

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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A CONVERTED ATHEIST.

CONVERTED Atheists are very rare in real life. They are more often converted when they are dead. The process is then easier. It is less difficult to tell lies than to produce convincing arguments. Indeed, the conversion of Atheists belongs mostly to the domain of fiction. Sometimes the fiction is pretended as reality, as in the case of Mr. Price Hughes's story of the *Atheist Shoemaker*, which we had the pleasure of exploding. Sometimes the fiction is honest in its way, because it does not pretend to be anything more than fiction. But in this case it is essentially foolish; for if one novelist writes a story, with selected characters and arbitrary incidents, to exhibit the conversion of an Atheist to Theism, another novelist may just as well, and just as successfully, pursue the same method in the opposite direction, and exhibit the conversion of a Theist to Atheism; and if both stories were written with equal skill and power, which is certainly conceivable, they would just exactly cancel each other.

One of this class of works is Alice M. Dale's new novel, *Marcus Warwick: Atheist* (Kegan Paul and Co.). It is not badly written; in some respects it is well written, for the narrative is by no means devoid of interest, the style is fairly good, and here and there a character is sketched with some skilfulness. Had the last part been a natural development from the two preceding parts, and the catastrophe been worked up as a logical climax, the book would have been in its way a triumph. But in the third part the authoress takes to miracles, which is a cheap and easy way of surmounting difficulties and avoiding artistic obligations. We perceive exactly what is coming next, and the worst of it is that we know such things do not occur in life itself. The lady, in short, ties a very pretty knot, but she does not untie it with the patient fingers of naturalism, she cuts it with the blade of the supernatural.

It is obvious from a certain conversation (pp. 379-80) between the heroine and the Rev. Mr. Mayne that the writer is not a Christian. It is plainly hinted that orthodox Christianity is unacceptable by anyone "trained to the most careful weighing of the value of evidence," that its "stupendous dogmas" rest on "evidence so contradictory, so obscure, and known in many cases to be deliberately forged." But it does not occur to the writer that her own Theistic doctrine is equally stupendous and contradictory to the plainest facts of human life and history. It is always thus with theologians. They are keen enough in seeing each other's errors, but quite incapable of seeing their own; and they never understand the thorough-going Freethinker who admires their attacks and smiles at their defence.

Marcus Warwick, the hero of this story, differs greatly from the old fictional idea of an Atheist, which was a mixture of the refuse of a lunatic asylum and the off-scourings of a gaol. He is a fine handsome fellow, with a clever brain, a keen tongue, and a noble character. He loves justice and mercy, and his only fault is that he does not walk humbly with his God. He does so at last, however, and this is how it happens. The woman who loves him, and whom he finds that he loves when it is too late, is married to another man, who wastes her money and brutally ill-treats her. Marcus Warwick warns the wretch that if he does not treat his wife better he will kill him in six months. At the end of that time, finding the wretch has continued his ill-usage, and actually beaten her within

an inch of her life, Marcus Warwick meets him on a cliff overlooking the sea, and tells him that he is going to his last account, but offers him a fair fight for his life. The coward whines and prays, struggles and collapses, and Marcus Warwick picks him up a helpless heap and drops him over the cliff. It appears that the wretch was really dead when he was dropped over, for the medical men at the inquest testify that he died from heart disease, and that his external injuries were inflicted after death. Marcus Warwick escapes scot free through a verdict of "accidental death," and he has no compunctions, for he does not believe in God, and he holds that he has done a righteous deed on behalf of a tortured woman. Soon afterwards he marries Hildegarde himself, and they are intensely happy. Only they are married on a very foggy day, and it was foggy when he killed Cecil Digby. Then, too, the wretch's heart disease was so far developed that he could not have lived more than a few weeks longer, and it looked as though retribution was arranged without the necessity of Marcus Warwick's intervention. Presently a boy is born to the happy couple—the wife, by the way, not knowing what her husband had done. During her pregnancy Hildegarde has a dreadful fit. She feels falling, falling, falling. Her baby-boy has similar fits, and loses his reason. In presence of this calamity the unhappy father feels that the great Avenger is upon his track.

"He knew that the blinding lightning-stroke of retribution had fallen at last. With a confident assurance he had given a thrust into the darkness that he regarded as tenantless, and now from that darkness he received an answering blow—too accurate in its aim, too vengeful in its stroke, to be consistent with any theory of blind force or unintelligent law. And it seemed to Marcus Warwick that he was face to face with God at last."

Another child is born—a daughter—who also has these horrible falling fits, and dies. Marcus Warwick confesses to his wife, who still clings to him lovingly, and bids him effect a reconciliation with heaven. She feels more than ever that God is love; but her husband, no longer an Atheist, hates the being who tortures him through his innocent wife and children. He regards God as implacable, and under the power of this fixed idea he is smitten down with brain fever. At the same time, the boy who lost his reason falls out of a window, and the real fall cures the falling fits; or rather, it was the hand of God in Marcus Warwick's full conversion, for the father recovers, though slowly and painfully, and his bright, handsome boy is presented to him as a pledge of God's benevolence and forgiveness. The story closes with a picture of Marcus Warwick, convinced and happy, resuming his old work for the people, no longer teaching them Atheism, but carrying to them "the best message of all—a belief in a wise and loving God."

This is Alice Dale's method of justifying the ways of God to men; and, on the whole, if there be a God, he may well say, "Save me from my friends."

We have already remarked that supernatural incidents do not occur in ordinary human experience. Retribution sometimes overtakes a criminal through his being found out, but otherwise he generally settles down to enjoy the fruits of his crime. Look at that smiling, smug, fat Jabez Balfour. All went well with him, and he was positively in clover, until human justice overtook him. But, not to labor this point, which really does not need laboring, let us turn to the vicarious plan of Marcus

Warwick's punishment and conversion. Alice Dale wreathes her upper lip at the Christian scheme, but her own Theistic scheme is open to the very same objection. Marcus Warwick is plagued though his innocent wife and children. His wife is tortured through her maternity—a most terrible device. Both her children are tortured by frightful convulsions; the boy loses his reason, until the time comes for his miraculous recovery, and the baby-girl dies. "The fits continued," we are told, "and little Myra's strength ebbed slowly away," so that she dies before she has lived a single year. "This world holds many a darker fate than that," says Alice Dale. Perhaps so; but two blacks do not make a white, nor two wrongs a right, nor two mysteries one intelligibility. Nothing could be worse than putting a baby upon the rack, killing it by slow and painful degrees, until it dies of sheer exhaustion. And if this is God's way, the less he intervenes in human affairs the better. Surely a wise and loving deity, with unlimited power, might have demonstrated his existence differently. He might have converted the Atheist by more rational and humane devices; before the killing of Cecil Digby, for instance, instead of after. But Theism, just like Christianity, always ends in mystery; it perplexes reason, and only satisfies faith, which is another name for prejudice and credulity.

G. W. FOOTE.

SHAKESPEARE AND MONTAIGNE.*

THE question of the evolution of the mind of England's greatest writer must ever have attractions for the student of literature. How from being the writer of *Venus and Adonis* Shakespeare became the author of *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*, is a problem which, could it be solved, would be worthy the utmost attention; and as much may be said for the able attempt at solution in the work before me. Mr. Robertson's thesis, stated broadly—somewhat too broadly, I fear—is that the reading of Montaigne's *Essays* gave the deepening and expansive movement which can be traced in Shakespeare's work. That he read Montaigne in John Florio's not over-accurate translation, we are quite certain. We have his own copy of the book in the British Museum. To note the many instances in which the French sceptic influenced the English dramatist is itself of great interest, and no one can go through Mr. Robertson's book without acknowledging that Shakespeare used Montaigne, as he did the English Bible and North's *Plutarch*, with a free hand. We may differ as to the extent of his obligation, but it is impossible to deny it totally. Some of the passages, as, for instance, "Hamlet's Soliloquy" and Gonzalo's description of an ideal Commonwealth in *The Tempest*, have been frequently pointed out; but Mr. Robertson has certainly gone into the entire question of Montaigne's influence, both with regard to his thought and his style, more carefully than any previous writer.

After noticing the influence of Montaigne on Pascal, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Flaubert, Emerson, and Thoreau, Mr. Robertson says (p. 127):—

"After all these testimonies to Montaigne's seminal virtue, and after what we have seen of the special dependence of Shakespeare's genius on culture and circumstance, stimulus and initiative, for its evolution, there can no longer seem to an open mind anything of mere paradox in the opinion that the essays are the source of the greatest expansive movement of the poet's mind, the movement which made him—already a master of the whole range of passional emotion, of the comedy of mirth and the comedy and tragedy of sex—the great master of the tragedy of the moral intelligence. Taking the step from *Julius Cesar* to *Hamlet* as corresponding to this movement in his mind, we may say that where the first play exhibits the concrete perception of the fatality of things, 'the riddle of the painful earth'; in the second, in its final form, the perception has emerged in philosophic consciousness as a pure reflector. The poet has in the interim been revealed to himself—what he had perceived he now conceives."

The seminal virtue of Montaigne is less likely to encounter dispute than the special dependence of Shakespeare's genius on culture and circumstance, stimulus and initiative.

* *Montaigne and Shakspeare*. By J. M. Robertson. (London: The University Press; 1897.)

It may be contended that Shakespeare was probably more profoundly influenced by the events of his own life than by any reading. His avocation developed his sympathies and the capacity of interpreting and interpenetrating the thoughts and emotions of others. He had living intercourse with men who were greater than their books, and before he knew Montaigne had touched some of the depths of tragedy in *Richard II.* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The loss of his own son Hamnet in 1596 may well have deepened and intensified his tragic muse. Doubtless he read, assimilated, and utilized all he got hold of, but, whatever it was, he mastered it and made it his own. In the majority of the instances brought forward by Mr. Robertson we may see the thought of Montaigne distilled in the alembic of Shakespeare's own imagination. It would be absurd to deny that he was influenced by the Frenchman; yet it may be very far from correct to suppose that it was Montaigne who made him what he is. His Freethought and sceptical character may easily have come to him far earlier from his contact with Marlowe—if, indeed, it needed other stimulus than the development of his own mind.

Montaigne, despite some reservations, was essentially a Freethinker. His motto, "*Que scay je?*" ("What know I?"), reveals the man's frank instinct for truth. His *Essays* was, as Mr. Robertson says, "simply the most living book then existing in Europe." They are largely so still, and that because the Gascon lord dared to show himself exactly as he was. "I like your book," said Henry III. to him at court. "Then, sir," he replied, "you will like me, for my book is myself." Such a man was bound to be taken by Shakespeare to his heart of hearts. His influence, if subtle, was sure to be far-reaching, and it may be questioned if even Mr. Robertson has hunted it all out. For instance, Montaigne says, at the conclusion of his *Essays*, that the noblest lives are to his mind those ordered after the ordinary human pattern, without miracle and without extravagance. This sentiment, though it might not easily be paralleled in Shakespeare's writings, seems decidedly to have been evidenced in his life. If it stood alone, it would go far to show that Montaigne was, in the happy phrase of Mr. Robertson, "the first of the moderns."

J. M. WHEELER.

REPLY TO THE REV. C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM.

