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PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE GOOD OLD CROSS.

CAPTAIN JOHN HAWKINS, the first Englishman who engaged in the slave-trade, sailed in 1562 for Sierra Leone, where he captured three hundred negroes. These he sold handsomely at Hispaniola. In the following year he set sail with five vessels to play the part of a robber and murderer on a grander scale. Finding the natives at Cape Verd to be "of a nature very gentle and loving," he thought to kidnap a lot of them easily, but he was disappointed. Proceeding south to Rio Grande, he went every day on shore, burning and spoiling the villages, and carrying off many of the natives. These he sold in the Spanish American settlements, forcing the colonists to purchase them at his own price.

This slave-dealer was a very pious gentleman. He drew up a set of rules for his men, two of which were "Serve God daily," and "Love one another."

An incident like this shows the sort of connection that usually exists between religion and morality. When it comes to stealing, or any other profitable crime, particularly at the expense of the heathen, your Christian religionist knows how to combine piety with business, and the most beautiful sentiments with the most damnable practices.

The Christian nations are the greatest thieves, liars, and hypocrites on this planet—and John Bull is well to the front in the competition. All over the world they are stealing territory, partly for self-interest and partly for aggrandizement. It is not their plan to go with a straight, bold, blackguard face to the natives, and say: "We want your land, so let us have it, or we'll blow your brains out." That would be too rude, too un-Christian, and positively wicked. So they go to work in another way. They pick a quarrel with the natives about something or other—*anything* will do; then they draw up a document a mile long, proving the natives to be entirely wrong, perhaps perverse, treacherous, filthy, and in every way abominable; and then they appropriate the land they want, and always meant to have, in the name of Christianity and civilization. By and by the natives disappear, and the Christians who fill their places talk about the wicked savages who dwelt there before them, and how Providence swept them away to make room for better people.

Africa is nearly parcelled out already. The leading Christian powers have their "spheres of influence" duly recognised. That is to say, the thieves have agreed not to fight each other if it can be helped, but to let the natives be common spoil for the lot. And now the Christian powers are turning their attention to Asia. Away in the far East lies the huge land of China, with its four hundred million inhabitants—a quarter of the whole human race. But all its resources and all its population do not make China a great power. Her government is too feeble, her disdain of science too lofty, and her energy too unorganized. All this was demonstrated in her late war with Japan. What a fine chance, then, to steal some of her ports and strategic peninsulas! Really it is too good an opportunity to be missed, and the Christian powers see it in that light. China, indeed, lies helpless like a moribund whale, and the Christian powers like sharks are eating into her vitals.

One of these sharks is Germany—and the fact is really tragi-comical. Look at Germany on the map. She is hemmed in on every side: a land power, if ever there was one. And indeed she has an immense, well-trained army,

which is required to keep down discontent at home as well as to protect the frontier. But the histrionic young Emperor has a passion for the sea, and an ambition to make Germany a naval power. She is already crushed by a colossal militarism, and a big naval burden is to be placed on top of that. But the Emperor's navy will never be much more than a toy navy. It could only ride the sea on sufferance. The moment England, for instance, meant real business in the way of hostility, she could send the German navy to the bottom as a sort of exercise before breakfast. However, it has not come to that yet, and we hope it never will. Prince Henry's magnificent squadron of two ships will not be molested by an English admiral on its way to the Chinese port which Emperor William has just "acquired."

The way that port was acquired is very simple. German missionaries, like ours, are advance agents for their own country. Two of them went to that part of China and got killed, for which they ought to be grateful, as martyrs are sure of heaven. But the Emperor made their death a pretext for plunder. China agreed, because she could not help herself, to pay a vast indemnity for these interlopers, to let the Germans have a cathedral built, to give Germany the practical possession of a fine port and a useful strip of land behind it. Of course the "integrity" of China is fully respected. That is one of the tricks of Christian diplomacy. The thief makes his victim say: "You did not steal it, I gave it to you; or rather, it is mine still, and I let you use it."

Well, the Emperor sends out his brother Henry to see to that Chinese port, and before he goes the Emperor makes a speech. It is a way he has. He can't help it. Nature meant him for a showman, and fate (in the form of the hereditary principle) has made him a sovereign. And in the course of this speech the Emperor says he will protect the good German missionaries who do not shrink from "risking their lives in order to carry our religion to foreign lands." First you force your missionaries on the foreigners, then you avenge them if they are injured, and you take care to make the retribution coincide with your own interest. And this is the international ethics of Christianity!

Cardinal Kopp and Archbishop Stablewski both telegraphed to the Emperor that his naval expedition to China was consecrated because it was for "the protection of the Cross." William replied that his brother was indeed going "in the service of the Fatherland and for the protection of the Cross"—a most judicious blend of bigotry and self-interest, though it may be doubted, after all, whether Christianity is the religion of Germany, since Prince Henry, in responding to the Emperor's rhodomontade, said that his one desire was "to proclaim and preach abroad [if necessary with ironclads] the gospel of your Majesty's consecrated person."

Oh, that good old Cross! In theory it means everything that is lovely and of good repute; in practice it means everything that is ugly and infamous. To the heathen all over the world the Cross stands for the greed, impudence, and cruelty of alien oppressors—of men who come with sublime sentiments on their lips, and death and destruction in their hands. Of course there is nothing new in Emperor William's policy. The Cross has always been a pirate's symbol. China found that before, and she is finding it again—just at Christmas time, the very season for studying the beauty of Christianity.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

CHRISTMAS celebrates no irrepeatable thaumaturgy of a human child born of a virgin mother, but the regular annual miracle of the sun new born from winter's darkness, the lengthening of days and the renewal of nature in a glad new year. Picture, amid your splendid festivities, our ancestors huddled around a carefully replenished or extinguished fire, in the long gloomy nights of winter, with no other light, or none save a rush stuck into fat, with vegetation dead around, and the light and warmth of life seemingly overcome. With what joy would be hailed the evergreens as proof of the vitality of nature; and how the advent of the longer day would be acclaimed, even as the birth of a new child. This is the real meaning of Christmas, which perpetuates the customs of our ancestors centuries before Christianity was heard of. All nations in cold climates have a great festival at the New Year, whose nativity they celebrate with dance and song, both expressed by the old word, "Carol."

