birth in Kapilavastu, Northern India, the Jews were returning from their Babylonian captivity. Says the Buddhist missionary:—

"India with its 300 millions of people, China with its 400 millions of people, and the Greco-Russian Empire with its fifty or sixty millions of people, were outside the influence of Jewish traditions, which were a monopoly of the Jews, who numbered at that period 42,360 men and women, and who had 7,337 men-servants and maid-servants, and 200 singing-men. This was the total population of the Jews at their return from the Babylonian captivity. The God Jehovah refused to recognise the 800 millions of Asiatic Aryans and Mongolians, as the 43,000 Jews were the object of his gracious solicitude. Until the appearance of Jesus Christ, who came to save the children of Israel, the world was left to the tender mercies of Zoroaster, Brahmanical Rishis, Jain Mahavira, Confucius, Lao-tze,

and Buddha. Zoroaster's beautiful religion was confined to the empire of Persia, the Brahmanical Rishis had their influence over the twice-born population of Aryan India, the Jain Mahavira had his influence over the Indian ascetics, Lao-tze and Confucius had their mystical spiritualism and moral agnosticism confined to the celestial kingdom. No universalism was to be found in any of these systems, and Jewish dogmas are also exclusive as the Vedas of the Brahmans. Buddha alone has the right to be called the universal teacher, for he was the *first* to break the manacles of priest-theologians."

And Buddha declared his gospel was for all—castes and outcasts, for women as well as men, and his ethics were extended to all animal life and carried into all known lands. The rock-hewn inscriptions of Asoka prove that in the third century B.C. Buddhist missionaries went from India to all neighboring potentates, mentioning by name Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Greece. One inscription reads: "Both here and in foreign countries everywhere the people follow the doctrine of the religion of Asoka wheresoever it reacheth." One of the Buddhist sacred books, the *Milinda-panha*, is occupied with a discussion held in Syria between Nagasena, a Buddhist, and Menander, who, we are told, was born at Alexandria, and who became a convert. The *Mahawanso*, old Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon, mentions among those who came from afar to a great celebration (B.C. 157) the Thero of Yona, and thirty thousand priests "from the vicinity of Alasadda, the capital of the Yona country." If this was Alexandria in Egypt, it may serve to explain the rise of Christian monkery.

The Angarika Dharmapala seeks to show that Christianity has only within the last four hundred years become a peaceful, persuasive missionary religion. By the way, it is not always that now, for gunpowder usually closely follows on the Gospel. Prior to that time it usually resorted to force. The cross by which Constantine conquered formed the hilt of a sword. Paganism was overcome by the battle-axe. Cyril hounded the Christian monks on Hypatia. Clovis, Charlemagne, and the Teutonic knights proclaimed to the heathen "baptism or death."

In contrast Dharmapala goes on to say:—

"Buddha's mission was one of peace and love, and never within the twenty-four hundred years that his religion has existed has there ever been a drop of blood shed in his name for the propagation of the doctrines he promulgated. For over fourteen hundred years it had an existence in India, Afghanistan, and the Bactrian territory, and the early Indian Buddhists carried their mission of peace to the far-distant countries of Burmah, China, Korea, Tibet, Siam, and the Java Islands. In its peaceful propaganda it avoided controversies and abstained from discussing questions which tended not to the edification of the religious mind. Buddha's religion is to ennoble and emancipate the human mind from ignorance. In the Chinese language there is no word to express the conception of a Creator God, and the Christian workers in China are having a difficult time in trying to get a proper term to express the idea. Four hundred millions of Chinese are thus left out from the Jewish theology; and in India nearly three hundred millions of people, over twenty centuries ago, gave up the creative theory of the world and accepted the evolution theory which has been brought into acceptance by the researches of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and others."

In this respect it must be admitted that Buddhism is the more philosophic faith. This Buddhist holds that Christianity as taught in schools and churches has no place as a universal religion. Buddha avoided all metaphysics, dogmas, speculations, and theologies. He thought it waste of time to go into speculations as to the origin of God, the world, etc.

Says the Singhalese Buddhist missionary:—

"Buddha was eminently practical and taught all people, men and women, to lead a virtuous life of love, righteousness, charity, and truth, for the emancipation from suffering and misery. He taught that we suffer through our ignorance of the immutable laws of causation, and by ignoring truths of suffering, causes of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the noble way of salvation. Buddha ignored a Creator, as he was the first to teach the principles of evolution, and denied annihilation, as he was the first to discover the great law of causation, with its dependents of twenty-four resultants; and he ignored a separate, permanent ego entity, as he was the first psychologist to discover that

everything is undergoing a continuous change in the phenomenal world."

Christianity and Buddhism alike are essentially monkish systems, born rather of despair than hope. They represent the ideals of a world groaning under slavery and oppression, and will be replaced by newer ones when all are free to develop their natures to the uttermost. Buddhism has endured for twenty-five centuries, and probably numbers more adherents than Christianity itself. May it not prove even more elastic in adapting itself to the increase of knowledge and modern reaches of thought? This will be for the future to determine; but at least it is safe to say it will force the younger faith to give up its exclusive pretensions to divine truth, and help to confirm the Freethought position, which holds by the old motto:—

Accept the truth wherever found,
On Christian, heathen, or on sceptic ground.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

XIV.—CHRIST'S REJECTION BY THE JEWS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that "God so loved the world" that he sent his son Jesus "to seek and to save" the whole human race, the divine messenger of salvation, we are told, was rejected and put to an ignominious death. This Savior, as we have seen, not only confined his ministry to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but he withheld from these "lost sheep" the spiritual meaning of his allegorical teaching, lest, perchance, too many of them might repent, "and it should be forgiven them." God's free gift of "eternal life" was thus limited to a select few, among whom were, of course, the disciples, Mary Magdalene, the woman who anointed Christ's feet, one of the two thieves who were crucified with him, and certain women who followed Jesus about and "ministered unto him of their substance." That Jesus should reserve all the best places in heaven for his intimate friends, and not care to admit many outsiders, may not, perhaps, be very astonishing; for the condition prescribed for obtaining a seat in the heavenly Jerusalem—viz., simple faith—an article not dependent on the human will—shows the whole plan of redemption to be irrational and absurd. But it is, I must confess, somewhat surprising to find Christ denouncing judgment on the people from whom he had withheld his teaching because they did not "repent." Thus in two of the Gospels (Matt. xi. 22; Luke x. 13) this most illogical Savior is represented as saying:—

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes.....It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."

There is no record of any miracles worked in either Chorazin or Bethsaida, which, further, appear to be purely imaginary places, no one except the Gospel-writers having ever heard of them. In one passage (Mark viii. 23) Jesus is stated to have entered Bethsaida, and to have spat on the eyes of a blind man. Before doing so, however, he "brought him out of the village"; consequently, he evidently did not intend the villagers to see any of his "mighty works." His conduct, then, in pronouncing these anathemas was both ridiculous and inconsistent, and the more so, since he never once visited Tyre and Sidon, where, he states, the people were willing to believe on him.

Again, in the Fourth Gospel it is recorded that Jesus, in passing through the province of Samaria, stayed two days at Sychar, and that "in that city many of the Samaritans believed on him," and said one to another: "This is indeed the Savior of the world" (iv. 39-42). Yet, in sending out his disciples to preach, Christ, with the same inconsistency, "charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans" (Matt. x. 5). Clearly, then, he had no wish to save any one: the Jews were treated to allegories which they did not understand; the Gentiles were to receive no message of salvation at all. Hence, the verses commanding to go into "all the world" and preach the Gospel to "all nations" (Matt. xxvii. 19; Mark xvi. 15)

are obviously later additions to the Gospels. This is practically admitted with regard to the second of these passages (see Note in Revised Version); neither can there be much doubt that the first is an interpolation also.

But that the apostles received no command to preach to the Gentiles is also evident from the fact that they did not attempt to do so. According to the Pauline Epistles, the early Church, as represented by the apostles, confined their ministrations to their own countrymen, and lived together at Jerusalem, without a thought of giving the Gospel to the Gentiles. They were there at the time of the conversion of Paul; they were there when Paul visited Cephas and James three years after that event; they were there when Paul went up to Jerusalem fourteen years later; and they were there just before Paul set out on his journey to Rome (Gal. i. 18; ii. 1, etc.). Further, the apostolic party not only cared nothing for the Gentiles, but they used every means in their power to counteract Paul's work among them, and sent agents to the Churches he had established misrepresenting him and his teaching. They were quite willing, it is true, to receive Gentile proselytes; but the latter had to become Jews by undergoing circumcision, and were to conform to the rites of the Mosaic law. These practices Paul found to be a stumbling-block to the Greeks; he therefore, on his own authority, set them aside. The Apostle of the Gentiles was, however, too formidable an antagonist to be ignored by the apostles at Jerusalem; the latter, therefore, when tired of anathematizing him, gave him their left hands, and requested him to confine his teaching to the Gentiles, while they kept to the Jews (Gal. ii. 9). They had, beyond all doubt, received no command to preach salvation to the uncircumcised.

Returning to the Gospel narratives, we find three reasons assigned for the rejection of Christ by the Jews, two of which completely exonerate that nation. The author of the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as saying (vi. 37, 44, 65):—

"All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me.....No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him.....For this cause have I said unto you that no man can come unto me except it be given unto him of the Father."

The word "come" in these passages is used in the sense of "to believe"; hence, only those could believe on Christ who were impelled to do so by "the Father." Christ's "mighty works" might just as well have not been performed at all; for those whom "the Father" intended to save would have been saved with equal certainty without them. This statement, making belief dependent on the will of "the Father," not only referred to the Jews in the time of Christ, but it applies to all men throughout all ages. Hence, those Christians who hurl anathemas at unbelievers and call them "Infidels" do not believe the words of Christ.

The writer of the same Gospel says again (xii. 37, 38):—

"But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

This statement is unmitigated nonsense. There is nothing in the question (Isaiah liii. 1) which shows that anyone disbelieved the "report," and certainly nothing which points to the Jews in the time of Christ. The "arm of the Lord" is merely a figurative expression for the wondrous works of Jehovah; it had no relation to the miracles alleged to have been wrought by Christ.

Lastly, the same voracious writer says (xii. 39-41):—

"For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah because he saw his glory; and he spake of him."

Thus, though "God so loved the world" that he sent "his only begotten Son" to save his chosen people—for, as we have seen, Christ came not to save the Gentiles—he, at the same time, shut those people's eyes, and closed their hearts, to his message of salvation. Under these circumstances, it must be a matter of the most profound astonishment to ordinary human beings why God took the trouble to send his Son at all. Leaving this enigma, we have two good reasons why Jesus was rejected by the

Jewish nation: first, the people were unable to believe, because the Father did not "draw them" to Christ; secondly, they *could not* believe, because God would not permit them to do so. The Father thus appears to have been even more inconsistent than the Son.