IN the *Freethinker* of November 28 appeared an article of mine under the heading of "The Freewill Fallacy," upon which the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström, secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, made some comments in the issue of the following week. Doubtless it has been noticed that in his comments the rev. gentleman entirely ignored my remarks upon man's responsibility, and also my reasons for rejecting the Christian doctrine of "freewill." In my article I stated the Secular view of responsibility, and endeavored to show that, according to the teachings of St. Paul, the Articles of the Church of England, and the "Confession of Faith," what is termed "freewill" is impossible. Further, I put forth some philosophical objections to the doctrine—such, for instance, as that "will" is an effect as well as a cause, and that it was not an entity, but a mental phase, depending for its manifestation upon such conditions as birth, climate, education, and general environment. I put the following case: If a person had the power to call up a desire by the "will," it is certain that some prior desire induced him to do so. What, therefore, caused that desire? Suppose a person says he wills to do a thing, and he does it, he must have had an inclination to do it, or he would not so have "willed" and acted. Now, the point here is, that some circumstance must have existed prior to the action of the "will,"—which influenced it; and surely the "will" cannot be the cause of that which precedes itself in time, and to which, in fact, it owes its existence.

Upon all these points the rev. gentleman is silent. It may be alleged that, before he can fairly assume that he has refuted the positions taken up in my article, he should answer the following questions: What is this much-talked-of "will"? Is it an independent existence, with absolute power to control the thoughts and actions of man? If it be an entity, where is it located, and how are we to learn its nature? On the other hand, if it be dependent upon

something apart from itself, how far does that dependence extend? If we are free in any degree, where does the freedom end, and necessity commence? Further, will the rev. gentleman tell me how volition can be "free" if, as the Church of England teaches, "the condition of man.....is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works"? Wherein lies our power to choose salvation if, as the "Confession of Faith" states, some men are ordained to "everlasting death"? Moreover, how can St. Paul's doctrine of Predestination be made to harmonize with man's alleged "power of choice"? If, as the New Testament informs us, we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves," where does the freedom come in?

Another fatal blow to the Christian's idea of "freewill" is the notion of God's foreknowledge. If it be true that he knew from "the beginning" that a proportion of the human race would be lost, then those victims of the "decrees of God" had no freedom of choice. It has been asserted that the events foreknown by God are certain, but not necessary. This, however, to my mind, appears absurd. For, if the existence of a future event be certain, is its non-existence in the course of things possible? If its non-existence is not possible, how is the existence of the event contingent? And if its non-existence be possible, how is the existence of the event certain? And if the existence of the event be uncertain, how can the knowledge of its existence be certain? These considerations are respectfully submitted to the rev. gentleman, if he contends for the absolute freedom of the will against the theory of philosophical necessity. Leaving these general remarks for my opponent to ponder over, his comments upon my article deserve, and shall receive, my serious attention.

He says: "If I rightly understand Mr. Watts's view, he is philosophically a Determinist." That is so, when the term is accepted in the sense in which I understand it. In my opinion, Determinism does not exclude all freedom, neither does it prevent a man choosing. As Calderwood observes: "The Necessitarian doctrine, in denying freedom of will, does not altogether refuse a place to freedom. But the only liberty which it acknowledges is liberty of acting as we will, denominated freedom from constraint or coercion." And Müller, in his *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, admits that from freedom "Determinism is not absolutely excluded, but some truth is recognised therein, and freedom attains its own full recognition and definiteness by blending Determinism with it." My view, briefly expressed, is this: Man has the power, or ability, to "will" or to choose; but as to what he shall "will" or choose depends upon internal and external conditions, which decide the nature of his choice. Karl Pearson, in his work, *The Grammar of Science*, puts the matter thus: "The 'freedom of the will' lies in the fact that exertion is conditioned by our own individuality, that the routine of mental processes which intervenes between sense-impression and exertion is perceived objectively neither by us nor by any one else, and psychically by us alone. Thus will, as the first cause of a sequence of motions, explains nothing at all; it is only a limit at which very often our power of describing a sequence abruptly terminates.....Science tries to describe how will is influenced by desires and passions, and how these again flow from education, experience, inheritance, physique, disease, all of which are further associated with climate, class, race, or other great factors in evolution. Thus, with the advance of our positive knowledge, we come more and more to regard individual acts of will as secondary causes in a long sequence, as stages in a routine which can be described—stages, however, at which the routine changes its at present knowable side from the psychical to the physical. An act of will thus appears as a secondary cause, and no longer as an arbitrary first cause" (pp. 150, 151). Motives govern or control the "will," and "will" regulates action; hence, as Upham says, "Volitions never exist independent of motives" (*The Will*, p. 213).

Mr. Engström supposes that the position I take involves the denial of the "veracity of consciousness." This is not so, for to me consciousness is a fact; but what are its nature and its functions? I do not accept the theory that it is a separate faculty, but, with Professor Ribot, I regard consciousness as a word "which expresses, in the most general way, the various manifestations of psychical life. It consists of a current of sensations, ideas, volitions, and feelings." According to this view, consciousness represents

a mental condition which depends for its nature upon influences that differ with time and place. Hence it is not uniform in all men, neither is it in the same person at all times. It may be true that an individual is conscious of a certain thing, but it does not follow that the thing of which the individual is conscious is true. Thus Buckle writes: "Consciousness is infallible as to the fact of its testimony, but fallible as to its truth." Graham also states, in *The Creed of Science*: "There is a thing called consciousness; there is a mass of conscious impulses and principles of action; but all these are themselves products of the physical energies" (p. 120).

My rev. opponent urges that "Determinism evacuates morality of all its virtues," and that the *practical* results of my theory would be most disastrous. But why so? Remembering that man and his actions are potent factors in the determining causes of human conduct, my view of necessity implies the highest morality, which is the endeavor to produce a state of society wherein it shall be almost impossible for man to be depraved. While it is too true that, in accordance with the laws of heredity, some unfortunates are born into the world whose bad and vicious natures have been so determined for them that they remain criminals more or less all their lives, the great majority of men and women enter the world possessing the power of self-improvement. Upon these latter devolves the ethical duty of striving to improve their physical and moral natures, and also their general surroundings, so that thereby higher motives in life may be acquired, and at the same time superior conditions may be secured for the regulation and control of future generations. Herein lie the force of necessity and the power of freedom, as I understand them. In starting in life we are all influenced by the conduct of our predecessors, and we are necessitated or free in proportion as that conduct has been virtuous or vicious.

Finally, the rev. gentleman says: "Teach this theory [that of Determinism] to a passionate, lustful, selfish person—or rather, teach it to everyone—and see how it will 'work.'" It has been taught, and, where properly acted upon, it has been successful. Punitive laws, sanitary laws, and medical science have all for their object the improvement of the environment of the individual, with a view of affording better opportunities for personal improvement. Take the various diseases that "flesh is heir to"; to cure the physical ills we have hospitals, for the mental we have lunatic asylums, and for the moral we have reformatories and other similar institutions. Robert Owen applied this theory in New Lanark, and with what result? The good philanthropist had under his influence nearly two thousand human beings. We are told that "the men were given to drink and dishonesty," but that he succeeded in converting "his domain into a model community." "He attributed his remarkable success," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, to preaching the doctrine that "character is made by circumstances."

The immorality lies with the teachers of the Church's doctrine of "freewill," which tells the "lustful, selfish person" that he can lead a life of crime and sensuality, and that he is "free" at the end of his vicious career to "come to Jesus," and thereby avoid the consequences of his immoral life.

CHARLES WATTS.

WOMAN AND THE BIBLE.

HAVE the teachings of the Bible advanced or retarded the emancipation of woman? Have they dignified or degraded the mothers of the race?

Since it is accepted that the status of woman is the gauge of civilization, this is the burning question that now presents itself to Christendom. If the Bible has elevated woman to her present status, it would seem that in 1,900 years the fact could be demonstrated beyond question; yet to-day the whole Christian world is on the defensive trying to prove the validity of this claim.

Despite the opposition of Bible-teaching, woman has secured the right to education, and to speak and print her thoughts; therefore her answer to these questions will decide the fate of Christian civilization.

In Genesis the Bible strikes the keynote of woman's inferiority and subjection, and the note rings true through

every accepted and rejected book that has ever constituted the Holy Bible. In the face of this fact, the supreme effort of the Christian Church has been to inculcate the idea that Christianity alone has elevated woman, and that all other religions have degraded and enslaved her. It has feared nothing so much as to face the truth.

The Bible estimate of woman is summed up in the words of the president of a leading Presbyterian theological seminary when he exclaimed to his students: "My Bible commands the subjection of women forever."

In an address to the graduating class of a woman's college in England, Mr. Gladstone, in awarding the diplomas, said: "Young women, you who belong to the favored half of the human race, enormous changes have taken place in your positions as members of society. It is almost terrible to look back upon the state of women sixty years ago, upon the manner in which they were viewed by the law, and the scanty provision made for their welfare, and the gross injustice, the shameful injustice, the flagrant injustice, to which in certain particulars they were subjected. Great changes are taking place, and greater are impending."

For centuries England has been the light of the Christian world, yet what an indictment is this against Christian England by the greatest living defender of the Bible and the Christian religion.

This one statement of Mr. Gladstone at once refutes the claim that the Bible has elevated woman, and confirms the idea of the president of the theological seminary. Add to these declarations the true condition of women to-day and the testimony the Bible bears against itself, and the falsity of the claim that the Bible has elevated woman is at once established.

If Mr. Gladstone acknowledges the "gross, flagrant, and shameful injustice" to woman sixty years ago in Christian England, what can be said of woman's condition six hundred years ago, when the Bible held greatest sway over the human mind, and Christianity was at the zenith of its power; when it was denied that woman had a soul; when she was bought and sold, robbed of her name, her children, her property, and "elevated" on the gibbet of infamy and on the high altar of lust by the decrees of the Christian priesthood?

If it can be proved that during the last thousand years the Christian clergy, with the Bible in their hands, have pointed out, or attempted to remove, one single cruelty or wrong that woman has suffered, now is the opportune time to furnish such proof.

Now, to-day, when woman herself is rising in her mental majesty, and when her wrongs are being righted, Christianity is dead in the strongest brains and most heroic hearts of Europe and America; and now, when the myth and miracle of Bible-teaching have lost their hold on the minds of men, this is the very age when the position of woman is more exalted than it has ever been since Christianity begun.

After nineteen hundred years, no woman's thought has ever been incorporated into the ecclesiastical or civil code of any Christian land. Monogamic marriage is the strongest institution of the Christian system, yet all the men of the Old Testament were polygamists, and Christ and Paul, the central figures of the New Testament, were celibates, and condemned marriage by example and precept.

Monogamy is strictly demanded of Christian women, but bigamy, trigamy, and polygamy are in reality practised by men, as one of the methods of elevating women in Bible lands.

Largely, the majority of men have one legal wife; but, assisted by a small percentage of youths and bachelors, Christendom maintains an army of several millions of courtesans. Thousands of wretched women are yearly driven to graves in the potter's field, while manhood is degraded by deception, drunkenness, and disease, and the blood of the innocents cries out against a system that thus elevates woman.

The Bible records that God created woman by a method different from that employed in bringing into life any other creature, then cursed her for seeking knowledge; yet the Scriptures say: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." "Because thou hast rejected knowledge I will also reject thee." "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge"; and knowledge has been the savior of the human race.

Ever since Eve was cursed for seeking knowledge the priest, with the Bible in his hands, has pronounced woman the most unnatural, untrustworthy, and dangerous creation

of God; she has been given away as a sheep at the marriage altar, classed with the ox and the ass, cursed in maternity, required to receive purification at the hands of the priest for the crime of child-bearing, her body enslaved, and robbed of her name and property.