Carol seems derived from the old French *carole*, a ring-dance or fête song. The same word appears in the Italian *carolare*, to sing joyously. Baretta explains it as a dance accompanied by singing. In *Chaucer's Dreame* he says:—

I saw her daunce so comely,
Carol and sing so sweetly.

Gower speaks of "The love daunce and the carole." Dr. E. B. Tylor, our great anthropologist, uses the word in its old sense, when he speaks of "a party of girls who were turned into stone for dancing carols on a Sunday." Originally it had no other religious meaning than that of nature worship. As mentioned in *Footsteps of the Past*, the custom of gathering and decorating houses with evergreens, and especially with the holly and mistletoe, whose berries were held to preserve the blood and seed of life from year to year, prevailed long anterior to Christianity. Some early carols still extant were sung to the vegetation itself. Shakespeare preserves an old refrain in "Heighho! the Holly." In Christian Carols the evergreen is sometimes related to the new-born Lord of glory. Thus, in a holly carol, we read:—

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
To do poor sinners good.
The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
On Christmas day in the morn.

The following was written near the reign of Henry II. :—

I am here, Sir Christmas,
Welcome my lord Sir Christmas,
Welcome to all, both more and less,
Come near Nowel!

God be with you, Sir, tidings I bring,
A maid hath borne a child full young
The which causeth me to sing,
Nowel!

Christ is now born of a pure maid,
In an ox-stall he is laid,
Wherefore sing we all at abraid,
Nowel!

Drink you all right heartily,
Make good cheer and be right merry,
And sing with us now joyfully,
Nowel!

One can see with half an eye that "Christ" is just as historical as "Sir Christmas" or the modern "Santa Claus." Here is another Anglo-Norman one, probably sung by wandering troubadours:—

Lordings, listen to our lay;
We have come from far away,
To seek Yule.
In this castle, we are told,
He his yearly feast doth hold,
This very day.
Joy descend from God above,
On all who our Yule-tide love.

To English ale and Gascon wine,
And French, doth Yule-tide much incline,
And Anjou's too;

He makes his neighbor freely drink,
So that in sleep his head doth sink,
Often by day.
Joy descend, etc.

Lords, by Yule-tide and the host
Of this mansion, hear my toast—
Drink it well—

Each must drain his cup of wine,
And I the first will toss of mine;
Thus I advise.

Here then I bid you all *Wassail*,
Cursed be he who will not cry *Drinkhail!**

Nowel is frequently used in the sense of news. Thus, in "Ane compendious booke of Godly and Spirituall Songs," we read:—

I came from hevin to tell,
The best nowellis that ever befell.

"A good old English Carol," given in *Poor Robin's Almanack*, 1695, has no semblance of religion save to those whose god is their belly. It begins:—

Now thrice welcome Christmas, which brings us good cheer,
Minced pies and plum porridge, good ale and strong beer;
With pig, goose, and capon, the best that may be,
So well doth the weather and our stomachs agree.

It continues in the same strain. Another and far older refrain was:—

Bring us in good ale, and bring us in good ale;
For our blyssed Lady sake, bring us in good ale.

Carols had little natural affinity to "the religion of sorrow." Tusser recommended:—

Beef, mutton, and pork, shred pies of the best,
Pig, veal, goose, and capon, and turkey well-dressed;
Cheese, apples, and nuts, jolly carols to hear,
As then in the country is counted good cheer.

One precious leaf of carols from the press of Wynkin de Worde, in 1521, contains two carols—"a Carol of Huntynge," and a carol bringing in "ye bore's head," which is still sung in Queen's College, Oxford, every Christmas. This is given in *Footsteps of the Past*. Though carols are now considered peculiarly Christian, like all else pertaining to the ancient festival, they take us back to ideas antecedent to Christianity. There is an appropriateness in considering the season of evergreen and the New Year as especially belonging to the young. And young or old, it is good for all to occasionally unbend and carol, and frolic with the children. J. M. WHEELER.

THOUGHTS ON CHRISTMAS.

PERSONALLY, I wish the readers of this journal, one and all, "a merry Christmas." At this season of the year we strive to divorce ourselves from the cares and anxieties of our ordinary lives, and to realize thoroughly the associations of a happy family. The December saturnalia is a period—all too brief—when worries and troubles should give place to peace and rest. We certainly admire the wisdom of the Pagans in inaugurating this annual festival season, when the brotherhood of the human race is fully enjoyed. The lives of many of us are not too much illuminated with the sunshine of existence. The presence, therefore, of Old Father Christmas in our midst is ever welcome. His magic wand tends to awaken the social virtues of our nature, and to stimulate that sympathy and benevolence which do so much to "cast away dull care." Our gratification should not be merely selfish; but we should think of the comfort and enjoyment of others, and, so far as lies in our power, do what we can to make their relaxation as genuine and bright as possible. Let us by all means be merry; but let our conduct be such that when sitting by the Yule fire, or around the festive board, we shall be cheered by the consciousness that we have not been unmindful of those less fortunate than ourselves.

Our first thoughts at this happy season are that misery and poverty are still abroad to a terrible extent, and that we are not indebted to Christianity for its jovial associations. To us Christ, the Church, and the priests in no way add to the value of this time-honored observ-

ance. It is purely secular in its nature, and human in its influence:—

The bells ring out rejoicing. Loud and clear
The tones fall gratefully upon my ear,
Melodious voices mingling among—
The "waits" are carolling the Christmas song.

"A Merry Christmas!" passes glibly round,
And joy awaketh at the welcome sound.
But Misery, where is he on Christmas day—
The merry music drives not him away?
For him it brings no balm, exerts no charms,
He hugs his victims tighter in his arms;
And, while they feel the fierce pangs of want,
The cheerful greeting seems but mocking cant.

"A Merry Christmas!" laughter rings out aloud,
And prattling children round the fire crowd,
And games go round, and fairy tales are told,
And childish sports engage both young and old.
Mirth rules supreme in many an English home;
But how fare England's poor who houseless roam?
How fare those children, hungry and ill-clad,
Out in the bitter cold? Do they feel glad?

"A Merry Christmas!" wherefore merry say?
The snow is deep, the frost bites keen to-day.
And thousands have not where to lay their head;
Thousands are famishing for want of bread.
These suffering wretches for compassion crave;
Let Christ save them, if he has power to save.

These Christmas revels I do not condemn;
I wish that millions more took part in them,
And that each Englishman had his share
In the solid blessing of Christmas fare.