That the author of the Fourth Gospel is wrong as to the *reason* why God prevented Christ's hearers from believing is no proof that that evangelist's statement of the fact is false. Possibly, the Father may have entrusted the drawing up of his plan of salvation to the Ghost, and the latter, not knowing exactly how it ought to be done—the chief functions of the Ghost being to inflate mortals with a holy wind and cause them to tell pious lies—made a muddle of it, and so arranged it that the Jews were bound to reject their Savior and secure for themselves eternal damnation. But this view, be it understood, at present lacks evidence.

The quotation in the Fourth Gospel is from Isaiah vi. 8-12, in which the writer says:—

"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying.....Make the heart of *this people* fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be waste without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and the Lord have removed them far away," etc.

Here, it will be seen, the reference is to the Exile and to the people of Isaiah's time. The Israelites were to be deaf and blind to the warnings and exhortations of the prophets, and were to serve the gods of other nations, until they were carried away captive to Babylon, and their land had become desolate. Also, that this blindness and hardness of heart referred to the idolatry of the people of Isaiah's time can be plainly seen by the following passage in the same book (xliv. 9-18):—

"They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity.....and their own witnesses *see not nor know*, that they may be ashamed.....The carpenter.....heweth down cedars.....he burneth part thereof.....and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it.....They know not, neither do they consider; for *he hath shut their eyes that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand*.....Remember these things, O Jacob," etc.

It is scarcely necessary to say that in the time of Christ the Jews were firm in their allegiance to Jehovah, and that idols had long been banished from the land. Yet, though Isaiah had no more knowledge of the Gospel-writers than he had of Christ, the above passage describes those writers exactly. They knew not, neither did they consider; their eyes were shut so that they could not see; they understood nothing of what they were writing, and they were not ashamed. The only thing in which they at all excelled was in distorting passages of the Old Testament to make them support the fictitious narratives they were writing. In this matter they were so successful that thousands of unreflecting Christians believe all their perversions and misrepresentations to this day.

But the writer of the Fourth Gospel says, further, that Isaiah *saw* Christ's glory, and so *spake of him*. Here is the "glory" (verses 1-3 of the same chapter):—

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I *saw the Lord sitting upon a throne*, high, and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of *his glory*."

Assuming that Isaiah was the writer, and that he actually *saw* what he describes, the "glory" he beheld was that of the "Lord of hosts"—the God Yahveh. Yet the author of the Fourth Gospel has the impudence to say that the prophet *saw* Christ's glory, and so "spake of him." Here we have another illustration of the fact that the early Christians, whenever it pleased them to do so, had no scruples in ascribing anything stated in the Old Testament of the God Jehovah to Christ. If we search all history, a more dishonest set of writers it is scarcely possible to find.

ABRACADABRA.

The religion of the future is humanity.—*Ingersoll*.

INGERSOLL'S LATEST.

(Continued from page 756.)

FROM my childhood I had heard read, and read, the Bible. Morning and evening the sacred volume was opened, and prayers were said. The Bible was my first history, the Jews were the first people, and the events narrated by Moses and the other inspired writers, and those predicted by the prophets, were the all-important things. In other books were found the thoughts and dreams of men, but in the Bible were the sacred truths of God.

Yet, in spite of my surroundings, of my education, I had no love for God. He was so saving of mercy, so extravagant in murder, so anxious to kill, so ready to assassinate, that I hated him with all my heart. At his command babes were butchered, women violated, and the white hair of trembling age stained with blood. This God visited the people with pestilence, filled the houses and covered the streets with the dying and the dead, saw babes starving on the breasts of pallid mothers, heard the sobs, saw the tears, the sunken cheeks, the sightless eyes, the new-made graves, and remained as pitiless as the pestilence.

This God withheld the rain—caused the famine—saw the fierce eyes of hunger—the wasted forms, the white lips—saw mothers eating babes, and remained ferocious as famine.

It seems to me impossible for a civilized man to love or worship or respect the God of the Old Testament. A really civilized man, a really civilized woman, must hold such a God in abhorrence and contempt.

But in the old days the good people justified Jehovah in his treatment of the heathen. The wretches who were murdered were idolaters, and therefore unfit to live.

According to the Bible, God had never revealed himself to these people, and he knew that without a revelation they could not know that he was the true God. Whose fault was it, then, that they were heathen?

The Christians said that God had the right to destroy them because he had created them. What did he create them for? He knew when he made them that they would be food for the sword. He knew that he would have the pleasure of seeing them murdered.

As a last answer, as a final excuse, the worshippers of Jehovah said that all these horrible things happened under the "old dispensation" of unyielding law and absolute justice, but that now, "under the new dispensation," all had been changed; the sword of justice had been sheathed, and love enthroned. In the Old Testament, they said, God is the judge; but in the New, Christ is the merciful. As a matter of fact, the New Testament is infinitely worse than the Old. In the Old there is no threat of eternal pain. Jehovah had no eternal prison, no everlasting fire. His hatred ended at the grave. His revenge was satisfied when his enemy was dead.

In the New Testament death is not the end, but the beginning, of punishment that has no end. In the New Testament the malice of God is infinite, and the hunger of his revenge is eternal.

The orthodox God, when clothed in human flesh, told his disciples not to resist evil, to love their enemies, and, when smitten on one cheek, to turn the other; and yet we are told that this same God, with the same loving lips, uttered these heartless, these fiendish words: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." These are the words of "eternal love."

No human being has imagination enough to conceive of this infinite horror.

All that the human race has suffered in war and want, in pestilence and famine, in fire and flood—all the pangs and pains of every disease and every death—all this is as nothing compared with the agonies to be endured by one lost soul. This is the consolation of the Christian religion. This is the justice of God—the mercy of Christ.

This frightful dogma, this infinite lie, made me the implacable enemy of Christianity. The truth is that this belief in eternal pain has been the real persecutor. It founded the Inquisition, forged the chains, and furnished the fagots. It has darkened the lives of many millions. It made the cradle as terrible as the coffin. It enslaved nations and shed the blood of countless thousands. It sacrificed the wisest, the bravest, and the best. It

subverted the idea of justice, drove mercy from the heart, changed men to fiends, and banished reason from the brain.

In my youth I read religious books—books about God, about the atonement, about salvation by faith, and about the other worlds. I became familiar with the commentators, with Adam Clarke, who thought that the serpent seduced our mother Eve, and was, in fact, the father of Cain. He also believed that the animals, while in the ark, had their natures changed to that degree that they devoured straw together and enjoyed each other's society, thus prefiguring the blessed millennium. I read Scott, who was such a natural theologian that he really thought the story of Phaeton, of the wild steeds dashing across the sky, corroborated the story of Joshua having stopped the sun and moon. So I read Henry and McKnight, and found out that God so loved the world that he made up his mind to damn a large majority of the human race. I read Cruden, who made the great Concordance, and made the miracles as small and probable as he could.

I remember that he explained the miracle of feeding the wandering Jews with quails by saying that even at this day immense numbers of quails crossed the Red Sea, and that sometimes, when tired, they settled on ships that sank beneath their weight. The fact that the explanation was as hard to believe as the miracle made no difference to the devout Cruden.

To while away the time I read Calvin's *Institutes*, a book calculated to produce in any natural mind considerable respect for the devil.

I read Paley's *Evidences*, and found that the evidence of ingenuity in producing the evil, in contriving the hurtful, was at least equal to the evidence tending to show the use of intelligence in the creation of what we call good.

You know the watch argument was Paley's greatest effort. A man finds a watch, and it is so wonderful that he concludes that it must have had a maker. He finds the maker, and he is so much more wonderful than the watch that he says he must have had a maker. Then he finds God, the maker of the man, and he is so much more wonderful than the man that he could not have had a maker. This is what the lawyers call a departure in pleading.

According to Paley, there can be no design without a designer; but there can be a designer without a design. The wonder of the watch suggested the watchmaker, and the wonder of the watchmaker suggested the creator, and the wonder of the creator demonstrated that he was not created, but was uncaused and eternal.

We had Edwards on "The Will," in which the reverend author shows that necessity has no effect on accountability, and that when God creates a human being, and at the same time determines and decrees exactly what that being shall do and be, the human being is responsible, and God in his justice and mercy has the right to torture the soul of that human being forever. Yet Edwards said that he loved God.

The fact is that if you believe in an infinite God, and also in eternal punishment, then you must admit that Edwards and Calvin were absolutely right. There is no escape from their conclusions if you admit their premises. They were infinitely cruel, their premises infinitely absurd, their God infinitely fiendish, and their logic perfect.

And yet I have kindness and candor enough to say that Calvin and Edwards were both insane.

We had plenty of theological literature. There was Jenkyn on *The Atonement*, who demonstrated the wisdom of God in devising a way in which the suffering of innocence could justify the guilty. He tried to show that children could justly be punished for the sins of their ancestors, and that men could, if they had faith, be justly credited with the virtues of others. Nothing could be more devout, orthodox, and idiotic. But all of our theology was not in prose. We had Milton with his celestial militia—with his great and blundering God, his proud and cunning Devil—his wars between immortals, and all the sublime absurdities that religion wrought within the blind man's brain.

The theology taught by Milton was dear to the Puritan heart. It was accepted by New England, and it poisoned the souls and ruined the lives of thousands. The genius of Shakespeare could not make the theology of Milton poetic. In the literature of the world there is nothing, outside of the "sacred books," more perfectly absurd.

We had Young's *Night Thoughts*, and I supposed that the author was an exceedingly devout and loving follower of the Lord. Yet Young had a great desire to be a bishop, and, to accomplish that end, he electioneered with the king's mistress. In other words, he was a fine old hypocrite. In the *Night Thoughts* there is scarcely a genuinely honest, natural line. It is pretence from beginning to end. He did not write what he felt, but what he thought he ought to feel.

We had Pollok's *Course of Time*, with its worm that never dies, its quenchless flames, its endless pangs, its leering devils, and its gloating God. This frightful poem should have been written in a madhouse. In it you find all the cries and groans and shrieks of maniacs when they tear and rend each other's flesh. It is as heartless, as hideous, as hellish as the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy.

We all know the beautiful hymn, commencing with the cheerful line: "Hark, from the tombs, a doleful sound." Nothing could have been more appropriate for children. It is well to put a coffin where it can be seen from the cradle. When a mother nurses her child, an open grave should be at her feet. This would tend to make the babe serious, reflective, religious, and miserable.