The ownership of the wife, established and perpetuated through Bible-teaching, is responsible for the domestic pandemonium and carnival of wife-murder that reigns throughout Christendom. In the United States alone, in the eighteen hundred and ninety-seventh year of the Christian era, 3,482 wives—many with unborn children in their bodies—have been murdered in cold blood by their husbands; yet the Christian clergy are reproving women for not bearing more children, in the face of the fact that millions of the children that have been borne by Christian women are homeless tramps, degraded drunkards, victims of disease, inmates of lunatic asylums or prisons, condemned to the scaffold, or bond-slaves to priests or plutocrats, who revel in wealth at the expense of women, whom it is claimed the Bible has "emancipated and elevated."

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This declaration puts the brand of infamy upon every woman that ever bore a child, and this, it is claimed, elevates the mothers of the race.

The wife who places her destiny in the keeping of the father of her children, bestows upon him the wealth of her affection, who is to bear the blood and name of her husband to conquests yet undreamed of, and to generations unborn, is by divine decree made a fountain of iniquity. Would not men and women rather pluck their tongues out by the roots than brand with infamy the mothers who went down into the valley and shadow of death to give them birth? Place the Bible Trinity—"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"—beside the Homeric trinity—"Father, Mother, and Child"—and prove that the Bible has elevated woman.

The Homeric conception of woman towers, like the Norway pine, above the noxious growth of the Mosaic ideal. Compare the men and women of the Bible with the stately figures culled from the temple of pagan antiquity. Zipporah denouncing Moses as a "bloody husband"; Abraham sending Hagar and his child into the desert, and pocketing twice over the gains from his wife's prostitution; Lot and his daughters; Judah and his daughter-in-law; Oman, Tamar, the Levite and his concubine, David and Bathsheba, Solomon in the sewer of sensuality; Rahab, Abolibah, Mary of Bethlehem, and Mary Magdalene. Place these by the side of the man and woman, Hector and Andromache, of the *Iliad*, who called upon the immortal gods to bless their child of love; the virgin Isis with her son, Horus; the Vedic virgin Indrance, the mother of the savior god, Indra; Devaki and her divine child, Krishna; Hipparchia, Pandora, Protegenia, Cornelia, Plotina, Arria, and a host of the noble and virtuous of pagan history.

Prove, by comparing these with the position of woman in Christendom, that woman owes all that she is to the Bible.

Compare Ruth of the Bible with the magnificent pagan, Penelope, who refused the hand of Kings, was true to her love as the star to the pole; who, after years of waiting, clasped the old wanderer in rags to her heart, her husband, her long-lost Ulysses; yet this pagan woman lived ten centuries before the laws of Moses or Christ were promulgated.

While there are millions of Penelopes in Christendom, there are other millions of women, after centuries of Bible teaching, who lie outside the pale of motherhood, and even outside of the pale of swinehood.

Under Bible teaching the scarlet woman is anathema-maranatha; while the scarlet man holds high place in sanctuary and State.

The bye-paths of ecclesiastical history are fetid with the records of crimes against women, and "the half has never been told."

And what of the history Christianity is making to-day? Answer, ye victims of domestic warfare which crowd the divorce courts of Bible-land. Answer, ye wretched offspring of involuntary motherhood. Answer, ye five hundred thousand outcast women of Christian America, who should have been five hundred thousand blessings bearing humanity in your unvitiated blood down the stream of Time.

Answer, ye mental dwarfs and moral monstrosities, and tell what the Holy Bible has done for you.

While these answers echo through the stately cathedrals

of Bible-lands, if the priest, with the Holy Bible in his hand, can show just cause why woman should not look to reason and science, rather than to Scripture, for deliverance, "let him speak now, or forever after hold his peace."

When Reason reigns, and Science lights the way, a countless host of women will move in majesty down the coming centuries. A voice will cry, "Who are these?" and the answer will ring out: "These are the mothers of the coming race, who have locked the door of the Temple of Faith, and thrown the key away; these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the fountain of knowledge."

JOSEPHINE K. HENRY.

IS LIFE WORTH HAVING?

"THAT depends upon the *liver*." This question seems to me one of the most senseless and useless that could be imagined; for no one can ever answer it rationally, simply because the elements and experience necessary for such an answer are wanting. It is like asking, "Would it have been better or worse if nothing had ever existed?" Better for whom, for what? Had nothing ever existed, good, better, best would have had no existence. Good, evil, better, and worse are all relative ideas or experiences; and relative questions cannot be answered except when both sides of the relationship are known.

Is life worth living? That means, Is it better to live than not to live, or to live than never to have lived? How is it possible for anyone to answer this question? To do so we must suppose an impossibility—viz., that the person answering must have had experience of not life as well as of life. Until a person knows two countries, two climates, how can he tell which is the better? If only one country and one climate existed, no comparison could be made, or ever thought of; and even if a great number existed, no one without experience could tell which was the best. Now, how can any man undertake to say if life is worth having? He knows nothing else, he never did anything contrary to living. No person ever experienced non-existence; we have no recollection of times in which we did not exist, for we did not exist then. We never were non-existent, for before we were we had no existence at all; we were not we, and we were nothing else.

Neither has any man an experience of death. No man ever dies. He merely lives; all his experiences are of life, not the contrary. And therefore, having no knowledge of non-being or non-living, he cannot possibly say whether it is better to live than not. We find ourselves living without any previous experience. Life and its changes are all the experiences we get, or ever shall get. And the question is, "Is it worth having?"

The fact that most people live as long as they can shows that life is worth having. Animal and man, saint and sinner, do strive to live as long as possible; and that shows that in all living things, almost, there must be something supposed to be worth living for.

Life itself—its bare self—cannot, I think, be worth having. If life were destitute of pleasure and pain, hope and fear, effort, work and rest—were its experience absent, no one would ask this question, for it is the experience we have that makes life life, and not the bare existence.

I cannot doubt, though I am not able to prove, that it would have been good for many had they never been born—although, of course, we can see what Jesus did not, that that is a bull; for to him that never existed good or evil is impossible. Still, the unconscious joke has point in it, for there are many persons born only to evil, born to life-long sickness, poverty, misery.

No one has exhibited this feature of human life more tragically, more pathetically, than Thomas Hood:—

What different dooms our birthdays bring—
For instance, one little manikin thing
Survives to wear many a wrinkle;
While death forbids another to wake,
And a son that it took nine moons to make
Expires without even a twinkle!
Into the world we come like ships,
Launched from the docks, and stocks, and sligs,
For fortune fair or fatal;
And our little craft is cast away
In its very first trip in Babbicome Bay,
While another rides safe at Port Natal.

What different lots our stars accord!
This babe to be hail'd and woo'd as a lord,
And that to be shunned like a leper!
One, to the world's wine, honey, and corn;
Another, like Colchester native, born
To its vinegar only, and pepper.
One is littered under a roof
Neither wind nor water proof—
That's the prose of Love in a cottage—
A puny, naked, shivering wretch,
The whole of whose birthright would not fetch,
Though Robins himself drew up the sketch,
The bid of a "mess of pottage."
Born of Fortunatus's kin,
Another comes tenderly ushered in
To a prospect all bright and burnished.
No tenant he for life's back slums—
He comes to the world as a gentleman comes
To a lodging ready furnished!
And the other sex—the tender—the fair—
What wide reverses of fate are there!
While Margaret, charmed by the bul-bul rare,
In a garden of Gul reposes,
Poor Peggy hawks noseegays from street to street,
Till—think of that, who find life so sweet;
She hates the smell of roses!

To one half of the human race, most likely, life is not worth having; and those whom we think the most happy are often the most miserable. Outward appearances are proverbially deceptive; and the probability is that most people experience more pain than pleasure.

Still, we find ourselves living, and the question is, Shall we fret and fume over the misfortune of life, or take it as it is and make the most of it? No doubt many of our evils are imaginary. We are apt to compare and contrast our own lot with that of other people, and thus spoil and poison what we have because it is not something else. This is folly, if it is not madness, and should be shunned by all rational people. Life is life; we did not choose it; we are what we are, and most of us have the chance to make life worth having.

A person that will take the trouble to fill his mind with the best thoughts he may find, and indulge in those thoughts; who will try to be as unselfish as possible, and adapt himself to his surroundings when he cannot change them, will find life worth having—that is, will extract from it more pleasure than pain.

One great thing in life, it seems to me, is to have an aim; a trade, a calling, an occupation—something we may regard as our own particular business; not something we are compelled to do to please a master, or merely to keep the wolf from the door; but every person should have a *fad*, a something that he delights in for his own pleasure solely. Unselfishness should not go to the extent of self-renunciation—that is madness. Every person should preserve a good sound part of himself for himself; and while he avoids the extreme of living for himself exclusively, he should also beware of ignoring self in living for other people.

Lastly. The hot competition of the present age, the rapid, electric style of living, no doubt creates many evils; and the great question, How to make life more rational and happy for all people? should be faced and studied profoundly; and this can never be done except through the force of general intelligence and general inquiry. Every person, as best he may, should take up this great question, How shall we make this only world of ours as beautiful and useful as possible? This is our only birthright, our only estate. Shall we waste and squander it, neglect its development, to please those who delight in war, in vice, in crime, or to gratify an insane hope of a better world? Or shall we treat this one world as good tradesmen do their business—develop its resources to the uttermost, and so make life, as far as we are able, worth living? If ever life should become what it ought to be, people must become more and more intelligent, more independent; and by their own well-directed efforts so organize the forces of life as to produce the highest good and the least evil.

When as much thought and capital have been expended upon life and its preservation and development as are now devoted to the arts of destruction and agencies of death and of pain, then life will be worth having. At present nine-tenths of its possible good are wasted upon the worst of people and the most detestable objects. And so, what with the folly of the many and the tyranny of the few, it is extremely doubtful if life is not a curse instead of a blessing. Still, people have the remedy in their own hands, and they should have sense enough to apply it.

JOS. SYMES.

ACID DROPS.

DR. BRUNO WILLE'S case has been decided at Gratz. He was charged with having publicly attacked the Christian and Jewish religions. The Provincial Court acquitted him on the count of interfering with the exercise of religion, but found him guilty of holding up to contempt the teachings, customs, and institutions of a religious community recognised by the State. For this awful crime he was sentenced to eight days' imprisonment, which we dare say he will "do on his head." It is not a heavy punishment, but it shows what religious liberty has come to in that part of Europe. Dr. Bruno Wille, however, will not be frightened. He will go on with his Freethought propaganda.

A battle has been going on in Australia, and more battles are to follow. It was between England and the Colonies. But happily no blood was shed. The battle was fought with ball and bats, and the best side won! This is a lot better than fighting with swords and rifles.

Peace Sunday is heralded with petty wars and rumors of wars. Pagan Rome kept the peace of Europe with four hundred thousand troops. Christian Europe has millions in arms, and other millions ready to spring to arms at a moment's notice; each nation vying with the other in increasing the strength and deadliness of its armaments. The Prince of Peace is supposed to have come long since, and the most earnest of his followers think it time he put in a second appearance. Much is heard of the Savior, but little seen of the salvation.

The war between capital and labor, too, is becoming more aggravated than ever. The spectacle of the biggest and best trade union in sore straits—if not defeated—is not an encouraging one for a peaceful solution of the problem, and counsels of violence are heard which but a little while ago would have had no chance of attention.

Mr. Buckmaster, magistrate at Hampton Wick, has been making some severe criticisms on the methods of bodies like the Church Lads' Brigade. He says that a foolish martial spirit is fostered by these drills, marches, and warlike surroundings. One youth got into trouble at Hampton for fighting, and in particular for striking two girls. It was urged in defence that there was some mistake, as he was at Bible-class during the disturbance. "Yes," said the constable in reply, "he doubled back into the Bible-class, your worship." We will not spoil this with any comment. It is too rich as it stands.