But that "our Savior" on this day was born—
That idle tale I laugh to utter scorn.
If Christ has paid the price for man's salvation,
Whence all this evil, poverty, starvation?
In worlds to come we cannot hope for bliss
From one who winks at misery in this.

Leave priests of Christ, prayer, penitence, to rave;
Let wise men teach mankind themselves to save;
And, when each breast with manly fervor swells,
Chant higher, singers; louder chime, ye bells.

It may not be unprofitable to us, as Secularists, to reflect upon some of the erroneous notions which professed Christians have formed in reference to Christmas and its associations. Apart from the fact that there is no evidence that Christ was born on December 25, but much to the contrary, the Church goes through the farce annually of celebrating this date as the natal day of the "Prince of Peace," who is said to have brought "on earth peace, goodwill towards men." What bitter sarcasm it is for this declaration to be proclaimed from the various pulpits when Europe presents one huge spectacle of military and naval preparation for war, and when the followers of this "Prince of Peace" are carrying fire and sword among those whose only offence is that they desire to have as little as possible to do with their Christian mis-rulers. Lecky truly writes: "When all qualifications have been fully admitted, the broad fact will remain that, with the exception of Mohammedanism, no other religion has done so much to produce war as was done by the religious teachers of Christendom during several centuries. The military fanaticism they evoked by the indulgence of the popes, by the ceaseless exhortations of the pulpit, by the religious importance that was attached to the relics at Jerusalem, and by the extreme antipathy they fostered towards all who differed from their theology, has scarcely ever been equalled in its intensity, and it has caused the effusion of oceans of blood, and has been productive of incalculable misery to the world." The warlike fever now raging in "Christian" nations is a sad and humiliating comment upon the mission of the "Prince of Peace."

That mission, however, has been a complete failure in other respects. The Church of the Cross is rapidly losing its hold upon the masses, who have become awakened to its false and useless pretensions. This fact is sorrowfully admitted by the warmest supporters of the Church. In an article on "Our Home Heathen," the *Rock* of Dec. 10 says: "When we consider how small and decreasing is the proportion of those in this land who attend a place of worship even once of a Sunday; when we further recognise how true was the Master's striking warning that wheat and tares would grow mingled in the professing Church, so that it is not at all uncharitable to assume that by no

means all those who attend church or chapel are really converted, it sometimes fills us with indignation, not un-mixed with terror, to contemplate the practical indifference with which even ministers of Christ regard this awful state of things. It is impossible that true Christians can realize what all this means. In this England of ours, at the end of this century, so marked by advance in all directions, there are millions upon millions as utterly un-saved as the wildest savage roaming the forests of Africa. When the joy-bells shall ring out their glad Christmas peals, they will be answered by shouts of unhallowed mirth, and sounds of God-dishonoring revelry, for millions of our countrymen are living without God in the world." The Rev. Moncur Sime, the minister of Holloway Congregational Church, London, is equally as emphatic upon the subject. In a sermon he has just published he states: "It can hardly be questioned that the Church, taking it all-in-all, is losing much of its wonted power, not only over the more intellectual of the people, but over the masses as well. The Church is no longer a terror to the thoughtless, nor is it a centre of real worship to those who are sincerely religious. A formal attachment to some church, for the sake of being counted respectable, or for some equally unworthy reason, is maintained by a good many people; but multitudes of all classes—the educated, the intelligent artisans, those sunk in misery and all evil—stand without the Church, and are wholly uninfluenced by it. . . . We still see an imperfect and restless humanity, selfish, fiercely struggling for the rewards of life, crowding the weakest to the wall. Sorrow and sin are thick around us. People have left the Churches because professing Christians and regular church-goers have failed to do the work for which the Church of Christ exists. What are the Churches really doing in the solution of the great questions of the day? How far are the members of the Church, as such, in touch with the highest expectations of the times? True, in a feeble sort of way, the Churches profess to try to make the world better; but what abiding success has there been? How much is the Church, as a Church, doing for the oppressed and the fallen? What is it doing to improve the tone of society, to check the madness of fashion, and to put down the worship of the great god—'Money'?"

If Christ were born as alleged, and lived as he is said to have done, the misery, starvation, and injustice by which we are surrounded are standing rebukes to the claims urged on his behalf. The condition of our poor, their physical and mental suffering, and the hardships imposed upon them, supply topics for serious thoughts at this festive season. We have a royal family revelling in wealth obtained from the people; we have an aristocracy living in luxury, which is not the production of their own labor; we have bishops and archbishops preaching "Blessed be ye poor," and receiving an annual income of from £5,000 to £15,000; and in the midst of all this wealth, extravagance, and injustice, we have thousands of those who are compelled to toil night and day to pay for this misappropriation of the nation's money; starving, broken down in health and spirits through the want of the common necessities of life. These unfortunate victims of a world which is said to be governed by the influence of the Cross, wake every morning tortured with anxiety as to how they are to obtain food and fire through the day, and when night arrives they know not where to lay their heads. Let those who have amassed wealth, and who "toil not," ponder over the following facts, which are taken from the *New Age* of December 9, and then try to remember and to do their duty to the poor: "It must be that English men and women do not know; they would never be so cruel as they must be if they did know of the human beings near them, and allowed them to live on as they do. A new inquiry has just been made by the Women's Industrial Council into the condition of about four hundred London women who earn money by working at home. A writer in a contemporary summarizes the inquiry thus: 'Of these four hundred women, taken as they came, without special selection, about nine-tenths were found to belong to sixteen different regular small trades—viz., brushes, umbrellas, matchboxes, beads, sacks, tailoring, shirt-making, fur-pulling, etc. Of these the umbrella-makers earn the most—from 2s. 6d. or 3s. a day to 5s. a week, while deductions run to 9d. a week. At the lowest end of the scale come the fur-pullers—a deplorable tribe. No woman takes to this who is fit for anything else, and

those who are driven to it by necessity are anxious to conceal the fact from the prying eyes of the world. These women live in the utmost poverty and filth, in the back kitchens and attics of tenement dwellings in noisome courts and alleys. They work, eat, and sleep in an atmosphere thick with impalpable hairs and tainted with the sickly smell of the skins. They earn about 1s. 1d. a day, and 4d. a week must be deducted for knives, etc. There is little difference in their condition or circumstances; all have sunk to the lowest depth of squalor and misery. They suffer from chronic asthma, and of course the rate of infant mortality is high." A sad object-lesson this in "Christian England" two thousand years after the alleged erection of the Cross!