God hates laughter and despises mirth. To feel free, untrammelled, irresponsible, joyous—to forget care and death—to be flooded with sunshine without a fear of night—to forget the past, to have no thought of the future, no dream of God, or heaven, or hell—to be intoxicated with the present—to be conscious only of the clasp and kiss of the one you love—this is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

But we had Cowper's poems. Cowper was sincere. He was the opposite of Young. He had an observing eye, a gentle heart, and a sense of the artistic. He sympathized with all who suffered—with the imprisoned, the enslaved, the outcast. He loved the beautiful. No wonder that the belief in eternal punishment made this loving soul insane. No wonder that the "tidings of great joy" quenched hope's great star, and left his broken heart in the dark depths of despair.

We had many volumes of orthodox sermons filled with wrath and the terrors of the judgment to come—sermons that had been delivered by savage saints.

We had the *Book of Martyrs*, showing that Christians had for many centuries imitated the God they worshipped!

We had the history of the Waldenses—of the Reformation, of the Church. We had Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Baxter's *Call*, and Butler's *Analogy*.

To use a Western phrase or saying, I found that Bishop Butler dug up more snakes than he killed—suggested more difficulties than he explained—more doubts than he dispelled.

Among such books my youth was passed. All the seeds of Christianity, of superstition, were sown in my mind, and cultivated with great diligence and care.

All that time I knew nothing of any science—nothing about the other side, nothing of the objections that had been urged against the blessed Scriptures, or against the perfect Congregational creed. Of course I had heard the ministers speak of blasphemers, of infidel wretches, of scoffers who laughed at holy things. They did not answer their arguments, but they tore their characters into shreds, and demonstrated by the fury of assertion that they had done the devil's work. And yet, in spite of all I heard, of all I read, I could not quite believe. My brain and heart said No.

For a time I left the dreams, the insanities, the illusions and delusions, the nightmares of theology. I studied astronomy, just a little—I examined maps of the heavens—learned the names of some of the constellations—of some of the stars—found something of their size, and the velocity with which they wheeled in their orbits—obtained a faint conception of astronomical spaces—found that some of the known stars were so far away in the depths of space that their light, travelling at the rate of nearly two hundred thousand miles a second, required many years to reach this little world—found that, compared with the great stars, our earth was but a grain of sand—an atom—found that the old belief, that all the hosts of heaven had been created for the benefit of man, was infinitely absurd.

I compared what was really known about the stars with the account of creation as told in Genesis. I found that

the writer of the inspired book had no knowledge of astronomy—that he was as ignorant as a Choctaw chief—as an Eskimo driver of dogs. Does anyone imagine that the author of Genesis knew anything about the sun—its size—that he was acquainted with Sirius, the North Star, with Capella, or that he knew anything of the clusters of stars so far away that their light, now visiting our eyes, has been travelling for two million years?

After I had learned a little about the stars I concluded that this writer, this "inspired" scribe, had been misled by myth and legend, and that he knew no more about creation than the average theologian of my day. In other words, that he knew absolutely nothing.

(To be concluded.)

POST-MORTEM LOTTERY BOOMERS; OR, THE HEAVENLY STOCKBROKERS.

THE time will come—"the writings on the wall"—
When priests and all the sacerdotal brood
Shall vanish from the earth, for human good,
And men will cease on ghostly gods to call.

The time will come when honest men will treat
The parsons and the priests as rogues or fools;
As rascals, or as rascals' dupes and tools;
As social pests, to shun in house and street.

A thoughtful person knows he can't believe
The fundamental nonsense of the creeds;
But priests—ev'n those with brains—by words and deeds
Profess belief; they, therefore, but deceive.

These knaves inspire the ignorant with trust;
They preach for gain; they sigh and lift their eyes;
They teach, as truth, their silly, solemn lies,
And fill the thoughtful thinker with disgust.

They nurse the ancient errors of our race,
And blandly ply their wicked, blighting trade;
They make their bread—how easily 'tis made!—
By scaring fools and children! what disgrace!

The time will come—" 'tis written on the wall"—
When thought will force the world to understand
How Bibles, priests, and churches curse the land;
And clearly see that Reason's all-in-all!

G. I. MACKENZIE.

ACID DROPS.

EMPEROR WILLIAM said that no one could be a good soldier without being a good Christian. The famous Berlin comic paper, *Kladderdatsch*, quoted William's words under a picture of Frederick the Great, Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and Leonidas. For this offence the office of the paper was raided by the police. Such is freedom in Germany!

What hypocritical thieves are all the great Christian nations! Just look at the quarrel which Germany is picking with China. A brace of German missionaries got killed over there. They were never invited, they were not wanted, and in fact they were hated interlopers. Being killed, they were martyrs, and of course they are now in heaven—or on the way there. But this does not satisfy the German Government. It seizes upon this incident as a pretext for landing soldiers on Chinese soil. Then it formulates and presents its demands for compensation. These include a tremendous money indemnity for the two missionaries, whose pecuniary value when they were living was never suspected; the erection of a German cathedral; the refunding of Germany's expenses in occupying Kiao-Chow; the degradation of the Governor of Shantung; the punishment of murderers and minor officials; a railway monopoly for Germans in Shantung; and the occupation of Kiao-Chow by Germany as a coaling station. It would be hard to beat this as a blend of moral pretence and greedy selfishness. And this is Christianity!

Chinese objections to Christian missionaries appear to be as strong as ever judging from a placard issued by the people of Yochou, Hunan, wherein the missionaries are

accused of all sorts of tricky ways in their endeavors to delude the people.

At a meeting of the Foreign Missionary Society held in Leicester a Miss Taylor told how she had served the Lord in Tibet. Mr. Landor fared very badly in that country; indeed, he has not yet recovered from the wounds of his torture. But it appears that Miss Taylor received divine assistance. Aconite was put in her food, but the Lord saved her from the poison, as he promised to do in the last chapter of Mark. She was also provided with food "in marvellous ways," though it probably did not drop down from heaven. Further, she made at least two converts to Christianity. They were with her at Leicester—going the round as part of the show. One of them told how he was converted. First, his mistress gave him some medicine, which cured him. Then she told him about heaven and hell, and asked him which he preferred going to. His choice fell on heaven, and she told him the way there, and now he worships Jesus. How simple! And how silly! Fancy sending missionaries at great expense to disturb the minds of the "heathen" in this ridiculous fashion! Better leave them to their own superstitions, which are just as good as the supernatural rubbish of the Bible.

The Catholics are never tired of denouncing Freemasonry as the enemy of law, order, and religion. But in England the heir to the throne is year after year elected Grand Master of the Order, and the bicentenary of the building of our finest cathedral is celebrated by a special Masonic service. Either the Papal denunciations are a calumny, or Freemasonry in England is entirely distinct from that in Catholic countries.

In Victoria, it seems, the Roman Catholics are taking steps to put down Orangeism. A Victorian Defence League has been formed which proposes to ask every Parliamentary candidate the following questions: "(1) Are you opposed to any person in the public service, and particularly in the police force, being a member of the Orange Society? If yes, and elected, will you support a Bill to attain this object? (2) Are you in favor of the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the state of Orangeism in the public service? (3) Are you prepared to support a Bill to remove all doubts concerning the illegality of members of the Orange lodges marching in procession wearing the regalia of their Order?" It is said the Orangemen of Australia are taking measures to defeat the schemes of the Catholics.

Ex-Rev. Father Joseph McCabe, writing in the *Echo* on "How I Became a Friar," remarks strongly on the iniquity of allowing boys of sixteen to take irrevocable vows of celibacy. He adds: "And for nuns, who make the vow of chastity at the same age, the pathos of the practice is much deeper. For them there is practically no appeal after the age of sixteen, and, unlike the priests, they are henceforth cut off from all pleasant intercourse with the outer world. The result is, naturally, misery and confusion; evil, solitary habits that lead to an awful premature mortality in nunneries; intrigue, quarrels, a perpetual fret and friction in their domestic life. Such a system could only be chastely and healthily supported by an unusually keen faith in the supernatural; such a faith is rarely found among modern priests, monks, and nuns (though much more among the latter than the former). Hence my previous words, that 'the greatest boon one could confer upon nuns would be to blow up all nunneries.'"

Walton Powell, the author of that infamous libel on the London Hall of Science, for which the printer and publisher were made to smart in the Court of Queen's Bench, was thought to have left the country, but he has turned up again at Bristol, where the magistrates have committed him for trial on a charge of procuration and criminal assault. Of course we have no comments to make upon the case at present. It will be another matter when the trial has taken place.

Since writing the above, and just as we go to press, we read that this scoundrel has been sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment, Justice Hawkins remarking that he did not add hard labor simply because the law would not allow it. Powell made it part of his artful defence that he had opposed "infidelity." We could say much on the doings of this worthy Christian Evidence man were it worth our while.

The Pontius Pilate letter "has forgery written plainly across its face," says the Rev. R. C. Nightingale, of Swaffham, in a letter to the *Daily News*. The reverend gentleman, however, refers to the "fact" of Pilate having written a report to the Senate, which "has at least as much authority as nine-tenths of the received facts of ecclesiastical history"—which is no doubt true. Mr. Nightingale alludes to the Apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, in which Pilate's report is mentioned, and adds that "it is hardly possible that these appeals would have been made to persons so well

able to prove their valuelessness if they had not been founded on existing records which were both genuine and authentic." But this is a mistaken view of the circumstances. These Christian writers were obscure men, belonging to a comparatively small and despised sect in the empire; and there is no more reason for supposing that the Emperor and the Senate ever saw their Apologies than there is for supposing that the Queen of England and Lord Salisbury would read (and perhaps answer) an open letter written by a Socialist lecturer. Besides, the Christians who forged a letter from Marcus Aurelius could just as easily forge a letter from Pontius Pilate. The Christians were always great forgers, and this new Pontius Pilate letter, which turns up in the Vatican, is the last trick of a very old showman.

Mark Twain has a sly dig at the Fijian missionaries in his new book entitled *More Tramps Abroad*. The natives couldn't swallow the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, and this is how Mark Twain puts it: "It appears that their savage ancestors had a doctrine of immortality in their scheme of religion—with limitations. That is to say, their dead friend would go to a happy hereafter if he could be accumulated, but not otherwise. They drew the line; they thought that the missionary's doctrine was too sweeping, too comprehensive. They called his attention to certain facts. For instance, many of their friends had been devoured by sharks; the sharks, in their turn, were caught and eaten by other men; later, these men were captured in war, and eaten by the enemy. The original persons had entered into the composition of the sharks; next, they and the sharks had become part of the flesh and blood and bone of the cannibals. How, then, could the particles of the original men be searched out from the final conglomerate and put together again? The inquirers were full of doubts, and considered that the missionary had not examined the matter with the gravity and attention which so serious a thing deserved."