There are two hundred regularly ordained women preachers in America—that is to say, in the United States. Paul commanded women to keep silence in the churches. He also suffered not a woman to teach. But the Yankee woman doesn't care the snuff of a candle for Paul, when his opinions clash with hers. "See Jesus, did he? Well, I can see Jesus too if I like." So poor old hook-nosed, bald-pated Paul is shoved aside, and the ladies perorate in the vacancy.

The Archbishop of York is a humble apostle of the poor Son of Man, who had not where to lay his head—who, as Robert Taylor said, lived on the high road and died on the gallows. But the Archbishop makes his humility consistent with the receipt of £10,000 a year, and on that income he preaches the glorious gospel of "Blessed be ye poor." Naturally the Archbishop of York has some personal finery, and among the lot is a valuable diamond ring. This, however, he lost recently at Conisborough. A boy named Senior found it, and the Archbishop's heart was so warmed by its recovery that he rewarded the finder with the magnificent gift of *twopence*. His Grace of York will never die poor.

Rev. W. Whelan, preaching at Little Albany-street Roman Catholic church, said he had coaxed people to come to the House of God, and remonstrated with them for not coming, but all in vain. He feared the only way to bring them to church would be to announce a free supper after the service. Mr. Whelan is evidently doing bad business. We wish the same could be said of all others in the same trade.

A law-suit by a French abbé, Brougdon, against the Pope, in the Italian Court at Rome, for the possession of the church of St. Joachim, has been decided in favor of the priest. The Pope was condemned to surrender the church to the abbé, and to pay heavy costs of legal proceedings. It is considered certain in clerical circles that the Pope will, under the circumstances, place the church, which is not yet completed, under an edict, and excommunicate the abbé, who thus has been the means of placing upon his Holiness one of the worst slights to which he has been subjected since his election to the tiara.

The *Tablet* publishes a Brief by which Signor Giacomo Pecci, otherwise Leo XIII., institutes "the Arch-confraternity of Our Lady of Compassion for the return of Great Britain to the Faith." The members obtain a plenary indulgence at the point of death, and on each of the feasts of St. Mary, St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. Gregory, and St. Augustine. The indulgences, too, may be applied to the Souls in Purgatory. The main object of the Confraternity is the return of Great Britain to the Catholic Faith. The chief trust is in prayer and good works. If it be left to prayer, Mary will have to wait long for her "Dowry," as the Pope ventures to call our little isle set in the silver sea.

But the Catholic Church does not trust to prayer entirely. Zealots of either sex are to be appointed, who will act in common for the great end; and these zealots are to meet on one Sunday of each month, "in every church where the Association is erected, for the purpose of praying together, if possible, before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, in order to implore more efficaciously from God the wished-for return of Great Britain to the Catholic Church." The Brief has attached the sounding name of "A. Trombetta, Secretary."

The *Church Times* calls attention to the fact that on Nov. 30 a couple from Yorkshire were married at All Saints, St. Helier's, Jersey, by special license; the bride being sister-in-law to the bridegroom. Many may be glad to hear this, because what one couple has done other couples may possibly do. Such marriages are legal in Jersey, as in most of the colonies; but it is a moot point whether the law is for visitors as well as residents. The Attorney-General lays it down that to have the legal right it is necessary to be domiciled on the island. What is certain is that marriage in Jersey must be recognised throughout the British Empire.

Chancellor Tristram having laid it down that a brass crucifix is a superstitious image, which must be removed from the altar of St. Mark's, Marylebone, the Ritualists are a good deal troubled, for St. Mark's is by no means the only church where the Roman practice is followed.

The Bishop of London has just been presented with a new toy, consisting of burnished ivory, ornamented with plates of pure gold. The technical name of this toy is a mitre. His lordship is said to be very proud of it. "Men are but children of a larger growth."

The *Westminster Gazette* gives the following as a fact:—Ingenuous Young Lady (*whose eye is caught by the score of a current Billiard Contest*): "Poor Mr. Diggle! I knew he didn't get in on the School Board, but I never thought he'd have to take to playing billiards."

The *Schoolmaster* publishes a list of questions sent by the vicar to the applicant for a teachership in a church school, "salary £60 and half-grant, £45 house and garden": "(1) Do you hold any extreme views as a Churchman? (2) Will you co-operate with me in Sunday school loyally? I am personally superintendent. (3) Are you willing to accept (as quite extraneous) the duties of organist (£5 to start with)? These will be: Two services on Sunday, and a third if called upon. Saints' and Holy Days and Wednesday evenings, and during special church seasons, if required. Also training the choir, and holding practice under my direction personally."

Other questions were: "(6) Are you disposed to interest yourself in the spiritual and temporal welfare of the young men and lads to some degree? (7) Are you willing to abide by the following conditions as to evening continuation school—viz.: No night school to be held on Wednesday and Friday, between 7.30 and 8.30 p.m., nor during hours of divine service in Penitential seasons? The use of school-room to be always conditional on requirements of trustees?" As the vicar evidently thinks most of his Sunday school, one would like to know how much of the salary is fairly chargeable to the day school?

The clerical majority on the Norwich School Board, says the *Chronicle*, in spite of a popular protest insisted upon establishing religious examinations in the Board schools. The first of these took place last week, when the Church party discovered that the public had decided to take a hand in the game by keeping its children away. The schools were more than half empty, in one case seventy-two attending out of 380 on the registers, with other schools in a very slightly larger proportion. The elation of the party at having carried their point in the Board room is now tempered by the sad reflection that the only service their victory has done them is to provoke a strong hostile demonstration.

This illustrates the usual position. Parents are no whit anxious that their children's minds shall be filled with religious nonsense. All the anxiety comes from the party desiring future supporters of church and chapel.

The High Church party in Birmingham have been much annoyed by Parliament sanctioning the demolition of several of the city churches. It appears that the trustees of Christ Church, among them the Bishop of Coventry, have sold the site for £65,000, by an agreement, through which an hotel may be erected thereon, provided there is no public drinking bar; whereas the conditions of sale stipulate that no licensed house shall at any time be erected there. The projected "desecration" is said to have excited much virtuous indignation.

"K." calls the attention of readers of the *Birmingham Daily Mail* to the fact that, although the Rev. W. Dale denounced Sunday trading, a religious magazine is hawked about at his chapel. One of the congregation who defends the practice says that it occurred during the pastorate of Dr. Dale.

Edwin Andrews, a gardener, for fourteen years in Mr. Chamberlain's employ, hanged himself in a cowshed. The poor fellow had lost his mother, and found he could not live without her. He had spent fifteen hours without food beside her grave. Not so very long ago, when Christian ideas prevailed, this poor fellow's corpse would have been buried by night at the meeting of four cross roads, with "a stake in his inside," as Tom Hood put it; but now the jury will return the dodging verdict of "Temporary insanity," and the corpse will be decently buried.

Speaking of suicide, is it not strange to find the *Christian World* giving fresh currency to the silly newspaper paragraph, that since Colonel Ingersoll wrote to show that suicide was no sin, five members of his family, or immediate friends, have "acted upon his suggestion"? In the first place, the *Christian World* must be very green to suppose that essays on suicide have anything whatever to do with the fact of suicide. People who kill themselves don't do so for academic reasons. In the second place, no member of Colonel Ingersoll's "family" has committed suicide. Mrs. Cooper was a rather distant relative of his, and she lost her life in watching her daughter who was suffering from religious melancholia—at least, that is how we read the evidence. The fond mother would not send her daughter to an asylum, and one night the demented girl got out of bed, turned on the gas (unlit), and asphyxiated both herself and her mother. These are the plain facts of the case, and we ask the *Christian World* in all seriousness what possible connection it can have with Ingersoll's pamphlet on Suicide.

By the way, if Ingersoll's pamphlet would lead people to commit suicide, it ought to be read by some orthodox journalists. The loss of some of them would neither eclipse the gaiety of nations nor diminish their average intelligence.

Suicide is often attributed to irreligion, but we notice that the letters of suicides very usually teem with religious expressions such as those left by the son of an undertaker in Islington, on whom an inquest was held last week.

Religious and racial hatred conspire to render the position of the Jews in Eastern Europe most uncomfortable. A fresh outbreak in Roumania recalls those in 1872 and 1882, when Jews were hunted wholesale.

Rev. Canon Gordon, head of the Sheffield Catholics, has been fined £1 for beating a schoolboy with a walking-stick. This is how he reads the Gospel texts, "Blessed are the merciful," and "If one smite thee on the one cheek turn unto him the other also." But there always was a glaring contradiction between Christian belief and Christian practice.

The South Shields Christian Evidence Society had to prosecute a colored man calling himself the Rev. J. T. Williams, B.A., for obtaining money by false pretences. According to Sergeant Porter, of Houghton le Spring, Williams had been convicted there of larceny under the name of John James Cole. The prisoner elected to be dealt with by the South Shields magistrate, and was sent to gaol for twenty-one days.

The Rev. Henry Samuel Berry, vicar of Cuckney, was brought before the Consistory Court of Nottingham, charged by his churchwardens with drunkenness. As his intoxication had not interfered with the discharge of his ministerial functions, he was merely admonished.

In the case of the Rev. J. H. Borrer Nigel Neville, a retired clergyman, charged at Dursley Police-court with indecently assaulting a girl of thirteen, an arrangement was come to with the father, and the prosecution withdrawn.

The rector of St. Peter's, Tiverton, and a number of his choir, were summoned by the police for being on licensed

premises after closing hours. They pleaded inadvertence, and the case was dismissed, though it is doubtful if the excuse would serve in the case of unreverent persons.

It appears, from a case which came before Judge Bacon at Whitechapel County Court, that some Jews think comparatively little of an oath in a Christian court. The defendant, when reminded of what the plaintiff had sworn, said: "Dat is nodings. Let him go before der Rabbi." Judge Bacon: "What difference is there in taking the oath before the Chief Rabbi or here?" Defendant: "Dere is mooch difference. Der swear before der Rabbi, dot is terrible. Der swear here nodings." The Judge said he had often suspected this, but had not heard it stated before with such frankness.

The *Jewish Chronicle*, under the heading "A Premium on Hypocrisy," exposes the methods of the missionaries in making bad Jews into worse Christians. Monetary considerations appear to be the only inducements for a profession of faith, which is repudiated whenever convenient.

Side by side with the statement that some ninety thousand pounds are spent by the London Mission for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, we read that fifty beds have had to be closed at University Hospital for want of means to support them.

Mr. Richard Beale Blaize, a wealthy merchant of Lagos, West Africa, says that the morality of the natives has been greatly impaired by their contact with Europeans. He further contends that the evangelization of Africa would be more effectively accomplished by her own sons than by imported native missionaries. Of course Bishop Tugwell repudiates this.

The *Liverpool Courier*, in a leader on the controversy, says: "It is certainly a significant and painful thing to learn, on the authority of the *Lagos Weekly Record*, and from other sources, that the 'bulk of Central Africa is rapidly coming under the control of Islam. Mohammedanism is knitting together, by religious and educational ties, the large and powerful tribes into a harmonious whole.'"

Hindu students of Bombay University have been agitated by the question whether a Hindu becoming a Christian remains a Hindu. The native Christians maintain that Hindu is a national name, and that there is no such thing as a Hindu religion. The Brahmans maintain that Brahmanism is Hinduism, and this seems recognised by men like Sir Monier Williams, who writes on the native faiths as Hinduism, although there are almost as many varieties of Hinduism as there are of Christianity.