One would suppose that, at this "merry Christmas" time, to shed a ray of the sunshine of happiness into the abodes of such gloom and misery as are here depicted would be deemed a laudable act. But it is evident the Rev. Dr. John Hall, of New York, thinks otherwise. This "miserable sinner" would keep others as miserable as himself. For, in proposing to have Christmas Day free from the idea of Santa Claus, he says: "It is a day sacred to the Lord, and there is no reason why any secular idea should be mingled with it. Children will gladly absorb the religious lessons of the day if their minds are not distracted by this notion of Santa Claus bringing gifts, which could as well be given at some other time, if it be really necessary that they should be given at all." We entirely agree with the editor of the *Christian World*, who, in his issue of December 16, writes in reference to the above paragraph thus: "We doubt whether Santa Claus will be frightened away by this deliverance. Christmas was a festival before Christianity came in, and the mirth-making—shall we say the Pagan element of it?—got into the race so deep and so early that it will take a great deal more than the fulminations of the stalwart New York Presbyterian to dislodge it."

CHARLES WATTS.

THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

XVI.—THE STORY OF THE ARREST OF CHRIST.

THERE is, as has been shown, presumptive evidence that the Gospel accounts of the ministry, arrest, and trial of Christ are, as matters of history, in all probability fictitious. But when we come to examine and compare these accounts, we find in them so many contradictions, discrepancies, and manifest absurdities that this conclusion soon becomes the only rational one possible. In order that this fact may be clearly recognised, I will now briefly refer to some of the circumstances of the character named.

(1) We are told in the three Synoptical Gospels that on the evening of "the first day of unleavened bread" Jesus sat down with his apostles to "eat the passover" (Matt. xxvi. 17-20; Mark xiv. 12, 17; Luke xxii. 7, 15). Yet, though this is stated as plainly as words can express, the author of the Fourth Gospel says that this meal was eaten "before the feast of the passover" (xiii. 1, 2, 29), and, presumably, the day preceding the commencement of that festival (xviii. 28; xix. 31). We have thus at the outset two statements completely at variance both as to the night on which Christ is said to have been arrested, and also the day on which he is stated to have been crucified. The Fourth evangelist further represents Jesus, on the same evening, as washing the disciples' feet, and as uttering a long, rambling discourse, extending over five chapters (xiii.-xvii.), neither of which circumstances appears to have been known to the other evangelists.

(2) The last supper over, Jesus, it is said, led the disciples into "an enclosed piece of ground," or garden called Gethsemane, where he "began to be sorrowful and sore troubled." Though he is stated to have come into this world for the express purpose of being put to death to save a few persons whom "the Father" permitted to believe on him, he is represented as praying three times to this Father to "let this cup pass from him," and to save him from the suffering of the cross. Bible commentators explain this extraordinary display of cowardice by asserting that Christ was then bearing the burden of the sins and sorrows of the whole human race—a statement too silly for serious consideration. So great was Christ's agony at the prospect of death that, according to Luke, "his sweat

became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (xxii. 44). In considering the latter statement, it has to be borne in mind that the night was dark (John xviii. 3), and Jesus was removed about a stone's throw from the disciples (Luke xxii. 41), and also that Luke, the only evangelist that mentions the circumstance, lived in post-apostolic times. This voracious evangelist adds, further, that "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." Matthew, Mark, and John, two of whom are said to have been present, know nothing of this angel. We may therefore put down the incident as one of Luke's little fabrications.

In the Fourth Gospel there is no agony in the garden, and Christ does not pray to have "this cup" taken from him. On the contrary, his question to Peter—"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (xviii. 11)—implies that it never even entered his head to make such a prayer.

(3) Christ's prayers over, the traitor Judas entered leading "a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders of the people." This fact we learn from Matthew and Mark. Luke, however, says that the chief priests and elders came *in person*, and that Jesus spoke to them and reproached them (xxii. 52). Upon one point only do the Synoptists agree—viz., that the people who came to apprehend Christ were Jews.

But even this small agreement is marred by the author of the Fourth Gospel, who represents Judas as accompanied not only by the emissaries of the Sanhedrim, but by a band of Roman soldiers (cohort) commanded by a Chiliarch (xviii. 3, 12). It would thus seem that Pilate, who neglected to arrest Jesus openly when, some days before, that personage rode into Jerusalem at the head of a shouting multitude, and set the whole city in an uproar—when, in fact, it was his duty as procurator to have done so—now entered into a league with the chief priests to apprehend Christ secretly—a fact unknown to the three Synoptical writers.

(4) According to the First and Second Gospels, the traitor Judas, upon entering the garden with his band, "came to Jesus, and said, Hail Rabbi, and kissed him much" (Matt. xxvi. 49, etc.); but, if we believe Luke, this treacherous disciple only "drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" From this it would appear that the kiss was not given. According to the Fourth Gospel, however, Judas neither kissed Christ, nor attempted to do so; for, as soon as the band appeared, Jesus "went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazarite. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also which betrayed him was standing with them" (xviii. 4-6). This writer also says that at the words, "I am he," the officers "went backward and fell to the ground"—a display of supernatural power also unknown to the Synoptists.

The story of the betrayal by Judas is, of course, fictitious. Paul knew nothing of such an event, nor did the author of the Gospel of Peter. The latter says: "But we, the twelve Apostles of the Lord, wept and lamented," etc. If the priests and elders desired to take Jesus, who is said to have taught daily in the temple, they had but to order some of their servants to follow him. Judas was probably introduced in order to fulfil alleged prophecies, which can be shown to have been manufactured like the others we have noticed.

(5) The first three evangelists tell us that "one of them that stood by drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear" (Mark xiv. 47, etc.). None of these three writers appears to have known who struck the blow. The author of the Fourth Gospel, however, fills in the names. It was Simon Peter who "cut off" the ear, and "the servant's name was Malchus." It was allowable to invent facts when writing Gospel history, especially at a time when no one was alive to expose the fraud. This is proved by the number of apocryphal Gospels that were written. Such was the opinion of the Fourth evangelist, and such was also the opinion of Luke, for the latter adds a short sentence which damns the whole story. He says that Jesus "touched his ear and healed him" (xxii. 51). The ear had been "struck off" and "cut off," and, of course, lay among the cabbages; consequently, when Jesus touched the stump on the man's head, we are to suppose that a new ear sprouted out like a mushroom. Had Jesus picked up the ear, and, following his usual

custom, spat on it, and then stuck it on the stump, the story might, perhaps, not be so outrageously incredible; but for a new ear to grow out of a man's head—such a marvellous fact must be left to the unwavering faith of the Christian Evidence man, who believes every statement found between the two covers of the New Testament.