Referring to the launching of the new cruiser "Pomone" at Sheerness, the *Daily News* satirically regrets that it was effected without any ceremony. What a pity, our contemporary says, to have no speechifying on these occasions; and it goes on to suggest a suitable form of words, ending in this fashion: "You are a living witness to the piety of our people, for he who is not a good Christian cannot build a good ship. Our glorious forefathers look down upon you out of the heavens—also the statues of the Kings, without whom ye can do nothing. See John xv. 5. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" Of course, this is a slap at pious Emperor William. The text in John begins, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," and most good Christians would call the quotation "blasphemous."

Herr Rudolph Falb, the German meteorological prophet, roused the religionists by predicting the end of the world, as a result of the collision of our globe with Temple's Comet on November 13, 1899. It is a comet which travels in the wake of the meteoric swarm of shooting stars, or the Leonid shower, which will be most intense in 1899; and the late Prof. Oppolzer, of Vienna, calculated its return for May, 1899, instead of November. Dr. Falb's sinister prediction has caused Dr. Frederick Bidschhof, first assistant at the Vienna Observatory, to make a recalculation of the comet's course, with the reassuring result that on the day in 1899 when it will be nearest to our earth the distance will still be eighteen million kilometres, omitting the odd figures. He gravely assures us that this distance is sufficient for removing any alarm, and gives us further to understand that Herr Falb made an error in his logarithm.

The *English Mechanic*, from which we gather the above item, inserts a good letter from "M. F. T." on the Star of Bethlehem, about which enough nonsense has been written to sink a man-of-war. He observes: "According to the evangelist, the Wise Men came to Jerusalem, inquiring, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' Now, Jesus was never, either in a literal or even figurative sense, King of the Jews. The story itself is a tissue of inconsistencies, and has always been a bone of contention among theologians, and the plain man may well be excused if he ask the preliminary question, 'Is it true, or is it simply one of the many legends that grew up around the infancy and childhood of the great teacher?'"

John Shaw, a painter out of employment and of no fixed abode, was brought before the York magistrates, on the charge of being on the premises of the Wellington Inn for an unlawful purpose, and wanted to know how the disciples who left all to follow Jesus lived. He said: "You gentlemen on the Bench don't know what it is to be in low circumstances. Has a man to go into a low workhouse casual ward, where they starve you, in this disgraceful Christian country? What did the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ do when they were hungered? Did they not steal?" John was sent up for a month with hard labor.

The Rev. H. J. Clarke offers an occult explanation of the casting of devils from men into swine. His idea is that "the unearthly malignant influence, in quitting the demoniacs, may have found entrance into the herd of swine through cries proceeding from the men, or acts done by them in some terrific paroxysm of fury, just before their restoration to soundness of mind." And this, he says, has "a profoundly valuable lesson, for it opens up to our mental view abysmal possibilities of brutish degradation, loathsome depths into which intellects, noble though they once have been, impotently sink their exalted powers if they engage in a struggle with Almighty God." This is the sort of nonsense that does for a theological monthly.

The Rev. Harry Wilson, a well-known East-end rector, went to Kensington to protest against against Canon Pennefather uniting Mr. Lyon to a Miss Croke, on the ground that he had a canonical wife. A canonical wife, it appears, is a wife who is recognised as such by the canons of the Church, but not by the law of the land—namely, a *divorcee*. Canon Pennefather had, however, previously declined, and Mr. Lyon found a more obliging clergyman elsewhere. Now, as the *Daily News* remarks, the real question of interest is whether Churchmen can take the freedom of a disestablished Church while enjoying the advantages of an Establishment.

There is a good story told of a Governor of Pennsylvania. A worthy Quaker took a wife without any formal ceremony. The Governor invited them to dine with him, and, in course of conversation, spoke of marriage. A discussion arose, and presently the Governor said: "Seth, I understand thee to say that thou dost consider Hannah to be thy lawful wife!" "Verily I do," said Seth. "Thou wilt cherish her as thy wife as long as thou livest?" "Yea, of a surety," replied Seth, looking proudly at Hannah. Presently the Governor turned to the wife. "Hannah," said he, "thou dost love Seth as thy true husband?" "Yea," said Hannah. "And thou wilt always be a faithful wife to him?" "Yea, verily," was the answer. Then the Governor rose with dignity. "By the authority vested in me as Chief Magistrate of this State," he said, "I pronounce you before these witnesses to be man and wife."

H. C. Richards, M.P., the opponent of Mr. Bradlaugh, has been to Australia, where, we gather from the *Sydney Bulletin*, he was appreciated at his proper merits—very small potatoes indeed. It is satisfactory to learn that, according to Mr. Richards, "the English Church there suffers from dry rot; and," says he, "I cannot escape from the conclusion that the only hope for morals and faith lies in the Catholic Church. It is the light of Australia."

A coroner's jury at Lambeth, investigating the death of George Tothe, a churchwarden, district councillor, and well-known religious worker at High Wycombe, who died in a house of ill-fame, brought in a rider to the effect that the number of prostitutes and brothels in the district was a blot on civilization.

The Lord Mayor and Corporation are going to a special service to be held in the Church of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, in thanksgiving for the preservation of life and limb during the recent fire. One boy lost, much property destroyed, and hundreds of workgirls thrown out of employment do not seem to offer much to be thankful for.

The tender mercies of Providence have been spreading the bubonic plague in India, and the human mercies of the India office have sent out twenty-five more doctors eminent in bacteriology to try and cope with the affliction.

God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. In Victoria he has been riding on a dust-storm which has wrecked several towns, many churches and prominent buildings being laid in ruins. One town was damaged to the extent of £50,000. Numerous casualties are reported.

Brazil—where the nuts come from—has lately been disturbed by a religious fanatic who, says the cable, "claimed to work miracles, and was regarded by his followers as the Messiah." There is food for reflection in the cabled news that the Messiah was killed. The Government didn't believe in his miracles, and the chances are against his founding a Faith of the Future. He is possibly a Mahomet, but the time for starting a new religion by peaceful or warlike means is not now-a-days. Try to imagine a successful Messiah preaching the Word at a meeting where newspaper reporters took it down in shorthand, or talking the Word into a phonograph! Absurd idea. If an irreproachable prophet were to try his luck in Sydney to-morrow—well, he would be "obstructing the thoroughfare." His followers—if he "caught on"—would swarm across the tramlines and cause him to get fined forty shillings or a month—an incident quite unsuitable

for publication in Holy Writ. Any further manufacture of Holy Writ is out of the question.

The S. M. *Herald* lately published, in its special advertisements' column, the following queer combination:—

"This is God's way. THERE IS NO OTHER. Accept it and be saved for ever; or reject it, or neglect it, and be lost for ever. 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.' 'Believe on the Lord and thou shalt be saved.'

ASK FOR 'RODERICK DHU' WHISKY.

Obtainable in Bulk, Case, ½ bottles, and stone Jorums. Also two and four gallon Jars, specially fitted with electro-plated taps."

The Wages of Sin—and stone jorums!—*Sydney Bulletin*.

The American religious papers have been discussing the increase of Sunday bicycling and the decline of public and private worship. Even the Unitarian *Christian Register* remarks: "Religion is getting to be much more of a fag-end affair than it was formerly. Formerly it was the most engrossing object of men's thought and feeling. Hardly did all other things together take up so much of their time and their attention, consume so much of their energy. It is quite otherwise in our own time. However it may be with some, it is true of the majority that religion is their last consideration, not their first."

In our young days we used to be told that every word of the Bible was divine, and was to be believed under penalty of eternal damnation, *nous avons changé tout cela*. Now, the Rev. S. A. Alexander, the Reader of the Temple, addressing a meeting at Torquay on "The Difficulties of the Bible," said "that the Bible was so unnecessary to Christianity that if they were to discover a tissue of difficulties on every page of it, they would not even be approaching the fundamental truths of the Christian faith." To the Reader of the Temple the billet seems to be more essential than the Bible.

Of course, Dr. Alexander went on to say that the difficulties of the Bible were very trivial. To give a picture of deity that cannot be distinguished from the devil is apparently, to Dr. Alexander, a mere trifle. He draws a distinction. "The Bible was the record of the revelation, and was not the revelation itself." So when Christ says, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren, and his sisters, he cannot be my disciple," that is not the revelation, but only its record. So we should think.

The latest American sect has started in Nebraska, and are known as Figgites, after their founder, Louis Figg. The members of the new sect assert a personal inspiration, and stoutly affirm that their bodies are the abode of the deity. If this were all, the Figgites would not differ from a number of other fanatical bodies which at various times have laid claim to divine inspiration; but the Nebraska fanatics go a step further, and maintain that, while they are the mouthpieces of divinity, most other people are possessed by demons. Even this feature would not be especially disagreeable, were it not for the fact that the Figgites claim to be divinely inspired to assault any person in whom they recognise the malign influence; and their belief has taken active form in so many instances that the members of the new sect are frequently compelled to appear in the police-courts as defendants in cases of assault and battery. Figgism seems to be a revival of a deep-seated atavism.

Convalescent homes are admirable institutions, and many of them admirably conducted; yet there are some designed rather to serve the interests of religion than humanity. We have heard of a Catholic institution in Wiltshire, where all females received have, for the first thing, all their hair cut off, and where they are told to prepare their souls for death. We know of one poor woman who went, was unable to take the food, or endure the treatment, and implored her friends to let her come home, as she did, to die.

The case against the fanatic stranglers in Russia has been heard with closed doors. This sect carries the belief in immortality to its logical consequence, and when assured that believers have received divine grace strangle them forthwith, that there may be no relapse. This is making salvation sure. Professor Ivanofski, of the Orthodox Academy at Kazan, was called to give expert evidence concerning this and a kindred sect commonly known as the "Jumpers," but his detailed statements, which occupied the Court for nearly seven hours, were not allowed to transpire. It is understood that the Professor's revelations with regard to the secret practices of the Stranglers will impel the Government to adopt suppressive measures against that and other extreme sects.

The Rev. C. L. Perry, a Presbyterian preacher, known in Missouri and Kansas, was convicted last week at Pawnee, Ok., of wrecking the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank of that place. He was cashier and president of the bank when it failed eight months ago. Citizens of the Pawnee and Osage nations lost between \$40,000 and \$50,000 by the failure of the bank, which only had sixty cents on hand at the time. —*Kansas City Star*.