Since 1852 there has been a bishopric at Sierra Leone, but the climate is so unhealthy that no church dignitary would stay there longer than the first return vessel. To wait for a crown of martyrdom is left for curates, and cannot be expected from a bishop. No martyrs being forthcoming, by letters patent dated November 29, 1897, her Majesty has revoked the letters patent which constituted the bishopric.

The Rev. J. Landreth, of Logie-Park, addressing the Scottish Church Society on the need of catechetical instruction, said: "Dahomey was respectable, compared with our baptised, sceptical, ingeniously naturalistic, and thoroughly sensual British savage." This being the case, the Scottish Church Society wants money for more missions abroad. And religion being so little efficacious at home, the prescription of Dr. Landreth is simply to increase the dose.

Mr. Gomer Williams, in his recent book dealing with the history of the Liverpool privateers and slave-traders, mentions a cargo "shipped by the Grace of God" on the *Mary Borough*, her "master under God" being Captain David Morton, and she herself "now riding at anchor at the Barr of Senegal, and by God's grace bound for Georgy, in South Carolina." The cargo of the good ship thus piously announced consisted of "twenty-four prime slaves, six prime women slaves being marked and numbered as in the margin, the mark being two circles branded on the right buttock." This was the way in which Christianity was abolishing the slave trade a hundred years ago.

The Robert Browning Hall, in York-street, Walworth, commemorated the eighth anniversary of the poet's death on Sunday evening. Robert Browning was not a Christian, but the Warden of the Browning Settlement is the Rev. Herbert Stead, and the institution has a decidedly pious flavor. The proceedings on Sunday evening opened with a couple of hymns and a prayer. An address was delivered by Mr. Augustine Birrell, M.P., who is generally more entertaining in his comical than his serious vein. Mr. Birrell dwelt on Browning's optimism—"God's in his heaven, All's

right with the world'; also on his "undying faith in immortality." But what on earth does a poet know about immortality more than other people? Browning knows now, if he knows anything, whether there is a future life or not, but during his earthly existence he knew no more about it than any tramp or crossing-sweeper. And, after all, the importance of a poet, and his value, do not consist in his individual opinions on controverted questions, but in his command over the universal elements of human life and his power of presenting them artistically in musical speech. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare was a far greater poet than Browning, and he had no "undying belief in immortality," unless it was the immortality of his genius in the world's literature.

Regarding the expedition to Ceylon to witness the total solar eclipse of January 21, 1898, Sir Norman Lockyer says: "In India, in 1871, my observations would certainly have been rendered impossible by the smoke of sacrificial fires to frighten away Rahu, the Dragon, who is supposed to cause eclipses by swallowing the sun, if there had not been a strong force of military and police present to extinguish them; and in Egypt, in 1882, without the protection of the soldiers, a crowd of Egyptians would have invaded the camp; as it was, their shouts and shrieks, from a distance of 500 yards, were plainly audible." The Emperor of China is likely to accede to all Germany's demands out of nervousness at the prospect of the forthcoming eclipse, which is taken as a sign of the anger of heaven.

The sun emblem of the Sun Fire office, according to a writer in the *Daily Mail*, used in Germany to be considered as a protection in various ways by the country people. In order to protect the marks from the weather they frequently surround them with a little wooden frame, and in the Catholic districts of Silesia people may be seen kneeling to the figure of the Sun, under the idea that it is dedicated to holy purposes.

Judge Paul, who is already noted for many remarks which permit of no doubt as to his religious beliefs, is thus reported to have recently examined a ten-year-old girl witness in a Brisbane indecent assault case: "Do you know what an oath is?" "No, sir." "You were questioned at the police-court?" "Yes, sir." "Did you kiss the book at the police-court?" "Yes, sir." "What did you kiss the book for?" "To tell the truth, sir." "Oh, she'll do for me. It's no use asking her where she'll go to if she doesn't tell the truth, because we don't know."—*People's Newspaper*.

Canon Cheyne's visit to America is much boomed in the press. He is showing Jonathan how a clergyman can now-a-days get £2,000 a year for doing what Thomas Paine received execration for.

"Providence" did not help the poor fellows who put off in the Margate surf-boat to save lives in a shipwreck. Most of them were drowned. No doubt the clergy have an explanation. They always have. It is their trade to show by hook or crook that "He doeth all things well."

The rector of the parish church, Southport, holds that mixed marriages are responsible for Agnosticism; for where parents hold diverse faiths the children run a great risk of lacking all faith and all reverence for sacred things. He would fain have none but sound Anglicans bred in the land.

The Rev. H. J. Taylor has been preaching at the Derby-road Church, Southport, on "The Atheist." He is reported as making some very strange statements. One was the following: "In the commencement of the Revolution the National Assembly of France appointed a committee to inquire whether there was a God. The committee met, and ultimately decided that there could be no liberty on earth while there was a God in heaven; and then, by a bold leap in logic, the committee decided that there was no God, and that death was an eternal sleep." Will Mr. Taylor kindly inform us the date when this committee was appointed, and where the document embodying its decisions can be found?

Mr. Taylor followed the polite example of the Psalmist in calling Atheists fools. "It is the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God. The folly of Atheism is apparent. It says that there is no God behind all in this universe, and yet it cannot give any adequate account of how the universe has come to be." Is not the folly apparent of a person who fancies that Atheists think it necessary to give an account of how that came to be which they cannot conceive as non-existent?

Mr. Taylor wound up by saying: "As long as there is any place in the whole universe unexplored the man who asserts that there is no God may be fitly described, in the language of David, as a fool." Suppose for the word "God" we substitute Devil, Witch, Fairy, Ghost, or Chimera?

"A. G. W." says in the *Glasgow Saturday Weekly Citizen*: "The average elderly man is orthodox in his views; he has at least recognised the value of conformity to the opinion of the majority. The spirit of scepticism is, as a matter of experience, more rife among the younger minds. Unsettled views are regarded as natural to the stage which precedes the acquisition of sufficient experience to provide a foundation for faith."

Several Welsh Nonconformist preachers have lately received offers to confer American degrees upon them at the following prices:—D.D., £21; LL.D., £20; Ph.D., £16; M.A., £12; B.A., £10; Mus. Bac., £10; Mus. Doc. (very cheap), £16; B.Sc., £10; B.D., £10. Dr. Sexton, Dr. Kinns, and many others, own their titles on the same valid ground that the lady owned her hair—by right of purchase.

A local schoolmistress, afflicted with religious mania, was found last week at midnight going along the Kew-road, Richmond, in a costume of Eve before the Fall. She was anxious to set up as a prophetess, having perhaps heard that the Rev. Mr. Horton, of Hampstead, laments the disappearance of prophetesses from the Christian Church.

Here is an advertisement from the *Times* of December 9: "Advowson.—The Patrons of a well-circumstanced London Benefice, in the best part of the West-end, will sell by private treaty. Income capable of large increase. Large church. Prospect early possession." The "income capable of large increase" indicates that the advertiser knows what those in search of "the cure of souls" really desire.

Our Spiritist friends seem as inconsistent as the Christians about death. An obituary notice in the Christmas number of the *Two Worlds* begins: "I regret to have to report the passing to the higher life of Mr. —"

The eloquent Pere Hyacinthe writes to the *Gazette de Lausanne*. In France, out of thirty-six millions [nominal] of Catholics, twenty-five have broken with the Church. He says: "If the Church remains in the road which she has so unhappily taken, Christianity in its Latin form will perish, and our nations probably will perish with it." M. Loysen need not be alarmed. He surely knows that nations with virtues which he can admire have existed, and still exist, apart from all Christianity.

Father Ignatius, preaching at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, on "The Advent of Christ," said that even Voltaire bore testimony to the universal expectation of that event. We are afraid the holy father is too deficient in humor to understand the great French master of sarcasm.

Councillor D. M. Stevenson, of Glasgow, has had the good sense and manliness to propose that the People's Palace at the east-end of the second city of the empire shall be opened for not less than three hours on Sundays. Of course the interested sky-pilots held a conference, with a view of preserving their monopoly, and invoking the vengeance of heaven on all who would interfere therewith. They raised a rare howl at the increase of Sabbath desecration, as they call recreation; but, as the United Trades Council almost unanimously voted to petition for the Sunday opening, the Town Councillors may do well to pay more heed to the wishes of the people than to those of the sky-pilots.

The Bishop of London has given his sanction to the launching of a large monastic institute by the Cowley Fathers at Westminster. Thus the Romanizing movement goes on apace.

The *Daily News*, noticing a saying of Napoleon, "When I appoint anyone to a place I make one ingrate and ninety-nine malcontents," parallels it with the saying of an English Prime Minister. "It is a strange thing," he said, "but when a man becomes a bishop the first thing he forgets is his maker." This reminds us of an old epigram on a bishop, who went out of church during divine service to wait on the Duke of Dorset:—

His station despising, unawed by the place,
He flies from his God to attend on his grace.
To the Court it were fitter to pay his devotion,
Since God had no hand in his lordship's promotion.

This calls up another old epigram, as true to-day as when it was written:—

Various religions various tenets hold;
But all one God acknowledge—namely, gold.

What others think of thee stay not to ask;
Rather than please the many, serve the few,
Knowing that life's most glorious regal task
Is never quite too hard for thee to do.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 19, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, subject, "God and His Mother; or, The Fairy Tale of the Birth of Christ."

January 2, Birmingham; 9, Manchester; 16, Liverpool.

February 20, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 2, Leicester; 9 and 16, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road; 23 and 30, Birmingham; 25 and 26, debate at Birmingham; February 13, Camberwell. May 1, 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.

SAM BRIERLEY, newsagent, 49 Chester-road, Manchester, writes: "I placarded the contents-sheet of the *Freethinker*, with six extra copies, and before I could look round I had to refuse six more. Some of my so-called Christian customers take me to task for advertising your horrid paper, but I sha'n't be frightened. Keep on sending the contents-sheet, and let Secularists in this part of Manchester know they will always be able to obtain the *Freethinker* at my shop."

G. J. HOLYOAKE, Eastern Lodge, Brighton, wishes to purchase the volume of the *National Reformer* containing his contributions from January 4, 1862.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—"Bible Bosh" will do capitally for our next number—that for Christmas week.

A. C. DREWRY.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

G. BRADY.—Your fresh monthly subscription (10s.) to the new Treasurer's Scheme to hand. Miss Vance will send you an official receipt in due course. Thanks for your good wishes. Mr. Foote is in excellent health.

T. BELLAMY.—Mr. Gladstone has not translated Homer, but has written a book about him. It is called *Juventus Mundi*.

T. J. HEAD sends us 5s. in redemption of his promise towards the Treasurer's Scheme.

J. H. T.—See paragraph.

J. H. FOSTER.—Order of Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—J. Unsworth, 5s. (p); J. Tonge, 5s. (p); W. Early, 5s. (p). *Per C. Cohen*:—N. Ashworth, 5s. (p).

JOSEPH MAY.—We fear we do not quite follow your question. Buddhism in the course of ages has become a superstition, with gods, heavens, and hells. In that aspect, of course, it is open to the same criticism as other superstitions.

H. A. GODDARD.—Your order is handed to Mr. Forder, to whom all orders for books, pamphlets, and papers should be sent *direct*.