(6) According to Matthew's account, Jesus, when arrested, declared to his captors that he had but to pray to his "Father" to receive the assistance of "twelve legions of angels"; but, he said, had he taken this means of deliverance, "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled that *thus it must be?*" (xxvi. 53). This question clearly implies that in the Jewish "scriptures" it was predicted that the Messiah, when he came, should be put to death by the Jews. This is another of Matthew's pious misrepresentations; there is no such prediction in any part of the Old Testament. Further, the statement respecting "twelve legions of angels" must be set down as braggadocio; for, judging by the effect of Christ's prayer, three times repeated, to let the cup pass from him, the "Father" would not have sent him a single angel for that or for any other purpose.

(7) According to the three Synoptical Gospels, the disciples, as soon as they saw their Master arrested, "all forsook him and fled" (Matthew xxvi. 56, etc.). According to the Fourth Gospel, however, they stood their ground, and Jesus said to his captors: "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way" (xviii. 8); and the officers, apparently, yielded to this request, and let them go. Being in "an enclosed piece of ground," they could not well have escaped otherwise.

(8) In the Fourth Gospel it is stated that Christ's captors "led him to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was high priest that year" (xviii. 13). The writer then says that Simon Peter entered "into the court of the high priest" during the examination of Jesus. Here Peter, standing by the fire, denied his Master, and here the cock crew. Here, also, Annas, who is called "the high priest," interrogated Jesus; and, the examination over, "Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas, the high priest"; but Caiaphas, having nothing to say to him, sent him on to Pilate (xviii. 24, 28). The writer evidently thought that Annas and Caiaphas were both high priests at the same time, as did also Luke (iii. 2). As a matter of history, Annas was high priest A.D. 7-15, and Caiaphas A.D. 25-36. Between the two the office was filled by Ismael, Eleazar, and Simon.

In the three Synoptical Gospels Jesus is not taken to the house of Annas at all. According to Matthew and Mark, the emissaries of the Sanhedrim "led him away to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders were gathered together," and the examination was held there and then. It was in the house of Caiaphas that Jesus was questioned by the high priest; there it was that Simon Peter warmed himself before the fire, and denied his Lord and Master; there, also, the cock crew, proclaiming the break of day. Then, "when morning was come," the chief priests and elders "led him away and delivered him up to Pilate the governor" (Matthew xxvii. 1, 2).

We have thus two utterly conflicting accounts of the examination of Jesus by the high priest, one being represented as held in the house of Annas, and the other in that of Caiaphas—Peter warming himself and denying his Master, and hearing the cock crew, being the central figure in each. One of these accounts must, of course, be rejected. But when we turn to the Third Gospel we find a fresh contradiction. According to Matthew, Mark, and John, the examination before the Sanhedrim was held at night, and Peter denied his Lord while this was going on. But in Luke's version the priests and elders assembled "as soon as it was day" (xxii. 66), and Christ, who had been in custody all night, was then brought before them and interrogated. When the examination was concluded, "the whole company of them rose up, and brought him before Pilate." In this account Peter had to deny his Master before the examination commenced, so as to get it over before the cock crew at dawn.

(9) The contradictions do not, however, end here. In the three Synoptical Gospels Peter is the only one of the disciples who had followed Jesus into the high priest's house; in the Fourth Gospel, Peter is accompanied by "another disciple," who is stated to have been "known unto the high priest," whose influence with the door-

keeper caused Peter to be admitted (xviii. 15). The Synoptists, beyond a doubt, knew nothing of this other disciple, nor is there a single sentence in any of their Gospels which even hints that one of Christ's disciples was a friend of the high priest. There are also several discrepancies in the four versions of Peter's three denials, which I pass over.

But that even one of the disciples was present at the alleged trial of Jesus is disproved by the Gospel of Peter, in which the last-named apostle says:—

"But I mourned with my companions, and with our hearts pierced through we hid ourselves, for we were being sought for by them as evil-doers."

It will thus be seen that there is scarcely a single statement in any one of the four inspired accounts of the arrest of Christ which is not contradicted in one or more of the other inspired accounts.

ABRACADABRA.

BIBLE BOSH; OR, JINGLES OF CHRISTIAN NONSENSE.

THERE once was a party called God,
Whose number and gender were odd;
4000 B.C.,

He, it, they, or she
Was made, but is now 'neath the sod.

There once was a woman who wouldn't
But covet the things that she shouldn't;
When the fruit she did *thieve*,
She'd have "laughed in her *sleeve*,"
But, being stark naked, she couldn't.

There was a young woman named Mary,
A wide-awake woman, and wary;
The mate of a pigeon,
A ghost, or pigwidgeon;
By left-handed marriage, a fairy.

Soon after her *liaison* loose,
She tied the legitimate noose
With Carpenter Joe,
A goose of a beau,
Who couldn't say "bo!" to a goose."

There once was a Jewish young nipper,
A cousin of Johnny-the-Dipper,
A brother of James,
A darling of dames,
And son of Jehovah-the-Ripper.

This advertised hybrid of Mary—
A cross 'twixt a flirt and a fairy—
At Cana, made sherry
For folk that were merry;
At Cana, they called it *Canary*.

He labored to consecrate fighting,
Yet spouted to deprecate smiting;
"On *earth*, bank no cash, said he,"
While banking his own at *sea*,
In some sort of haddock or whiting.

A "wandering" human hotel
Was lodging a legion, pell-mell,
Which Jesus aointed,
And sent, disappointed,
By sea, *via* porkers, to Hell.

He walked on the Sea, as on ground,
And frightened the billows around;
'Twas a pretty good sign
This corrupter of swine
Had never been "born to be drowned."

This goody young man of Judea
Dispensed a divine panacea,
For sin and for pimples;
'Twas pray'r, without simples,
Or aught from the pharmacopœia.

There once was the son of a ghost,
Whom godly men pinned to a post;
I don't say it's true,
But priests say that you
Have all to believe it—or roast!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

WHO WAS JEHOVAH ?