Pastor Gilham, of Mintonville, Kentucky, told his congregation that there was no such personage as the Devil, and his exasperated hearers arose and hurled him through the window, giving him a parting salute of twenty pistol shots as he fled. It was a shame to seek to deprive such good Christians of their consolations.

Unbelieving France has miracles certified to by a doctor one Dr. Boissarie pledging his word that cases of blindness, paralysis, and hernia have been cured at Lourdes. Yet the world shrugs its shoulders. Miracles must be musty with age ere they command respect.

When I was out West (says a business man in *Hardware*) a young man registered at the hotel and proceeded to make things lively. The first night he played poker with the landlord and cleaned him out, the next night he came home drunk and whipped the cabman, the third night he went up and down the halls singing at the top of his voice and daring the chambermaids to come out and embrace him. In the morning they asked for the key of his room, and gave him his bill. He looked it over, and then said, with surprised pathos: "Don't you make any discount for ministers?"

It is proposed to lay a cogwheel railway up the falsely-called Mount Sinai, to give pilgrims (who break "the Commandments") an easy lift to the spot where two Gods, Moses and Jah, confabulated, at the time Jack and Jill went to fetch that pail of water. Professor Sayce—as pious a fool as a scholar can well be—says Mount Sinai is not in the Sinaitic Peninsula at all, at all; but must be looked for in the Mount Sier range, about 120 miles farther to the N.E. There seems no known limit to the madness produced by religion, especially the Judæo-Christian superstition. Pious noodles see no difficulty in the averment that their invisible and infinite God came down from everywhere and stood or sat on a mountain, where he showed his feet to the elders and his face (and back parts) to Moses, and wrote the paltry Decalogue with his finger on two slabs of stone! This absurdity never strikes the worshipper, and he would be terribly agitated if it should. Many a man has considered himself damned to all eternity because a glimpse of some pious absurdity has for once flashed through his brain. However, Christianity is a grand instrument for blinding the conscience to the real duties of life, and awakening it to exquisite sensitiveness over the paltriest of all possible trifles; and it is a splendid instrument for extorting cash from the pockets of fools to enrich the holy sharpers.—*Liberator*.

Edward Marks, of Melbourne, puts forward a sensible religious objection to the marriage of Jews and Jewesses with "Christians of easy faith" who join the Synagogue from purely matrimonial motives. "The evils of indifference and callousness which the Christian Churches are lamenting are equally rampant among certain sections of the Synagogue," says Mr. Marks, "and what can be the result of a commingling of insincere Christians with indifferent Jews?" As a champion of his ancient faith, the worthy Hebrew is naturally alarmed at its gradual decay; but he may at least derive a little racial satisfaction from the fact that, while all religious faiths are dying, Judaism dies gamest of all.—*Bulletin*.

An orthodox correspondent signing himself "Verax," but surely no relation to the "Verax," opens fire on Colonel Ingersoll in the Manchester *Umpire*. This person begins by calling Ingersoll "an exploded frost"—whatever that may mean. No doubt something dreadful. Next he denies that Ingersoll can have any morality at all, as "all morality is founded upon the believer's standard." Apart from the cool impudence of this, the question arises, Why is such rubbish inserted in the *Umpire*? How on earth can anything be founded on a standard? A standard is for testing or measuring, not a foundation. Lastly, we wish to know if it is any answer to Ingersoll to say that he differs from his father. If this means anything at all, it means that Ingersoll's father was the standard of correct opinion for the whole world—past, present, and future. Could anything be more absurd? "Verax" has mistaken his vocation. He may be fit for some menial employment; he is certainly not fit to criticise Ingersoll; and the *Umpire* must have been short of copy when it inserted his ridiculous letter.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 5, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, subject, "Another Converted Atheist."

December 12, Athenæum Hall.

January 2, Birmingham; 9, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. C. WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 5, Manchester; 12, Camberwell. January 23 and 30, 1898, Birmingham; 25 and 26, debate at Birmingham. April 29, Glasgow.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

S. G. GRANT.—Thanks for the cuttings from Bristol papers. Yes, it is the same Walton Powell.

A. C.—See paragraph. Thanks. Always glad to receive such cuttings.

HERBERT.—We have written several paragraphs in "Acid Drops" on the "newly-discovered" bogus letter from Pontius Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius. It is really not worth a separate article. The fraud is so transparent that no one is deceived. There is no need to worry about killing an abortion.

MISS VANCE, N. S. S. Secretary, asks us to announce that she would be glad to receive the private addresses of the following subscribers to the Treasurer's Scheme:—J. C. Banks, W. S. M., Geo. Smith, F. G., W. Marr, M. Ball, M. Duncan, J. G. Dobson, S. Burgon, E. F. B., G. Thwaites, T. Stephens, C. H. Gask.

A LARGE number of members' certificates are lying at the office, returned by the Post Office officials, marked "Gone away." Members of the parent Society who have not received certificates should write Miss Vance.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Per Miss Vance: J. Hampson, £1 (p); Mrs. Hampson, £1 (p); T. Holstead, £1 (p); Thomas Reed, £1 (p); W. Turner, £1 (p); W. Hopper, 10s. (p); S. Graham, 5s. (p); Dr. W. W. Hardwicke, £1 1s. (p); G. L. Lupton, £1 (p); H. A. Lupton, 5s. (p). Per C. Cohen: J. Umpleby, £5. We have received: Joseph May, £1 (p).

THE HOOPER FUND.—Mr. Thomas Bollamy acknowledges:—Per J. W. Gott, £5 2s. 3d.; C. Chambers, 1s.; Gustave Smith, 5s. 6d.

GEORGE PROCTOR.—Thanks for remittances. The Secretary will acknowledge formally in due course. This acknowledgment was written for last week, but got laid aside accidentally.

A. B. MOSS.—Lecturing at outside Clubs and Institutes is a good way of spreading our principles.

J. G. DOBSON.—Voltaire never had a printing press himself, so it cannot possibly be used now for printing Bibles; and if it was it wouldn't matter as long as Voltaire's works are still printed and circulated extensively.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Dr. R. Nichols, £1 1s.; A. B. Moss, 10s.

T. BELLAMY.—It is pleasant to know that the subscriptions acknowledged in our columns made poor James Hooper's last days lighter than they otherwise would have been. Your share of the good work must not be forgotten. The obituary notice appears in another column.

W. FROUDE.—Grant Allon's new book on *The Evolution of the God Idea* is an important one. Mr. Foote will make it the subject of his lecture at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday, December 12.

H. BROWN.—Evolution *does* continue in the human race. This is proved in many ways, chiefly by archaeology. See the works of Darwin, Lubbock, Tylor, etc.

C. HARWOOD.—See paragraph.

A. KOHN.—Marked papers are always welcome.

A. ESKHOFF.—The placard against "ex-priest Slattery" certainly bears the style of Brann, who, we are here to hear, is an ex-Baptist preacher, with a soft side for Catholicism. We know nothing whatever as to Slattery's merits or demerits, but believe in all having a fair hearing.

PLYMOUTHIAN.—Rather broad.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Leeds Daily News—English Mechanic—New York Public Opinion—Glamorgan Free Press—Lucifer—Echo—Gloucestershire Echo—Liberator—New Century—Two Worlds—Crescent—Sheffield Telegraph—Torch of Reason—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker.

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 is due.

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

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 23 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 23 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*.—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE lectures this evening (December 5) at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, his subject being "Another Converted Atheist."

Mr. Foote lectured twice at Leicester on Sunday. The morning lecture was well attended, and the hall was crowded at night in spite of the stormy weather. Both audiences were enthusiastic. Mr. Gimson presided in the morning, and Mr. Pinder in the evening.

We are happy to learn that the Leicester Secular Society is making good progress. With a view to closer organization and wider usefulness, it is proposed to engage Mr. Harry Snell as a kind of "resident minister" of Secularism. This will not, however, make any difference to the old varied program of Sunday evening lectures. A list of subscribers is being made up for this effort, which should, in our opinion, be successful. Mr. Snell is at present spending his week-ends at Leicester, and a definite engagement with him is contemplated at the end of March.

The terrible gale that visited London last Sunday evening interfered with Mr. Charles Watts's audience at the Athenæum Hall. Those, however, who were present evidently appreciated the new lecture on "Can God Do Wrong?" Mr. Dunn, of the Christian Evidence Society, opposed. The chair was occupied by Mr. Harry Brown in a most efficient manner.

To-day, Sunday, December 5, Mr. Watts lectures three times in the Secular Hall, Manchester. His subjects are all new, and should draw large audiences.

In accordance with a resolution of a Conference upon Moral Instruction in Schools, a meeting will be held at St. Martin's Town Hall, W.C., on December 7, with a view to the formation of a Moral Instruction League. The National Secular Society will be represented by Messrs. Foote, Watts, Heaford, Moss, Cohen, and Hartmann, and we hope there will be a good muster of Secularists. Mr. J. Allanson Picton takes the chair, and Dr. Stanton Coit, the Rev. J. Page Hopps, and Mr. F. J. Gould are in the list of speakers.

Mr. Thomas Robertson, secretary of the Glasgow Branch, informs us that the receipts from members are considerably in excess of those in the corresponding period of last year, and the improvement is likely to be continued. This is the reward of harmony and devotion.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, takes place on Monday evening, January 11, at the Holborn Restaurant. The tickets are now ready for sale, price four shillings. Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, Mr. Wheeler, and other well-known Freethinkers, will be present at the dinner.

Mr. Percy Ward lectured on Sunday at Edmonton in connection with the P. S. A. movement. There was a large and sympathetic audience, and the lecturer was highly complimented on his address.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured on Sunday morning at the North Camberwell Radical Club on "Darwin, the Shakespeare of Science." There was a large and appreciative audience, and the lecture was followed by some intelligent discussion.

Mr. J. G. Dobson, having returned to Stockton-on-Tees, determined to reorganize the Freethought movement there. Local friends willing to assist are earnestly requested to meet at No. 1 Langley-street, Stockton, on Sunday, Dec. 5, at 6.30.

The Birmingham Branch has projected a testimonial to its devoted and indefatigable secretary, Mr. James Partridge. Subscriptions should be sent to W. T. Pitt (treasurer) or C. H. Cattell (hon. sec.) to the Committee, at 65 Waverley-road, Small Heath, Birmingham.

Mommsen, the great German historian, whose *History of Rome* is an acknowledged standard, has just celebrated his eightieth birthday. He is still in perfect bodily and mental health. Mommsen is a Freethinker. He has more than one sneer at the absurd history and chronology of the Gospel narrative.