J. PARTIEGE.—All right. Please forward copy of the bill in the usual way.

W. WILSON.—Lick, who gave money for the Lick telescope and observatory, was a Freethinker. We believe he gave most of the cost of building the Paine Memorial Hall at Boston. Thanks for your kind offer, but at present we cannot avail ourselves of it in London, not having the orchestra to begin with.

HOOPER FUND.—T. Bellamy acknowledges:—Collection at Motherwell, 10s.

J. WOOD.—We are not able to pay for verses.

REV. DR. CLIFFORD'S letter on the Bible as a Board-school book, together with our reply, will appear in our next issue.

R. S. JENNINGS.—Too late for this week.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Humanity—The New Century—Crescent—Blue Grass Blade—Two Worlds—De Dageraad—Southport Visitor—Southport Guardian—Daily Chronicle—Birmingham Daily Mail—Newcastle Chronicle—Bury Times—Glasgow Herald—Shields Gazette—Intelligence—The Clarion—Fria Tankar—L'Etoile Socialiste.

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

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

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

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

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.

IN spite of the unpleasant weather, there was a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Evolution of the Idea of God," with special reference to Mr. Grant Allen's new book so entitled. The lecture was listened to with very profound attention, and loud and long applause marked its conclusion. Some questions were asked and answered. Mr. Foote speaks at the Athenæum Hall again this evening (Dec. 19), taking for his subject "God and His Mother; or, The Fairy Tale of the Birth of Christ." As the subject is so seasonable, Freethinkers should endeavor to bring their more orthodox friends to this meeting.

London Freethinkers will remember that their Annual Dinner takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday, January 10. Mr. Foote presides, and is to be supported by Messrs. Watts, Wheeler, Forder, Cohen, Moss, Heaford, Ward, and other Freethought speakers. The tickets are four shillings each, as usual. For this a good repast is provided in agreeable surroundings, and the evening will be made pleasant in other respects. No doubt there will be a large gathering.

Notwithstanding the exceedingly unpleasant weather, Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience at Camberwell last Sunday evening. The applause was most enthusiastic in approval of the new lecture, "Christian Tactics Exposed." Mr. Sabine presided, and appealed, but in vain, for discussion.

Mr. A. B. Moss, who was unable to lecture last Sunday in consequence of an attack of lumbago, is happily recovering. We hope he will soon be himself again.

Mr. Cohen is now back in London, after a prolonged tour in the provinces. Last week he delivered the first Sunday lectures ever given at Chester. The meetings were far more successful than was anticipated, and seventeen new members were added to the local Branch.

Mr. Chilperic Edwards is a lecturer we should like to hear often from Freethought platforms. His discourse on "Jonah from the Standpoint of the Higher Criticism," at Wood Green, was replete with humour and learning. Next Sunday Dr. Drysdale lectures in the New Hall, Wood Green.

Mr. S. M. Peacock, the president of the South Shields Branch, after an elaborate address upon education and School Board matters, performed, last Sunday, the interesting ceremony of naming Rose, the daughter of the secretary, Mr. R. Chapman, expressing every good wish to child and parents. The annual social of the South Shields Branch is fixed for January 1, at the Baring-street school.

A woman's journal has been started in Paris with the title *La Fronde*. It is written and composed exclusively by females. Some of the leading contributors, such as Mmes. Marya Cheliga, Eugenie Potonie Pierre, and Paul Mink, are well-known Freethinkers.

R. Didden, in the *Westminster Review*, notices the work of Herr von Otto Gaupp on Herbert Spencer, in which he says that the *Synthetic Philosophy* will for all time secure for its creator a place among the intellectual heroes of mankind.

"Nunquam," in the *Clarion*, writing on Mr. John Trevor's new book, which we shall have something to say about shortly, once more confesses his Agnosticism. "The quest for God," he says "is an old, old quest, and never mortal yet came back therefrom with anything in his hand but guesses. And if it comes to guessing, I can guess as well as another. But I know—nothing!"

Colonel Ingersoll is announced to deliver a "Thanksgiving Sermon," and the American Christians are once more talking about his approaching conversion. Haven't they been praying for it, and will not the good God answer their supplications? They can't convert Ingersoll, and they know it; but God can, and they are eagerly waiting for him to begin business. But alas and alack! Ingersoll's "sermon" is a Freethought address, after all, and we expect shortly to be able to present it to our readers.

Some time ago Talmage preached on "Lies and Liars," and we remarked that he was a good authority on both. Since then Talmage has stated that Charles Darwin "gave twenty-five thousand dollars to the Missionary Society." Dr. Croffut, of Washington, wrote to Darwin's son for verification, and received the following reply: "My father, Mr. Charles Darwin, did not, as a rule, subscribe to any missionary societies. For some years he used to subscribe

£1 (\$5) a year to a society in the Falkland Islands. He had been in these poor islands, and was interested in them, and an old friend who was there with him asked him to subscribe. This is, no doubt, the origin of Dr. Talmage's romance."

The New York *Truthseeker*, from which we extract this item, points out that Darwin was deceived by this missionary, who really reduced the tribe among whom he worked from three thousand healthy persons to three hundred sickly ones. Darwin seems to have given £5 altogether, and Talmage tacked on three ciphers—a trifle for him.

FREE INQUIRY.

THE right of free inquiry is the first condition of progress, and dogmatists who dispute that right virtually impeach the evidence or the morality of their own dogmas. An exception from that rule may, under certain conditions, be admitted in favor of theological tenets. Unobtrusive mystics have a right to expound the unknowable after their own fashion. The priests of Isis and the adepts of the Eleusinian Mysteries had the privilege to veil the secrets of their sacred rites. The discreet Pythagoreans could not be obliged to explain the bean-law of their master, or their reason for believing in his ghost-stories as firmly as in the evidence of his geometrical theorems. Even nocturnal devil-worshippers may be permitted to mumble about their altars, if they do not dress them at the expense of their neighbors.

But it alters the case if such creeds become aggressive. The right of secrecy does not pertain to religions that have devastated our earth by a series of murderous wars, that have enforced their anti-natural dogmas by destroying the prosperity of whole nations, and their ghost dogmas by the torture and slaughter of millions; religions which, after the loss of their political power, have used all their moral influence to obstruct the progress of freedom and science, to arrogate the education of our children, and to interfere with the recreations of our holidays—all under the pretext of promoting the propaganda of an infallible revelation. The votaries of such creeds cannot plead the privileges of the ancient mystics, for the right to investigate their claims has become a social and religious duty.

—F. L. Oswald.

AN INERRANT BIBLE.

THE *Central Christian Advocate*, as a Church organ, gave publicity to the following statement of Professor Wilbur F. Steele, a distinguished Christian scholar, in which he showed up the character of the inspired Bible, "every sentence, word, and letter of which is of God." He says: "In 1848 there was such a confusion in the office of the American Bible Society, and such impossibility of telling what should be the reading in many places, that a man was set to work to bring order out of chaos. He took four Bibles from as many leading Bible houses of England, a copy of the American Bible Society, and a copy of the original edition of 1611, all claiming to be the same. These were carefully compared throughout; every variation, no matter how minute, was noted. The number of these variations was about 24,000."

Suppose an honest comparison had been made with the "Douche and Latyn," from which the Coverdale translation was made; how many additional thousands of errors in this inerrant Bible would have been found?

If "about 24,000" discrepancies were made by printers from 1611 to 1848, a period of 237 years, probably how many occurred in making the Latin translation into Dutch? and how many were made by copyists, intentionally and unintentionally, of that Latin original, claiming to have been translated from the Greek in the beginning of the fifth century by Jerome?

Oh, there is a curious history of that earlier Latin edition, which, says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "originated in Africa." And it will surprise the world sometime to learn, as they will, that the "original Greek" is only a translation of that old Latin.

"We know how the Bible was made," said the good Father McGovern, in a sermon to a Catholic audience twenty-seven years ago, "and that is why we are opposed to placing it in the hands of the people." Ah, and there are others who have learned how it was made, and they are not disposed to always remain silent.

—*Progressive Thinker*.

THE CHILDREN'S GOD.

O, BABY mine, with golden hair,
And eyes so innocently blue:
So helpless, weak, so dainty-fair,
Who'd have the heart to injure you?
God kills such darlings every day—
It is his dear, delightful way.

In pomp absurd he sits on high,
And strikes our little children down:
To sate his burning lust they die—
His lust for blood, of old renown.
As then, so now he loves to slay—
It is his dear, delightful way.

Their holy blood, like awful wine,
Is daily on his altar poured:
Full sweet their burning flesh divine
Smells in the nostrils of the Lord.
The heavenly Potter kneads his clay—
Just in his dear, delightful way.

Sweet throats he rips with bloody steel,
He tears babes, shrieking, limb from limb:
No thrill of pity God can feel,
Their agony is naught to him.
No prayer his ruthless arm can stay—
He'll have his dear, delightful way.

Babes strangled, poisoned, butchered, drowned;
Blind, maimed, deformed, diseased, distraught!
Thus are his works with mercy crowned:
His deeds, with loving kindness fraught!
His tortures naught but love display—
It is his dear, delightful way.

Then, children, creep beneath the wing
Of God's all-loving, boundless might,
And if you feel the baleful sting
Of him—the way, the truth, the light—
Repine not, O, remember, pray,
'Tis but his dear, delightful way.

EX-RITUALIST.

Signs from the Lord.

The Jewish prophet was an extraordinary being. He was something more and something less than a man. He spoke like an angel; he acted like a beast. As soon as he received his mission he ceased to work. He often retired to the mountains, where he might be seen skipping from rock to rock like a goat; or he wandered in the desert with a leather girdle round his loins, eating roots and wild honey; sometimes browsing on grass and flowers. He always adapted his actions to the idea he wished to convey. He not only taught in parables, but performed them. For instance, Isaiah walked naked through the streets to show that the Lord would strip Jerusalem and make her bare. Ezekiel cut off his hair and beard, and weighed it in the scales; a third part he burnt with fire; a third part he strewed about with a knife; and a third part he scattered to the wind. This was also intended to illustrate the calamities which would befall the Jews. Moreover, he wore a rotten girdle as a sign that their city would decay, and buttered his bread—in a manner we would rather not describe—as a sign that they would eat defiled bread among the Gentiles. Jeremiah wore a wooden yoke [and there was nothing indecent in this] as a sign that they would be taken into captivity. As a sign that the Jews were guilty of wantonness in worshipping idols, Hosea cohabited three years with a—woman of the town; and, lastly, as a sign that they committed adultery in turning from the Lord their God, he went and lived with another man's wife.—*Reader's "Martyrdom of Man."*

War.

Miserable physicians of souls, you declaim for five quarters of an hour against the mere pricks of a pin, and say no word on the curse which tears us into a thousand pieces! Philosophers and moralists, burn your books; so long as the caprice of a handful of men will cause the massacring in all loyalty of thousands of our brothers, the part of the human race which is devoted to heroism will contain all that is most frightful in human nature. What concern to me are humanity, benevolence, modesty, temperance, gentleness, wisdom, piety, so long as half-an-ounce of lead shatters my body, and I die in torments unspeakable, surrounded by five or six thousand dead or dying, while my eyes, opening for the last time, see the town I was born in delivered to fire and sword, and the last sounds that reach my ears are the shrieks of women and children expiring in the ruins—and the whole for the pretended interests of a man whom we do not know?—*Voltaire*.

THAT BADGER BOY AT SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

THE LESSON OF BALAAM—OR HIS ASS.

THE teacher read the story of Balaam, which, save for the jackass episode, wouldn't be worth telling to empty benches, that Badger boy at once getting in his hooks, as it were.