THE fundamental assumption running through all religions is that power not ourselves manifested around us is power like ourselves. This anthropomorphism is clearly seen in the Bible representation of Jehovah, who is a revengeful and barbarous Jew. Nonetheless, there seems to have been an early philosophy lying behind the conception, and this seems to me to have been expressed in the phrase, "I am that I am." The first philosophical abstraction of the Semitic conception of a power above, and ruling over the world, seems to have been that of vague Time, the enduring, that which was before we were born, and lasts when we are gone. This conception was embodied in the Kronos of the Syrians and Greeks, and the Saturn of the Latins, with whom affinities to Jehovah the Eternal have been pointed out. This Eternal was by no means Matthew Arnold's Eternal that makes for righteousness, but rather, like the Shiva of the Hindus, the enduring one that destroys all alike. "Our God," says Deut. iv. 24, "is a consuming fire," and fire was certainly one of his emblems. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, led the Jews in their wanderings as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, Nadab and Abihu, Korah and his followers, the fifties sent to apprehend Elijah, by fire, and took the latter prophet in a whirlwind with horses and chariots of fire. He appeared as fire in sacrifices, the fat being specially dedicated to Jehovah. Elijah says, "The God that answered by fire let him be God" (1 Kings xviii. 24). Isaiah, too, tells us that he will come with fire (lxvi. 15, 16), and Paul has the same idea when he says that Christ will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God (2 Thess. i. 8). No doubt fire and light were early objects of human regard, and both sun and moon worship were probably gathered up in the worship of Jehovah. Some have found in Yahu a variant of the Aryan sky-god Dyau, or Ziu.

There is a curious story in Sanchoniatho, who preserved the Syrian traditions, which brings Kronos into line with Jehovah, or perhaps with Abraham. Sanchoniatho, as preserved by Philo Byblius, says that, there being a pestilence, Kronos, whom the Phœnicians call Israel, offered up his only son Jeoud, clad in a royal robe, as a burnt-offering to heaven (Uranus). The story reminds us at once of the legend of Abraham and Isaac, and of the Christian myth of the offering of Christ. Whether the word Jehovah actually means "the Eternal," or "that which causes to be," I must leave to the philologists.

MAHERSHALALHASHBAZ.

CREMATION AND THE CLERGY.

DESPITE a few exceptions, there is no doubt that the weight of our spiritual pastors and masters is put in the balance against the sanitary method of disposing of the dead by incineration. With the Pope, who has authoritatively denounced the practice as non-Christian, they feel it to be heathenish and calculated to destroy the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh. Of course, in reality that dogma is so nonsensical that nothing can add to the superfluity of its absurdity. Only a miracle could get the body together again, whatever its manner of disposal; but the evident reduction of it to ashes would bring this home, as the laying of a corpse in a coffin never can. This is no real reason either for or against the practice. The one question which should determine it is the health of the living. But here the interests of the clericals step in. For burial in consecrated earth they have fees. A crematorium would take away this source of revenue, and they naturally dislike the idea as much as they do that of civil marriage. Priestcraft lives by having its fingers in every man's pie at births, marriages, and deaths, and those who wish to kill priestcraft should see that it does not get its hand in on any occasion.

A. J. NAIGEON.

A few hundred years ago the ancestors of the English-speaking nations were as savage as the savages; without temples to their gods, in perpetual and bloody war, untamed cannibals; add a few thousand years to the perspective, and man over the whole globe was in the same condition.—*D. G. Brinton.*

ACID DROPS.

COUNT LEO TOLSTOI contributes a long letter "On Marriage" to Mr. Fletcher's *New Age*. It is important as coming from a writer of Tolstoi's eminence, though it contains nothing new, being, in fact, a repetition of the principles and arguments set for by him a few years ago in the *Universal Magazine*. But, although not new in substance, it is new in presentation, and we shall deal with it in next week's *Freethinker*. Meanwhile we have simply to say that when Mr. Fletcher regrets that Count Tolstoi "fails to comprehend the Christian idea of marriage," he is only saying precisely what Count Tolstoi would say of *him*. And the worst of it is that Jesus Christ, on whom they both rely, is dead and incapable of deciding which of them understands him.

"Falling in love, and union with the object of one's love (however verse or prose may seek to prove the opposite), never facilitates, but always impedes, the attainment of an aim worthy of man," is the latest utterance of the Christian, Anarchist, Russian Court. Well, Tennyson, who lived a blameless life, perhaps knew as much on the matter as Tolstoi, for he says:—

Indeed, I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

Tolstoi can, and does, cite Jesus Christ in favor of the eunuch's view of life. But this is a subject upon which eunuch's views do not count. They simply leave the world to be peopled by those of a different belief.

Poor Price Hughes has been at it again. We mean that he has once more been displaying his constitutional inaccuracy. In denying the progress of Catholicism in the United Kingdom he pointed out that in 1841 there were 6,958,737 Catholics, while in 1891 there were only 5,047,307, showing a decrease of 1,911,430 in fifty years. This is true enough, but poor Price Hughes forgot the depopulation of Catholic Ireland to the extent of nearly three millions and a half. Allowing for this shrinkage, the Catholics *have* increased relatively. Further, the emigrants from Ireland took their Catholicism with them to America and the Colonies, and there are now a million Catholics in Australia and ten millions in the United States. Evidently the great Wesleyan oracle has studied the Bible too exclusively. We all know that arithmetic is not its strong point.

In Spurgeon's *Autobiography* the great preacher relates his childish wonder at an apple in a phial almost as big as the bottle. At length he saw a phial put on a tree round a very small apple. He makes the reflection, "Nature well known no prodigies remain." He did not venture to apply the thought to Bible miracles. On the contrary, he appreciated mere superstitious reverence of the fetish book, and tells of one of "the old men of the table-pew" who, when near death, was seen counting the leaves of a Bible, and who, being asked why he did that, replied: "I never could read a word of it, but I thought I would know how many leaves there were."

Spurgeon mentions that, in Cambridgeshire, in 1865, a murder was committed which grew out of the popular belief in witchcraft. But he does not notice the Bible sanction of "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus xxii. 18). Spurgeon had the old belief that he would have a happy day if he selected a good text in the morning—a remnant of the belief in Bibliomancy.