The *Gloucestershire Echo* reports pretty fully a Freethought paper on Immortality, read to the Cheltenham Free Lances by Mr. B. Corke, and the discussion which ensued thereon.

Mr. Foote's article on Mr. Richard Le Gallienne's *If I Were God* has had to stand over. It will appear for certain in our next issue.

The *Glamorgan Free Press* reports Mr. Foote's recent lectures at Porth and Pontypridd. Incidentally it remarks that "the price of admission was rather exorbitant." But as the highest price was sixpence and the lowest threepence, it is difficult to understand this criticism. No doubt it would be better to carry on a free-admission campaign in South Wales, but Mr. Foote cannot undertake that on his own responsibility, and the cost can hardly be covered by a handful of Rhondda miners.

The *Free Press* also gives a two-column report of the debate between Mr. Foote and Mr. Lee at Pontypridd. "The large audience," it says, "which included a considerable sprinkling of ladies, evinced great interest in the discussion." After an impartial account of the opening speeches, the *Free Press* says: "The subsequent discussion between the two gentlemen was of a very entertaining order, both speakers showing remarkable aptitude in the art of repartee. The debate was full of brilliant hits, and was highly instructive."

PIONEERING IN SOUTH WALES.

UNTIL recently I had not visited South Wales since the debates I held with Mr. Lee, in the early part of last year, at Cardiff and Swansea. Mr. Cohen paid a flying visit to the district soon after; and a good deal of stir has been created in the Rhondda Valley by Mr. J. W. Cox, whose lectures and debates have attracted large audiences. Mr. Cox would have had a career as a Christian minister had he been able to remain in the pulpit, but his mind became too broad for orthodox dogmas, and he preferred another method of earning his bread. He is a man of fine presence, his voice is powerful, and I should not be surprised if he makes a name on the English Freethought platform. Unfortunately he finds his business suffering from his bold advocacy of our principles, and it is just possible that he may deem it advisable to keep more in the background.

Having been frequently pressed to visit the Rhondda Valley, I determined to spend a few days there and "prospect" the territory. Arriving at Pontypridd on Saturday evening (November 20), I was met at the station by a band of earnest Freethinkers, who conducted me to the house of Mr. Lewis, where I was hospitably entertained. The next morning I went to Porth, about four miles distant, to deliver three lectures in the Town Hall. Special efforts had been made to deter people from hearing me. One wretched emissary of Christianity from London had told them that I was an immoral and even an obscene writer, which I venture to think is a very peculiar description. When I defended myself against the charge of "blasphemy" before the late Lord Coleridge I contended that it was at least *clean* "blasphemy," and I objected to the Christians flinging about the word "indecent." Lord Coleridge said that I was right, and that while I might be blasphemous I was certainly not licentious. "You do not find him," his lordship said, "pandering to the bad passions of mankind." As far as I am aware, I never wrote a line which I should hesitate to read out aloud at any time or any place. Still, the lie about me was abroad, and many of the Porth people regarded me as a monster. My morning audience was scanty, but there was a very good attendance in the afternoon, and a still better attendance in the evening. The lectures were listened to attentively, and there was no lack of applause. Discussion was invited, but was not offered; however, several persons asked questions, some of which were extremely wide of the subjects I dealt with. One gentleman, whose anxiety was pathetic, wanted to know "who made the universe?" I hope he has since recovered.

The friends who came over from Pontypridd had to walk back after the third meeting. Some who came from greater distances, one at least fifteen miles, had to get home somehow. Mr. Cox, who had been obliged to walk ten miles to take the chair in the evening, had to stretch his legs again over the four miles to Pontypridd.

On the Monday evening I lectured in the Town Hall, Pontypridd, to a most courteous and attentive audience on the question of whether Jesus Christ ever lived. It was too much of a staggerer, I fear; another selection would have been more suitable. Some of the questions that were asked showed that some of the audience were positively dazed by the novelty of the subject.

On the Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, in the same hall, I debated the relative merits of Christianity and

Secularism with Mr. W. T. Lee. The Christians wildly applauded their champion when he first rose, and they treated me with respectful silence. They did not applaud me at all throughout the debate, but their enthusiasm abated as we went along, and it was obvious that the Secular arguments were telling. Mr. Lee had the last speech, but there was no frantic applause at the finish as there was at the commencement. It was not that he did not speak well; it was simply that the Christians felt, in spite of themselves, that there was something in Secularism, after all; something more in harmony with common sense and civilization than they had suspected. And this is really the only use in such debates. They enable a Freethought speaker to address hundreds of Christians who otherwise would never hear him.

I was sorry I could not stay longer in the district. Friends from other parts pressed me to pay them a visit. South Wales presents a fine field for Secular propaganda. Beyond the flourishing towns of Cardiff and Swansea there is a multitude of small towns in which lectures could be delivered night after night for whole weeks at a stretch. The district is notoriously religious, yet Freethought simmers everywhere under the crust of orthodoxy. I wish we had money enough to send lecturers down there in constant succession. Immense good could be done if we only had the means. Freethinkers should really give a better support to the new N. S. S. Treasurer's Scheme. Those who cannot share in the fighting ought at least to supply the sinews of war. I ask nothing for myself, as I take the risk everywhere and raise no lamentation when I do not earn my own bread and cheese. It is for other propagandists that I am appealing. I want the Secular party to make good use of its efficient advocates. Meanwhile I desire to express my admiration of the courage and devotion of the Porth and Pontypridd Freethinkers—nearly all working men—who are fighting as best they can for the success of our cause.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Friday, November 26; the President, G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were present:—Messrs. E. Bater, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, Annie Brown, J. M. Wheeler, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, J. Neale, P. Sabine, M. Loafer, W. Leat, E. W. Quay, and the secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Secretary's cash statement adopted. Some discussion arose upon the Treasurer's statement, and it was resolved that the President be asked to call a special meeting of the sub-committee, with a view to having the balance-sheet prepared by the next meeting.

It was resolved that a generous gift of £100 to the Benevolent Fund be acknowledged in the *Freethinker* without the name of the donor.

The sub-committee's minutes were then read and adopted; and Mr. Henry Smith, of Stanningley, was appointed as a collector under the Scheme. An application was received from some unattached Freethinkers residing in the West of London for permission to form a branch of the Society, and for its members to pay a reduced fee to headquarters. After some discussion, it was resolved to instruct the secretary to point out that the Executive could not alter the rules of the Society, and to advise the proposers to strengthen the already existing branch in West London.

The forthcoming Moral Instruction Conference was then discussed, and the President, Messrs. A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, J. M. Wheeler, S. Hartmann, and C. Watts, were elected as delegates.

The Secretary reported that members' certificates were now out of print; and, after some discussion as to the advisability of obtaining a new design or reprinting, it was resolved that "we pass to the next business."

An application for assistance to form a branch at Croydon was referred to the sub-committee, and the meeting adjourned until December 30.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

The *Daily News* gives this as another genuine anecdote of a Godless Church school: "Teacher (who is putting the class, boy after boy, piecemeal, through the 'Apostles' Creed)—'Now, then, your turn.' Pupil—'Please, sir, I'm not the boy who believes in the Holy Ghost. He's at home ill of measles. I'm the one who believes in the Holy Catholic Church.'"

IMMORTALITY.

"WHAT a terrible end these Freethinkers must have to look forward to—to die like a dog, to lie in the cold and dismal grave for ever and evermore," I can remember my father saying over and over again when I was a boy; and the Christian Evidence man loves to dwell upon this point, too; while the parson in the pulpit does all he can, Sunday after Sunday, to call forth and sustain the emotions of his congregation by impressing upon it the "consolations" of Christianity, the chief one being eternal life in the presence of Jesus and his host of angels. This betrays the origin of a life beyond the tomb. The wish was father to the thought, as there can be no doubt that dreams helped to form the notion of an immortal soul; and the wish is, if not father, stepfather, to the thought to-day, as sure as dreams form the corner-stone of our nineteenth-century Christianity, which is believed in and accepted as such by intelligent, every-day-life, practical people, if they are sincere. They are right; it would be cruel to be annihilated, to be totally extinguished like a flame, to be snapped from off the earth in the prime of life, and to be cast into oblivion for ever, to behold no more the faces we have loved. It would be hard to some to think of while they live; it will no longer be so when they can think no more. But the question, after all, is not, Would it be pleasant to live on after what we call Death? but, Is it true that we shall? There are many hard conditions and occurrences in this life that we know fall to our lot, which we all wish did not exist, but whose existence, nevertheless, we cannot dispute. There are many who would never part with their loved ones at all, but who would live on in their presence here on earth; this, however, we know cannot be, and we do not hope for it, and so, as a consolation, we grasp after the life hereafter; not because we are certain of it, but just because we are fond of lingering in the hope of something uncertain, which we know can never be ascertained. But if this hope of eternal life proves to be a delusion, it will not be the first time the human race has been cruelly disillusionized. Disappointment is, and always has been, the lot of man—individually as well as collectively—and in the long run it makes us wise. An awakening from a fond delusion brings first despair, then resignation, and at last content. The schooling that humanity has to undergo has been one uninterrupted series of blunders made by itself, rude awakenings and rectifications, and it is the only kind of schooling that would educate a child without a teacher, wherefore we are perfectly justified in proclaiming reason and experience as our only moral guides.

Reverting to the consolation theory, one would imagine Christianity, least of all religions, to be adapted to console a thoughtful and sensitive adherent. You think of the eternal presence of your Lord, the everlasting prayer-meetings, the incessant shouting of "Holy, holy," the curiosity or the hypnotizing stares of the beasts "with eyes without and eyes within," or whatever is your attraction; but look at the other frightful picture! While you go to eternal glory, a hundred others will depart to eternal torment. While you are twanging on your harp and revelling in your ecstasy of bliss, yell upon yell will ascend from the bottomless pit, and the weeping and lamentation will drown the hallelujahs and rejoicing of heaven. While you are engaged in chanting your "Glory! glory!" perhaps you will be startled by a long-drawn moan of a well-known voice in hell, and, turning round, you will perhaps see your old mother, maybe your sweetheart or wife, struggling in the flames, writhing in her never-ceasing death agonies. Say, my Christian friend, could you be happy in heaven, while the very sky is lurid and tinged with the lustre from the fire in hell, and the very air rings with the shrieks of the damned ones? Could you, unless you were transformed into a Satanic monster ten times worse than the Sovereign of the Inferno himself has ever been depicted? You know very well you could not. But in steps the Spiritualist and says: "Oh, but there is no material hell in that sense." There is but the hell which you yourself have made through your own immorality or ignorance, exactly as you do here. There is the hell of remorse, the hell of spiritual misery and darkness, out of which you will have to get through your own effort, and that by incessant work and hard labor, perhaps for ages. And if you have been ever so good, still there is work for you to do for inferior ones, whereby you yourself will be able to rise to higher and ever higher planes of existence. Certainly an infinitely nobler aspiration than the swinish and diabolical ideal of the Christian, and it may be a moral guide and intellectual stimulus to the thoughtless energy of youth; but where is the consolation to those who are on the point of passing over? As the child grows up it steadily increases in physical and mental vigor; its views expand, its aspirations rise, and the castles in the air are often augmented as the years go by. At thirty the nature calms down. The fire of youth cools off, one ideal after the other bursts like bubbles; the sea of one passions, the waters of aspiration, quiet down, the man becomes settled, often in the bosom of a happy family life. At forty both body and mind begin slowly, imperceptibly,

but surely, to die; and as one glides over into the ever-decaying feebleness of old age, which derides the pleasures and renounces the battles of life, and is only desirous of rest and peace, where is the consolation of knowing that in a short time one has to resume that vitality and energy which was one's only desire a lifetime back, but which one desires no longer?