"That Balum was a fortune-teller for revnoo only, as pop says, wasn't he, mum?"

"Yes, James, that was just about what he was."

"Yes'm. He wasn't one of God's profiters, was he, mum?"

"No, dear, he was not. He was one of Baal's prophets, dear."

"Yes'm. Who was Bale, mum?"

"He was just nothing and nobody, James; but the ungodly called him their god."

"Yes'm. He was a noppession god, wasn't he, mum?"

"James Badger, don't you dare to talk like that!"

"No'm. Them ungodly folks wasn't ungodly to Bale, was they, mum?"

"No—yes—well, now you just stop talking anything about it, you boy."

"Yes'm. God told Balum to go to King Boleg, didn't he, mum?"

"God told him to go to King Balak, you stupid, you."

"Yes'm. What't he git mad for, then; 'cos he went, mum?"

"Why God's anger was kindled, I don't know, James."

"No'm. Wonder 'f he knew, mum?"

"James Badger, that's blasphemy!"

"Yes'm. All the same, it was very funny he told Balum to go up over against Boleg, and then got mad 'cos he went, warn't it, mum?"

"You horrid boy, you stop!"

"Yes'm. It must a knocked Balum galley west when the jackass spoke out to him, mus'n't it, mum?"

"You little slang-whangy thing, you; I don't know whatever you mean, I'm sure!"

"No'm. I mean it must a sot him back, opened his peepers, knocked him stiff, give him"—

"There, you can stop your horrid lingo just where you are. I won't listen to you."

"No'm. If you was ridin' a jackass, mum"—

"You needn't go any further with the supposition, you little badger, you."

"No'm. Was the jackass a talker from Wayback, mum, or for this er'asion only, as pop says?"

"Of course he spoke only on that occasion; otherwise it would have been no miracle, you heathen boy, you!"

"Yes'm. Was it a miracle when the jackass spoke, mum?"

"Of course it was, stupid!"

"Yes'm. Was it when the snake spoke to Eve, mum?"

"Of course it was, you boy."

"Yes'm. Who done the mirrieles, mum?"

"God, you miserable little heathen!"

"Yes'm. Then it was God that buncoed Eve, and not the snake, weren't it, mum?"

"Merciful heaven! James Badger, you go home!"

"No'm please. How obbun yer nice hair—I mean how nice yer obbun"—

"There, that'll do, dear. I'll forgiv you this time. But don't be so wicked again, will you, dear?"

"No'm. What was the matter with Balum's eyes, mum, that he couldn't see the angel, and the jackass could?"

"It was God's doing, the whole of it, James."

"Yes'm. Was it God spoke, and not the jackass, mum?"

"God willed that the animal should speak, James, and it spoke."

"Yes'm. How sot back the jackass must a been, same's Balum, mum! Did he always talk after that, mum?"

"Of course he didn't."

"How do you know he didn't, mum?"

"James Badger, you've said quite enough about the animal, now you stop."

"Yes'm. Why don't you say jackass, mum?"

"Because there's no authority—the Bible doesn't say it, you horrid!"

"No'm. But it says ass, and everybody calls 'em"—

"James Badger, you can go home."

"No'm—please. Pd liked to heard the jackass talk, wouldn't you, mum?"

"No, I wouldn't; there now."

"Why not, mum? It was God's doin', wasn't it?"

"Of course. And er—well, we weren't either of us there, James, so say no more about it, please."

"No'm. All the same, it was a big thing, a talkin' jack-ass, mum."

"James Badger, will you ever stop?"

"Yes'm. Was the angel gonter kill Balum, mum?"

"Yes, dear; and only for the ass he would."

"Yes'm. If the critter hadn't got scart, and had walked over the angel, then Balum would a ketched it, I s'pose, mum?"

"You suppose, do you? Well, keep on supposing you little monkey you."

"Yes'm. S'posin' the jackass had brayed at the angel, then the angel would a got on his ear"—

"You horrible James Badger, go home!"

"No'm—please. Would you be scart of an angel, mum?"

"James, I suppose any of us would be. Don't we read that the men of God were bowed with fear before the angels of the Lord?"

"Yes'm. And that one must a been a tough lot, mum, that knocked the jackass silly! What a scarecrow he'd a made in a corn-field, wouldn't he, mum?"

"Oh! oh! oh! you horrid heathen wretch! I shall die. Go home—go. The class is dismissed." Then to an untimely end came the seance of Balaam—or his ass.

—*Truthseeker.*

SI SLOKUM.

SAVE ME AND DAMN THE REST.

No, not for me the selfish prayer,
"Lord, bless thou mine and me,
Protect me by thy watchful care,
Keep me from evils free!"

"Prolong my days, keep Death afar,
Thine angel though he be;
But when he calls, in some bright star,
Eternally bless me!"

Lo, what am I that I should be
Above my fellows blest?
That God should from them single me,
Save me—and damn the rest?

Am I to taste eternal joy,
While friends I loved are lost?
Shall songs of praise my harp employ,
And they in torment tossed?

Shall I find joy in heaven's bliss,
In peace one moment dwell,
While lips I loved on earth to kiss
Are parched with fires of hell?

No, not for me the selfish prayer,
"Lord, bless thou mine and me,
Protect me by thy watchful care,
Keep me from evils free."

But be my earnest labors given
To every effort wise
To make this lowly earth a heaven,
A cloudless paradise.

—*S. J. Macdonald.*

Christmas.

The Rev. Albert Barnes says, in his comments on Luke ii. 8: "It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced. While away in these desert and mountainous regions, it was proper that there should be someone to attend them, to keep them from straying, and from the ravages of wolves and other wild beasts. It is clear from this that our Savior was born before the twenty-fifth of December, or before what we call Christmas. At that time it was cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. God has concealed the time of his birth. There is no way to ascertain it. By different learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year."

Obituary.

GEORGE JULIAN HARNEY, who on February 17 celebrated his eightieth birthday, and was known as the sole survivor of the Chartist Convention of 1839, died at Richmond on December 9. Mr. Harney had been one of those imprisoned for selling Hetherington's unstamped *Poor Man's Guardian*. As a writer and speaker, he did much for advanced political causes. He edited the *Democratic Review*, and, for a while, the *Northern Star*. After the collapse of the Chartist movement he went to Jersey and to the United States, where he was engaged in journalistic enterprises. Since his return to England he had been a contributor to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. He became somewhat more Conservative in politics, but remained a Freethinker to the end.

The progress from deepest ignorance to highest enlightenment is a progress from entire unconsciousness of law to the conviction that law is universal and inevitable.—*Herbert Spencer.*

BOOK CHAT.

COLONEL JOHN HAY'S speech at the dinner of the Omar Khayyam Club was worthy of his reputation. Here is the conclusion of his eulogy on the great Persian Freethinking poet: "The many cannot but resent that air of lofty intelligence, that pale and subtle smile. But he will hold a place forever among that limited number who, like Lucretius and Epicurus—without rage or defiance, even without unbecoming mirth—look deep into the tangled mysteries of things; refuse credence to the absurd, and allegiance to arrogant authority; sufficiently conscious of fallibility to be tolerant of all opinions; with a faith too wide for doctrine, and a benevolence untrammelled by creed; too wise to be wholly poets, and yet too surely poets to be implacably wise."

* * *

In Mr. Wilfred Ward's *Memoir of Cardinal Wiseman* it is gravely recorded how—either when awake or in slumber, it is not quite clear which—the Virgin Mary appeared to the future Cardinal on the night of May 31, 1840. The Cardinal wrote: "I seemed to myself surrounded by waves boiling up, and to see at a great distance the heavens opened and the Blessed Virgin in great glory, pouring from a vessel upon the surface of the sea, which then became calm, and the calm diffused itself until it reached and surrounded me; and I seemed in a mild, pleasant bath, and part of the waters appeared covered over, and changed into gardens." This lets us know how miracles happen—in dreams.

* * *

It seems to be allowed that the reason why a Life of Wiseman only reaches the public so long after his death is that Manning would not permit any biography of his predecessor to appear in his lifetime. There were many little passages best covered up. Since, however, Mr. Purcell ripped some of the old wounds open in his *Life of Manning*, a Memoir of his predecessor became a necessity for the Church, and was commanded by Cardinal Vaughan. Hence these two more bulky volumes.

* * *

Wilfred Ward's *Life of Cardinal Wiseman* recalls an old epigrammatic verse written when the Catholic hierarchy was proclaimed in England under the last Pope:—

With Pius, Wiseman tries
To lay us under ban:
O Pius, man unwise,
O impious Wiseman.

* * *

Aubrey de Vere, in his *Recollections*, tells a good story of Hartley Coleridge and an Irish enthusiast who was dilating on the errors of Popery. "Sir," he said, with awful solemnity, "there are two great evils in Ireland." "There are, indeed," replied the Irishman; "but please to name them." "The first," resumed Hartley, "is Popery." "It is, indeed," said the other. "Now tell me what is the second great evil." "Protestantism," roared Hartley in a voice of thunder.

* * *

Under the title, "A Roman Catholic University for Ireland," Mr. St. John Morrow sounds an alarm in the current number of *Macmillan*. He contends that in Dublin University the Catholics have an institution to which they can go with freedom to their consciences, without setting up an institution which shall be exclusively Catholic. As a matter of fact, Trinity College is looked upon by Catholics as a Protestant institution. The new University should be before all things a national one. There should be no endowment of theological chairs of any kind, and no paid chaplains.

* * *

In the lengthy notice of the late G. Julian Harney in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* it is stated that while editor of the *Jersey Independent* he received some contributions from James Thomson. We should like to know if among these there were any not elsewhere published.

* * *

Monday, December 13, was the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Heine, one of Germany's greatest poets. Born a Jew, a sham perversion to Christianity left him a real Freethinker. "The Japanese," he said, "hate nothing so much as the cross. I will be a Japanese." Of a preacher of Christianity to the Jews he says: "If he does it from conviction, he is a fool; if from hypocrisy, a rascal." "Judaism," he said, "was not a religion, but a misfortune." "Freedom," he wrote, "is the new religion, and Paris the new Jerusalem. Lay on my coffin a sword, for I was ever an intrepid soldier in the war for the liberation of humanity."

* * *

Heine satirized all forms of religious faith, and became known as the Voltaire of Germany. Matthew Arnold wrote:—

The spirit of the world,
Beholding the absurdity of men—
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
For one short moment wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE MORAL INSTRUCTION LEAGUE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I fancy Mr. Thurlow slightly misapprehends the purpose of those combining to form the Moral Instruction League which was inaugurated on December 7. I resent as much as he does the idea of "moral parsons" and the insolence of those Ethical Culturists who have the air of saying: "We are the moral instructionists, and morality will perish with us." But it seems to me the League represents a very wholesome reaction against the Church and Chapel parties labelling themselves Moderates and Progressives, of the citizen party who will insist that those things which are paid for by all must be agreed upon by all.

I think Mr. Thurlow will agree that there must be that discipline in every school which the French call *morale*. Punctuality, obedience, common action, prompt response of the right word at the right moment, cleanliness, truth, cheerfulness, and kindness should pervade every lesson, even if no copy-book ethics are agreed on. But I know no valid objection to the inculcation of the uses of the simple virtues on which all are agreed. I object to my children being taught to look to God for support, but not to their being taught to ever tell the truth, and to add to the world's joy and lessen its sorrow.