Spurgeon says: "In my first pastorate I had often to battle with Antinomians—that is, people who held that, because they believed themselves to be elect, they might live as they liked. I hope that heresy has to a great extent died out, but it was sadly prevalent in their early ministerial days." It is prevalent yet with people who believe that their salvation is sure, or who believe that they are the elect and have God in them. Does not Paul say, "We are delivered from the law," and "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

The great Baptist preacher ridiculed the ecclesiastical twang affected in the Establishment, which he described as "a sort of steeple in the throat grandeur," and illustrated it by the phrase, "He that hath yaws to yaw, let him yaw."

The Catholic Church is slowly climbing to supremacy. The Vatican confirms the report that the Duke of Norfolk has approached Lord Salisbury with the view of obtaining the admission of Cardinal Vaughan to the House of Lords. It may be pleaded that Vaughan has quite as much right

there as the bishops. The admission of the Cardinal will be hailed with delight by those who desire the renewal of a certain measure which was passed by the House of Commons on March 19, 1648.

It is not in the least likely that the claim of the Duke of Norfolk will receive any serious consideration from Lord Salisbury. It would make too good a precedent for the admission of other non-Anglicans. We might have Dr. Parker and Ananias Hughes aspiring to a peerage as representative divines.

Mr. F. C. Selous has become an honorary member of the Guildford Natural History Society, which is specially interesting itself in securing Wolmer Forest as a sanctuary for wild birds and animals. In notifying his acceptance, Mr. Selous claims never to have destroyed life wantonly. We were pleased to read this, for Mr. Selous is a Freethinker who has a great reputation as a hunter. But, to the eye of common sense, there is a vast difference between hunting lions in Africa and hunting tame deer in Windsor Park.

One of the gift-books of the season is *An Almanack of Twelve Sports*, heavy drawings by W. Nicolson, and verses by Rudyard Kipling. One of the latter must be quoted:—

SHOOTING.
Peace upon Earth! Goodwill to Men!
So greet we Christmas Day;
O Christian, load your gun; and then,
O Christian, out and slay!

We regret to note that the Glasgow Corporation have decided not to open the People's Palace on Glasgow Green on Sunday. Evidently a good deal of work has yet to be done in godly Glasgow. Seventeen University professors, as well as the Trades Council, petitioned in favor of the measure; but cant and bigotry proved stronger than the claims of intellect and labor. The *Glasgow Herald* says "the majority may rest assured that time is against them. The triumph of unreasoning panic, of ignorance, and of clerical trade unionism is but a temporary one."

The men of God all cite the commandment, "Remember the seventh day to keep it holy"; yet they dare not defend the legend on which the law was founded, and, instead of keeping the seventh day, when God is said to have rested, they keep the first, on which he began to work.

Father Brady, in a recent sermon, said: "It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and all other Christians outside of the pale of Mother Church, that the Bible, the only authority which they recognise in matters of religion, does not support them anywhere in the observance of the Christian day—namely, Sunday. For them to call Sunday the Sabbath, and speak of 'Sabbath-school,' is arrant nonsense. The Seventh-day Baptists are the only ones who properly employ the term Sabbath, because they also observe the seventh, and not the first day of the week, as the day of rest."

That is so. The only authority on which the change to the day of the sun was made is the authority on which Roman Catholics rest prayers for the dead, purgatory, and all the other dogmas which Protestants repudiate.

Among the good things uttered by Sir Frank Lockwood, whose death is being mourned by a large circle of friends and admirers, was his reference to the talk of dissolution towards the close of the last Liberal administration. It is so good that we give it *in extenso*:—"I was cast down when my honorable and learned friend, Mr. Haldane, like one of the weird sisters of Macbeth preaching on some blasted Scottish heath—(laughter)—announced that the day of dissolution was at hand. I don't know whence he owed that strange intelligence, but this speech, if it did not reassure me, I think it did not reassure the party. I remember in a North of England country town there was a prophet—not a racing prophet (there are plenty of them there)—but a real prophet—(laughter)—a sort of man who foretells the end of the world once a week. (Laughter.) Nobody believed him—you could not believe a man who was regularly wrong once a week—but a local coal merchant told me that the number of persons getting in coal by the sacks was phenomenal. It was not because they expected the world was coming to an end, but it would not be well to be left, when it did come, with a stock of coal on hand. (Laughter.) It might be used, possibly, against you. (Loud laughter.)"

The Rev. Dr. Minot Savage, the Broad Unitarian minister in the Church of the Messiah, Thirty-Fourth-street, New York, has been exposing the alleged Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, which, he says, are based, not on truth, but such disproved doctrines as that of the fall of man. He said: "Every one of these Creeds sprang out of a theory of the universe that nobody any longer holds. They are

Ptolemaic in their origin, not Copernican. They sprang out of a time when it was believed that this was a little tiny world, and God was outside of it, governing it by the arbitrary imposition of his law. Every one of those Creeds is fitted to that theory of things, and that theory of things has passed away absolutely and forever. Consider for just a moment. Why should we pay such extravagant deference to the opinions of men who lived in the dark ages of the old Church Fathers, of Athanasius, of Arius, of Justin Martyr, of Origen, of Tertullian?" Dr. Savage might have mentioned that the evidence for the Gospels depended on these same old Fathers.

Dr. Savage has also been arraigning the Old Testament, endorsing the opinion of Professor Goldwin Smith, that the old Jewish books are the millstone around the neck of Christianity. On this point he has been taken to task by Rabbi Maurice Harris, and we confess we think the Jew gets the best of it. The Rabbi says: "The New Testament is largely made up of quotations from the Old. These quotations are not incidental, but vital. They are the Messianic references on which the whole creed is built, and from which the life of Jesus is partly modelled. To cut the Old Testament from the New is to cut the heart from a human being and bid him go on living."

A writer on "The Mystery of Life" in the *Glasgow Weekly Citizen* remarks: "It is well known that seeds, which are kept in a dry place, are capable of retaining their germinative powers for an indefinite period. The popular idea of the state of the seed during this period of quiescence has been considerably influenced by an unscientific remark in the Gospel according to St. John: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' With the theological parallel which the writer sees fit to draw we have nothing to do here; but it is evident to every student of botany that he was not sufficiently inspired to overcome his ignorance of the real state of the case. Inert as the seed seems to be when it is stored in the granary, there are slow chemical changes going on within it, which are evidences of a low state of vitality. They are conservative changes, not the destructive changes which, under the circumstances, would follow death."