Now, take a horse, a dog, and a man, and place them in a row. The horse dies. Where is it gone to? Nowhere. It arose from nature, and it is gone home to nature. The dog dies, and it remains in the earth and rots, passes into more and ever more forms of life, till, as it were, it is absorbed in the great cosmos of vegetable life and air. The man dies. Where is he? "Gone to heaven," is the reply. Now, I want to know, what is it that differentiates the lower animals from man to such an extent that they are irrevocably doomed to eternal death, while eternal life is, without asking, thrust upon man? Is it our intelligence that procures for us this preference (?). If so, after all, the difference is only one of degree. All animals reason in their way—that is, they first ponder, and then decide one of two alternatives; and some species of the higher animals, such as the dog and horse, have memory; the fox is, as is well known, cunning, and can pretend to be dead while laying plans of escape; the hare will make side-leaps so as to bewilder the pursuing dogs; while the elephant makes war schemes. The monkey will learn to count, and both that and the dog will learn not a little of the human language. I daresay that the cleverest animals are more intelligent than the most stupid men, for remember that the Christians also claim immortality for idiots. If a donkey could conceive the idea of a god, its deity would probably have fine, long ears; if a monkey could conceive of one, its god would undoubtedly possess a splendid long tail. If the animals have a notion of a hereafter, each species presumably arrogates to itself alone eternal life, and why should man be an exception? Indeed, the courageous and faithful dog, who will bring lost objects to its master, and leap into the water to save a drowning infant, would strongly resent the theory of extinction to himself, and immortality to his often harsh and ungrateful master.

J. K. MAAGAARD.

DANIEL.

THE evidences in Daniel that the book was written after the Alexandrian conquest, and after his death B.C. 323, and the division of his empire among his four principal generals, are overwhelming. Three Greek words, the names of musical instruments, occur, "so exact," says the orthodox M. Lenormant, "that they must have been taken from the lips of a Greek, an impossibility before commercial intercourse was established between Greece and Babylonia, after the age of the Selucidæ." Alexander's conquest, his death, and the division of his empire among his four generals, are told with such particularity as would be impossible for one not familiar with the history of those events. The ablest critics, who follow the old lines of thought, fix the period when Daniel was written as about B.C. 168, near the close of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. Its purpose was to influence that monarch; and the allusions to him, though in the form of prophecy, were easily understood, because of their directness. Hitzig, a German Biblical critic, found the period when Daniel was written as B.C. 170 to 174. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* says: "This opinion [of Hitzig] has found, especially in Germany, a very wide acceptance, and Lucke [a German theologian] ventures to pronounce it 'a certain result of historical criticism.'" Again says Smith: "The real grounds on which most modern critics rely in rejecting the book are the 'fabulousness of its narratives' and 'the minuteness of the prophetic history.'" Hitzig says: "The contents of the book are irrational and impossible."—*Progressive Thinker*.

Obituary.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. James Hooper, of Nottingham, after a long illness, which terminated in the rupture of a blood-vessel during a violent fit of coughing. The funeral took place at the General Cemetery, Mr. T. Bellamy reading the Secular Burial Service written by Austin Holyoake. The large gathering of sympathizers at the grave included Councillors H. H. Adams, F. W. Gregory, and E. G. Loverseed, and County Councillor J. R. Anderson. The deceased, as we have recently had occasion to remind our readers, was a stalwart soldier of Freethought in the rough old fighting days. He was a very familiar figure in Nottingham, and was more or less known throughout the Midlands. No one could doubt his earnest sincerity.

The Universe is one. There is no supernatural—all is related. Nothing exists but substance and its modes of motion.—*Spinoza*.

THE OLD FAITH AND THE NEW.

In *To-Morrow* William Platt has a brief but telling article on "The Religion of To-day." He points out that a little while ago Darwinism was a little stream, then it became a strong, rapid river; already it has joined a mighty ocean, tireless to destroy old-worn continents, and to build up fresh fertile land. And the destruction of the old creeds is leading to a fuller faith, a nobler practice. "Take first those vague elevating sublimities that bear in especial the title 'Religion'—we are told by the advocates of yesterday that we are losing religion—what are the facts? Just these: that instead of a narrow, miserable view of one earth, a personal deity, contradictory laws, and a vague, vitiated, empty dream of psalm-singing eternity, we have arrived at a glorious conception, breathless in its sublimity, of a timeless, spaceless universe of immensurable force and beauty, supreme in its own unalterable law, the awe of which dazes us while we feel we cannot even say we have grasped it fractionally with our limited understanding; as for eternity, the thought we admit unreservedly to be beyond us, modestly bow before a mystery, the solution of which is infinitely beyond our finite minds. For true religiosity, the old religions are further from modern cosmic religions than a music-hall tune is from a symphony of Beethoven."

From the point of view of courage Mr. Platt holds that we have advanced. "The courage that faces death is the courage of a few moments; the courage that faces life is the courage of our every moment, and that is the courage of to-day. The courage that refuses to the mean or animal, sensual or selfish, is a courage that exists to-day more than it ever existed, and which must exist to-morrow more than it exists to-day. And the tender, sensitive love of the men and women of to-day is glorious beyond comparison with the times before. By this test before all others may it be known: that at no other time were children so tenderly and beautifully cared for, understood, and loved as to-day; love that builds the new generation is glorified with gravity and holy beauty; its mystery was never more sublimated. The old religion appealed to self; but modern religion, knowing life to be short, will strenuously refuse to give its moments to squalidity, sensuality, or selfishness."

A WOMAN ON THE BIBLE.

ACCEPTANCE of the Bible literally tends to retard the development of both man and woman, and consequently the establishment of their highest and best relation to each other—a relation upon which depends their usefulness to the community.

Both the law of Moses and the teachings of Paul, thus considered, belittle woman more than they exalt her. While words of praise and promises of future place and power are not altogether lacking, this is the impression left upon the mind of the reader who is not able to pass around to the other side and gain another view.

The Bible has been, and will continue to be, a stumbling-block in the way of development of inherent resources, consequently of the truest civilization, in proportion to the strength of its exoteric aspect with the people. It will cease to be a stumbling-block, and become a powerful impetus in the desired direction instead, when its inner meaning becomes revelator, companion, and friend.

In the literal rendering of the Bible woman appears first and above all as man's subordinate; but this inner meaning shows her first and above all as the individual equal with him, and afterwards his complement, or what she is able to be for him.

Portrayed as the mother of the Savior of the world, one woman is exalted above all women when only physical motherhood is seen; and the consequence has been that one woman has been worshipped and the sex has been crucified. This one woman has been lifted above her place; and all women have fallen correspondingly below it.

URSULA GRETFELD.

The British Museum Treasure.

We have already said that Cyril Lucar, the reforming Patriarch of Constantinople, gave the Codex Alexandrinus to Charles I. in 1628. We need not doubt that he brought it with him from Alexandria; and we may think, if we please, that he took it with him to Alexandria. The ownership of A. cannot be traced back beyond Cyril.—*Rev. J. M. Cotterill, "Peregrinus Proteus," p. 329.*

Mr. Oswald Dawson lectures for the Legitimation League on Monday, Dec. 6, at 8 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Holborn Restaurant, on "The Outcome of Legitimation."

BOOK CHAT.

THE Humanitarian League publishes a reply by the Rev. J. Stratton to Lord Ribblesdale's book on "The Queen's Hounds and Stag-Hunting Recollections." He thus describes the "blooding" of the hounds: "Eye-witnesses always narrate that cast-off stags used to be turned out in the seclusion of the forest, the hounds allowed to maul them, then they were 'knifed,' and the pack fed on their intestines. When was this last done?" For the law to treat the practically-domesticated stags of Windsor Park as wild beasts is an absurdity. We wonder the humane Queen has not long since got rid of her Buckhounds.

Sir Edmund du Cane, in his work on *The Punishment and Prevention of Crime*, says: "As a final climax of burlesque absurdity the Bible was made the principal lesson-book (in one prison the solitary prisoners were supplied with nothing else whatever), and a reformatory influence was supposed to be achieved by requiring the criminals to commit large portions of the Testament to memory. This result was figured by one irreverent critic to be so effectively achieved that a felon was said to have been so distressed that the end of his sentence interrupted his studies when he had only 'got as far as Ephesians,' that he came back (under sentence for sheep-stealing) to learn the rest of the Testament."

Writing on "The Literature of the Rising Generation," "W." in the *Glasgow Saturday Weekly Citizen*, remarks that "the theological element is not nearly so prominent now as it was thirty or sixty years ago. This, of course, only holds with the books published by those firms which have no direct or indirect connection with any religious movement. Many tales are written without the time-honored religious moral, and few popular books for the young have a specifically religious purpose. Writers seem content to let their stories carry their own moral, leaving the work of inculcating theology to other than literary powers. From an artistic point of view, the result seems in every way beneficial."

The *English Mechanic* is always up to its old high-water mark. There are ever the letters of "A Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society," full of science and common sense. Dr. Aveling is continuing his contributions on Zoology, and there is an abundance of technical information for workers. The correspondence is always good, and in the December number we find letters on "The Error in the Christian Era" and "The Star of Bethlehem," as well as on a multiplicity of other topics.

Edward Pickard, of Flushing, near Falmouth, announces the completion of *The Hat Crusade*, in three volumes. It is mainly a work of devotion to the memory of Samuel Fox.