Personally, I hold that physiology is a sound foundation for morality. But I do not wish it taught as such, since others disagree. But I do wish its facts taught as concerning all who happen to have bodies. So I would not have total abstinence praised or blamed, or vivisection called useful or abominable. But I would have the uses of temperance and of kindness shown, and I would like every child to feel that its character is an object of affectionate care to its teacher.

The subject raises another one which deserves careful consideration. The home has been the great school of morals. Perhaps it is well that parents should let their children's religion be provided for by others, since it shows the parents are indifferent, and the children are all the more likely to be disgusted with the nonsense. But if the State is expected to provide moral training, as well as everything else, the infants will become less the children of their parents, and more the children of the State. Whether this is desirable or not, I do not here discuss. As things are, it seems to me that parents should be considered primarily responsible for the behavior of their children, and any plans for relieving them of that responsibility would need careful examination. But we have not come to that. All we have come to is the substitution of what all are agreed upon for what all are disagreed upon, and this implies the removal of supernaturalism from school teaching. With this, I think, Mr. Thurlow and I agree. When there is a prospect of the State establishment of "moral parsons," Mr. Thurlow's criticism will be to the point, and some may be forthcoming from

PLAINSPEAKER.

MORAL INSTRUCTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Thurlow raises three interesting points in his last letter:—

(1) Is Secular Moral Instruction intended as a substitute for "the huge superstitious imposition known as Christianity"? Now, I am an Agnostic or Atheist (I care little which name I go by), and I have done my little best to persuade my Christian neighbors to put aside all theological and supernatural doctrines. But I recognise the existence of certain good elements in Christianity. It has upheld many of those moral truths which, as Mr. Thurlow rightly says, "are the common property of mankind." In that sense, Christianity has a claim to be in part retained. In preparing a code of Moral Instruction, therefore, I should feel free to borrow from Christianity on the same terms that I borrow from Buddhism, or Judaism, or the principles of the French Revolution. I cannot agree with Mr. Thurlow that "Book Morality is the same the world over." To take one simple instance: I find in the books of Buddhism a tender thought for the animal world, which I do not find in the New Testament. No doubt, the leading lines of morality—veracity, kindness, temperance, etc.—are to be traced in all ethical codes; but the applications vary. That is why I choose one good point from the Romans, another from the Greeks, a third from the Chinese, a fourth from the Society of Friends, and so on. Having constructed a method suitable to the minds of children, we propose to introduce this secular system into State-aided schools as an improvement on the mythical and imperfect plan now followed under the name of "Religious Instruction."

(2) The capacity of the teachers. Here Mr. Thurlow embarrasses me. If I say I know more about ethical instruction than the teachers with whom I used to work under the School Board, he will call me conceited. If I say

I know no more than they, he will ask why I make a stir about the question at all. I will meet the difficulty by stating two facts:—(a) Since I left the School Board service I have, by study and experiment, and with the help of French text-books of civic instruction, gained a clearer insight into the nature of sound Moral Instruction than I possessed in former years. So I quote myself as one Board School-teacher who has been glad to improve his capacity. (b) A number of Board School-teachers with whom I have conversed have told me they felt the new secular method would be a great advance upon the "Compromise," but they confessed they were not sufficiently familiar with the subject to take it up practically. I do not mean that they have never taught morality. They mean, and I mean, that the systematic teaching of morality as a thing by itself, separated from ideas of God and a supernatural world, is a novelty, and requires some training to put into practice.

(3) The relation between intellectual progress and morality. Mr. Thurlow contends that if we multiply scientific inventions, and bring them to the doors of the people, we may safely leave morality to take care of itself; and our chief aim should be to "fertilize the budding intellect with all the useful knowledge of which it is profitably capable." To this I reply: (a) The access to inventions does not of itself moralize people. When railways came in, did they make the British nation more loyal to duty? When torpedoes were invented, did they wean the nations from the wicked lust of war? The engineering trade is the mother of a thousand smart inventions; and yet in this very trade the morality falls short of the level of mutual consideration and justice. (b) The moral sense needs fertilizing as much as the intellectual faculty. Was not the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh (I refrain from citing living examples) a teacher of morality? As a social reformer, he did not call upon the people to patent more machines. He called upon them to display sincerity, honesty, mercy, and mutual respect. The whole struggle over the Oath was a moral struggle. His advocacy of Malthusianism was based on moral grounds; he argued that more careful limitation of numbers was necessary for the happiness and comfort of individuals and of the community. Now, just as Mr. Bradlaugh brought moral suasion to bear upon the adult members of society, I want to bring the suasion to bear upon the children. I want them trained in good citizenship. F. J. GOULD.

SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I rejoice that, while literary journals and high-class magazines devote much space to discussions as to whether Shakespeare's Sonnets were addressed to Pembroke, Southampton, or some other, and inquisitive inquiries as to who was the other Will, who the dark lady, and such recondite mysteries of little moment, our beloved *Freethinker* has so excellent a notelet on the deepest thoughts of our greatest thinker as that by "D. M." in your last issue. I do not, however, agree that Shakespeare's belief and disbelief may not be drawn from his plays. I have heard you, Mr. Editor, put the matter unassailably. When, for instance, the thought that death ends all is put in the mouth of Shakespeare's most intellectual characters, it is conclusive that he thought this appropriate to them; and what is this but saying that the thought is his own?

"D. M." alludes to the fact that in the Sonnets no other immortality is suggested but that through offspring. Note this in stanza xiii. :—

O that you were yourself! but, love, you are
No longer yours, than you yourself here live:
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give.

One could quote many lines to the same purport. I rather turn to Sonnet xxix., which I wonder "D. M." did not give:—

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate.

Who but a Freethinker would have inserted "deaf" before "heaven"? Here we have the same voice which in *The Tempest* makes Miranda say:—

Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
It should the good ship so have swallow'd, and
The freighting souls within her.

One expression in Sonnet lviii. might lead a careless reader to suppose the writer no Atheist:—

That god forbid, that first make me your slave,
I should in thought control your times of pleasure.

In some poor editions it is printed "God"; but Dowden properly gives it with a small g. Evidently the god is Love, the only god known to the author. Gerald Massey acutely compares this sonnet with the speech of Rosaline in *Love's Labor Lost* (Act v., Sc. 2). In this same stanza he calls his waiting "hell." In stanza cx. he speaks of "a god

in love, to whom I am confined." Massey thinks "'a god in love' is really only warranted by its being addressed to a woman." Much might be said on Shakespeare's application of the language of religion to human love, but I should like to hear others on this point. AURIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although I think the study and interpretation of Shakespeare vastly more important than that of the Jew books, it would, perhaps, be trespassing beyond your usual bounds to inquire into the purport of the Sonnets. May I, however, throw out the suggestion that they may be just as dramatic as his plays—that is to say, the interpretation of other people's moods, thoughts, and desires, not Shakespeare's own? J. G. F.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE American slave-owner could appeal to the Old Testament as a warrant for his institution. Slavery there was everywhere in primitive times, but the Hebrew slave-law is more merciful than that either of Greece or Rome, notwithstanding the ordinance, shocking to our sense, which held the master blameless for killing his slave if death was not immediate, on the ground that the slave "was his money." The belief in witchcraft as a crime to be punished by death, unhappily, is also true, and, though not prominent, gave birth in misguided Christendom to an almost incredible series of atrocities.—*Professor Goldwin Smith.*

The dim and shadowy outlines of the superhuman deity fade slowly away before us, and as the mist of his presence floats aside we perceive, with greater and greater clearness, the shape of a yet grander and nobler figure of him who made all gods and shall unmake them. From the dim dawn of history, and from the almost depth of every soul, the face of our father Man looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes, and says, "Before Jehovah was I am!"—*W. K. Clifford, "The Bearing of Morals on Religion."*

Did I possess the riches of all the orient lands, or all the crown-decked jewels of all the brainless kings, I would gladly give it all to hear one word from a once-loving mother who now sleeps beneath the starry dome of heaven, and over whose grave for years have crept the trailing vines. Not from one that has passed away, or who sleeps the sleep of death, has ever come one solitary word. Seasons, years, centuries, yes, ages pass, yet no response. The earth in its unweary cycle moves steadily on. The stars and suns keep their courses amid the countless constellations, while the millions of years that pass are as drops of water in a shoreless sea. Generations pass from life to the silent tomb, and there, with all the proof that was ever known, they sleep, "wrapped in the dreamless drapery" of eternal silence.—*W. J. Burns.*

That work is worship, ancient sages said;
A truth that seems ill-pleasing to the priest;
Though worship is the work for which he's paid,
Work is the worship that he likes the least.

—*Percy Greg.*

If four thousand years had to pass ere old Jah
Could develop from one into three,
What time must elapse ere the son be a pa,
And the father a grandfather be?—*G. L. M.*

PROFANE JOKES.

It's just as well, if you're going to talk Scripture, to know something about it. A lady living in Kent, and at some distance from a church, remarked the other day at dinner that she didn't go to her favorite place of worship as often as she should do owing to its being so far off, and added: "I don't think it's right to work my coachman on Sunday." "Certainly not," replied a cheery old gentleman; "and I am delighted, madam, to hear that you have so much respect for the Seventh Commandment."

The following obituary notice appears in an American paper: "The wife of the Rev. J. Dolittle listened to her husband's preaching on Sunday last, and died in convulsions the following Tuesday afternoon."

Mrs. Jonsing—"Am Pahson Jackson ve'y eloquent?" Mrs. Whitewash (ecstatically)—"Am he eloquent? Oh, my—I wish yo' could hab heard his sermon las' Sunday 'bout Balaam an' de ass—yo could almost magine yo heard de ass a-talkin'."

"My text, dearly-beloved brethren," said a minister in a Western town enjoying a land boom, "will be found in the gospel according to Matthew, lot six, block ten." And then the congregation settled back to sleep, and dreamed that a railroad ran through the place, and Eastern buyers of real estate were as plentiful as chinch bugs on a Kansas farm.

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, "God and His Mother; or, The Fairy Tale of the Birth of Christ."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, Stanley Jones, "Christianity and Other Religions." December 18, at 8.30, Concert and Dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "A Tour Through the British Museum"; 7.30, A. B. Moss, "The Moral Government of the Universe."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7.30, Mr. Huckleby, "Tolstoi."

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Dartmouth Park Lodge, N.W.): 7, B. K. Gray, "The Beautiful and Good."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion, "Theo-Agnosticism versus Theology"; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Poem of Job."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Bernard Bosanquet, LL.D., "The Return to Nature."

WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, Dr. Drysdale, "Should the Population Question be made a State Question?"

EAST LONDON BRANCH (King's Hall, 83 and 85 Commercial-road, E.): 7, W. Heatford, "Can we Believe the Bible?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 3.30, A lecture.

COUNTY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 7, S. Armfield, "The Birth of Jesus Christ."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, R. Forder, "Christmas: its Meanings and Associations."

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class: J. Culligan, "The Evolution of the Solar System"; 6.30, A. G. Nostick, F.G.S., "To Switzerland on a Bicycle, *via* the Rhine Valley and Black Forest"—with lantern illustrations.

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): C. Cohen—11, "The Origin of Man"; 6.30, "The Case for Secularism."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, The Secretary, "The Book of Job."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusho'me-road, All Saints): 6.30, Ernest Evans, "The Foundations of Evolution"—lantern views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, "Christianity and the Growth of Civilization." December 29, Members' and Friends' Annual Soiree and Ball. Tea at 5.30.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, Adjourned discussion, "School Boards and Education."

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—December 19, Leicester.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—December 19, Camberwell Secular Hall.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—January 8 to 12, Mission to Stanley. 23 and 30, Manchester.

POSITIVISM.

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