From the *History of South Africa*, by G. Theal, we learn that the first chaplain of the Dutch settlement was one Erastus Buck. This man was so addicted to intemperance that at times he was unfit to perform his duties. He was repeatedly suspended, on which occasions the fiscal conducted the services; but punishment and disgrace seemed only to harden him. The commander was fearful that his conduct would bring down divine vengeance upon the community, all the members of which, by some method of reasoning, were considered subject to the consequences of his guilt. Mr. Wagenaar's alarm was increased by the appearance of a comet, which for two months was seen nightly in the sky. He and his Council did not doubt that the terrible star with a tail was put there by God as a threat of righteous punishment, and therefore they considered it high time to get rid of the chief offender. A yacht was lying in the bay ready to sail for Batavia. Buck and his family were unceremoniously hurried on board, and the office was once more vacant.

The *Academy*, noticing Podmore's *Studies in Psychological Research* and Stead's *Real Ghost Stories*, says: "Two known causes explain satisfactorily a large proportion of the phenomena with which the Psychological Research Society has to deal—human fraud and human folly." The American put it tersely who said he had met lots of liars and lunatics, but never a spook or miracle. The *Academy* remarks that "a careful and most impartial analysis of the evidence enables Mr. Podmore to find the operation of these causes in most of the spiritualistic and mediumistic marvels, as well as in the already exploded feats of Madame Blavatsky and Eusapia Palladino."

The *New Century Review* always shows some sign of the new spirit, and in its December number the review of *Evil and Evolution*, by Arthur Ransom, says boldly that the old difficulty of reconciling evil with perfect power and perfect goodness is "left as unsolved as ever."

The *University Magazine* opens with a paper by Dr. de Villiers on "The Progress and Arrest of Cancer." Vaccination Law is opposed by A. W. Hutton. Mr. J. M. Robertson has an incisive article on "The Fallacies of Theism," in reply to W. Julius Basil. W. M. Beitt writes on "Is Christianity Scientific?" There are long reviews of Wiseman's *Dynamics of Religion* and Crozier's *Intellectual Development*. Allan Laidlaw writes with frankness and fervor on "The Social Evil Problem."

CORRESPONDENCE.

FREEWILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I wish, with your permission, to comment very briefly on Mr. Watts's article in your last issue on "The 'Freewill' Fallacy."

I do not write to defend Mr. Waldron's arguments, but to state my own position.

If I rightly understand Mr. Watts's view, he is philosophically a *Determinist*. Now, Determinism denies any real choice. Beforehand, you may *think* you can choose this or that; afterwards, you may *think* you made a right or wrong choice; but, *in reality*, Mr. Watts seems to hold there was only one course open to you.

Now, I object to Determinism for reasons—(1) philosophical, (2) moral, (3) practical.

1. The conviction that we really possess a power of choice, however limited, is fundamental in human nature. If you deny the veracity of consciousness as regards this power of choice—*i.e.*, that there are very often two or more courses open to you—you must, on precisely the same grounds, deny the validity of the "laws of thought." Every argument against freewill, whether on philosophical or evolutionary grounds, is (to speak mathematically) only a "function" of the "laws of thought"; and no function of those laws can override what is equally fundamental with those laws—the sense of right and wrong.

2. Determinism evacuates *morality* of all its virtue. By "right and wrong" we mean something absolutely different in quality from happiness or misery, success or ruin. Something we do from pure, unavoidable ignorance may wreck the happiness, or shorten the lives, of many persons. To anyone right-minded that would cause unutterable anguish, but—if he did not lose his sanity and clearness of judgment—not any sense of wrong-doing. If, therefore, Mr. Watts be a Determinist, he is bound, after he has done what, to any ordinary person, would appear a cause of bitter remorse, to view (not the consequences, but) himself with equanimity. *To blame himself would be to believe a cruel and unjust lie—* according to Determinism.

3. Your readers can easily judge what would happen, *practically*, if all men, women, and children saw clearly and accepted Mr. Watts's theory, before acting—and after. Teach this theory to a passionate, lustful, selfish person—or rather teach it to everyone—and see how it will "work."

Fortunately, all language, all laws, and all common sense utterly traverse Mr. Watts's contention.

C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM
(Secretary, Christian Evidence Society.)

MORAL INSTRUCTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I fancy I am to blame for starting Mr. Thurlow on a false scent. I spoke of the old conflict between the theological system and the proposed "purely secular education." Then I went on to say that this old conflict was likely to be modified into a struggle between the Theological system and the Moral Instruction system. That seems to imply that the Moral Instruction is not to be purely secular. I wish to state, in the clearest possible terms, that I should never be satisfied with anything less than a purely secular method of teaching morality to children.

In speaking of a change in the issue, I meant to say that whereas, in times gone by, Freethinkers simply demanded purely secular education, without demanding a central place for moral training, we of the new party demand a purely secular education, in which moral training shall hold the supreme place. We want the children's intellects disciplined; we also want their character disciplined; we want them to grow up clear-headed men and women, ready to do the business of the world; we also want them to grow up honorable and kind.

I do not understand Mr. Thurlow's condemnation of "book- and tongue-taught morality." I have heard his tongue utter censure of evil-doing; and, in his letter to you, his pen attacks—and very rightly attacks—the rascals who know the Golden Rule and yet cheat their neighbors. I do not see why I may not, as a teacher, do the same as Mr. Thurlow does. I have often told children I thought it wrong to kiss Bibles in the courts of justice, as if a man

could not speak the truth on his honor as a gentleman, without the need of any oath. That was tongue-taught morality, but I daresay Mr. Thurlow will agree that I did right.

F. J. GOULD.

"THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In No. xiii. of these very interesting articles Abraham says: "The *holy wind*, which in one of the passages is misnamed the *spirit of truth*." Will he be so good as to inform me where this passage occurs, as the four following references have, in the Greek, the full expression?—John xiv. 17, xv. 26, xvi. 13, and 1 John iv. 6. I quote from Bohn's edition: "τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας"—the wind of the truth. It is the latter part of the expression, I take it, to which he alludes. There are no capitals.

W. W. HARDWICKE, .D.

THOSE BOYS.

THE lesson was from the prodigal son, and the teacher was dwelling on the character of the elder brother. "But amid all the rejoicing," he said, "there was one to whom the preparation of the feast brought no joy, to whom the prodigal's return gave no pleasure, but only bitterness; one who did not approve of the feast being held, and who had no wish to attend it. Now, can any of you tell me who this was?" There was a breathless silence, followed by a vigorous cracking of thumbs, and then from a dozen sympathetic little geniuses came the chorus: "Please, sir, it was the fatted calf!"

The country clergyman was nailing a refractory creeper to a piece of trellis work near his front gate when he noticed that a small boy stopped and watched him with great attention. "Well, my young friend," he said, pleased to see the interest he excited, "are you looking out for a hint or two on gardening?" "No," said the youth, "I be waiting to see what a parson do say when he hammers his thumb."

"Did the baby come from heaven, mother?" "Of course he did." "Well, I s'pose he plumped right down, and that's why he's bow-legged."

It was, of course, an American boy who had teased his father for a watch, until the father in despair had forbidden the boy to mention the subject again. But it was the good custom of that family to repeat a text of Scripture at evening prayers. The day after the edict of silence had been imposed, the boy quoted the following: "I say unto you—watch."

PROFANE JOKES.

"GIB us dis day our daily bred," shouted the colored deacon from the interior of a hired shanty, upon which a generous baker from outside threw a loaf in at the window, accidentally smashing it. "Gib us dis day—dat'll do, good Lord, dat'll do; tupp'ny loaf right fro a ten-penny winder."

Pious Grandmother (wearisomely dealing out religious instruction to cute six-year-old Ada)—"Yes, my dear, all our good thoughts are suggested to us by God, and all our wicked thoughts come from Satan." Little Ada (brightening up)—"Grandma, do you know what Satan is telling me to say to you?" P. G.—"What is it, my dear?" L. A.—"He is telling me to say 'Shut up, Grandma,' but God won't let me say it."

Crotchetty Bachelor—"They have had a blind man and a cripple before the court for begging. How is it you lady beggars escape?" Lady Beggars—"Indeed! we are not begging—we are *collecting funds* to purchase a bicycle for our curate!"

Infallibility.

Human infallibility, avaunt!

The claim is impious wheresoever made;

Whether by Papist or by Protestant,

Rivals in pharisaic robes arrayed,

No one is more, and no one less, than man;

Where all are equal, who shall claim control

Over the conscience, or put under ban

The free, outspoken, independent soul?

There is no heresy in honest doubt,

Or strong dissent, where demonstration fails;

Or non-conformity, however stout;

For thus the righteous cause at last prevails.

Begone! Popes, Cardinals, Councils, Bishops—all

Who seek to hold the human mind in thrall!

—William Lloyd Garrison.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30 G. W. Foote, "Another Converted Atheist."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Some Plain Words about India." December 4, at 8.30, Concert and Dance.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, E. Pack, "Things Worth Remembering"; 6, Tea; 7, Dance and Entertainment.
EAST LONDON BRANCH (King's Hall, 83 Commercial-road): 7.30, A. B. Moss, "What do Christians Believe?"
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion, "Tendencies of the Ethical Movement"—opened by Miss Florence Law; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Theism and Ethics."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, F. W. H. Myers, M.A., "The Poetry of William Morris."
WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, A lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 8.30, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): E. J. Sale—11, "What is Religion?" 7, "How God was Made."
BRADFORD LABOUR CHURCH, Peckover-street: O. Cohen—3, "Crime and Criminals"; 6.30, "The Fight for the Schools."
BRISTOL (St. James's Hall, Cumberland-street): 3, Discussion Class—J. Watts Treasure, "Was Christ a Socialist?"
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, J. J. Taylor, "Rome or Reason?"
CHESTER (Labour Club, Watergate-row, Watergate-street): 7, Meeting of members and friends.
DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, Mr. Whitewell, A Reading.
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Harry Snell—12, "What is the Bible?" 6.30, "Egypt and the Dawn of History"—with lantern illustrations.
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, W. Heaford, "Christian Errors and Secular Antidotes."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "The Philosophy of Secularism."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Watts—11, "The Cradle, the Altar, and the Tomb"; 3, "The Triumph of Reason over Faith"; 6.30, "Christian Tactics Exposed."
PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, Members' meeting.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Bockingham-street): 7, W. Dyson, "Ex-Priest Slattery: A Side-light on Catholicism."
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Important meeting. Federation and other business.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—December 8 Preston; 5, Bradford; 8, Blackburn; 19, Leicester.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—December 5, Mile End; 12, Camberwell Radical Club; 19, Camberwell Secular Hall.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—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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