An old man in tatters, named John Winter, and his son, Kennett Kerr Winter, were charged at Highgate with sleeping in a field. The elder accused said that "he was guided absolutely at every step as a child would be guided by the hand of its parents, by the Father above from the other side." This is just what Jesus enjoined, but the magistrate said he thought the man was a lunatic, and ordered him to be remanded for medical examination.

A person writes from Nottingham to *Reynold's Newspaper*: "Religion in most cases is £ s. d. Having been an officer in the Salvation Army five years, my experience was that the most successful officer in the eyes of headquarters was he whose finances increased at each corps he commanded, and the one soonest kicked out was the worst beggar. I also went into training for the Church Army Labor Homes. Their system, if anything, was worse. Briefly it is this: Make those you are trying or professing to raise work like slaves; feed them on scraps or any refuse you can get. The captain is allowed from 2s. 6d. to 3s. weekly to keep each inmate. Where do the subscriptions go?"

Worldliness of some sort seems to have infected the Council of the Glasgow Young Men's Christian Association, who have decided, by forty votes to twenty, to attach a smoking room to the institution. No mention is made of the matter in their report, it being probably thought that the action of the Council would be resented by some subscribers.

The *Church Times* says: "Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, advertised songs and solos, popular preachers billed far and wide, women speakers, the thousand and one inducements held out to people that they may come and get some enjoyment in the name of religion, all seem to us to put a place of worship on a level with a dry-goods shop, which nobody will patronize without constant advertising. This is especially rich, coming from the organ of the Church party that relies on lights, flowers, music, gorgeous vestments, and tinsel generally."

H. L. Gordon's book on *Sir James Young Simpson and Chloroform* shows how the discovery of that anæsthetic was decried by the clergy, the Kirk elders, and the unco guid generally. The Tories of the profession, bless them, argued that pain at childbirth was "a desirable, salutary, and conservative manifestation of life force." The Holy Willies quoted from Genesis the primæval curse upon womanhood. The incident reminds the *Daily News* of that passage in *Old Mortality* wherein Headrigg remonstrates with Lady Bellenden for her introduction of a winnowing machine

"thus impiously thwarting the will of divine Providence by raising a wind for your leddyship's ain particular use by human art, instead of soliciting it by prayer, or waiting patiently for whatever dispensation of wind Providence was pleased to send upon the sheeling hill."

"Hang Theology Rogers," whose portrait has just been presented by Lord Rosebery to the London Court of Common Council, made a neat retort to Lord Granville at a dinner of the City Liberal Club. Her Majesty's minister said: "I will now call upon the Reverend Canon Rogers to say grace." "I beg to state that I am not yet a canon of the Church of England. For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful."

Squabbles in connection with the Congregational Church, Coytesville, New Jersey, resulted in the arrest of the pastor, the Rev. Solomon Brown, and two of the trustees.

The Rev. Father Dolje, former rector of the Roman Catholic Church at Abilene, Texas, was arrested at Thurber in that State, his present home, on a complaint sworn out before United States Commissioner Girand, charging him with writing and mailing obscene, lewd, and lascivious letters to the wife of Patrick H. Grady, of the first-mentioned town.

The Rev. W. T. Veale, a Presbyterian clergyman, committed suicide by shooting himself in his room at the Hollenbeck Hotel, Los Angeles, California.

The *Lyttelton Times*, of New Zealand, reports the case of a well-known Evangelist there, one Richard Henry Keast, who is charged with forgery by a person he intended to make his father-in-law.

The *Indian Journal of Education* reports some recondite answers from would-be B.A. natives. Thus the allusion to Noah in Moore's *Paradise and the Peri* was thus elucidated: "Noah was in his ark. He sent first rabbit, then dove, to see whether the God's anger has been appeased. The dove came without putting its leg in the country, for the flood was there. The allusion is to the branch of grapes brought by a hawk to Moses when the whole country was washed off by the sea."

Mr. S. R. Crockett is not a "stickit" minister, but a live one, as well as a Kailyard author, and in his latest work, *Sir Toudy Lion*, gives a boy's prayer when imprisoned by his fellows. It runs thus: "Our Father Witch-Charta-Nevin [this she considered a Christian name and surname, curious, but quite authoritative], help me to get out of this beastly hole. Help me to lick Nipper Donnan till he can't stand, and bust Sammy Carter for running away. For we are all miserable sinners. God bless father and Prissy, Arthur George (I wonder where the little beast went to—guess he sneaked—just wait!), Janet Sheepshanks, Mary Jane Housemaid, and everybody about the house and down at the stables, except Bella Murdoch, that is a clash-bag and a tell-tale-tit. And make me a good boy. For Jesus' sake. Aymen."

We have a sincere regard for Lucy A. Mallory, the editor of *The World's Advance Thought*, of Portland, Oregon. Her journal is the constant advocate of loving kindness to all creatures, and we have heard that she lives on biscuits and raisins, and prints her own paper to practise her principles. But why will she put her new wine into the old bottles? Why does she say, for instance, that one who is cruel "is the worst kind of an Atheist," thus countenancing the false idea that an Atheist is inhumane?

What Lucy really means, unless we mistake, is that a person who owns no God, yet seeks to increase the love and joy and diminish the hate and anguish of the world, is superior to the mere believer without care for other living beings. But, if this be her meaning, why does she not frankly say so?

Lucy says: "The true worship of God is the purification of life by infilling it with love." Now, will Lucy tell us why this is not as possible to the Atheist as to the Theist? We warn her that we shall take it as no compliment to be told that we may be god-worshippers without knowing it. Love to our fellow-beings we understand, but God is utterly beyond our cognisance.

Canon Bardsley, the vicar of Huddersfield, at the Bible Society's meeting at Lincoln, said that Christianity was the only religion founded on fact—such facts, we suppose, as birth from a virgin. There was no history of any kind, he remarked, in the sacred book of the Moslems, or in the sacred books of the world, except in the case of the Bible; and the reason for that was this—because facts and imposture did not agree. Canon Bardsley evidently is not aware of the fact that the Koran gives some of the same history of the Bible, and was itself, if not written entirely

by Mohammed, certainly in existence much nearer to his time than the Pentateuch was to the patriarchs, or the Gospels to Jesus Christ.

With the title "Palmistry Extraordinary: A Harmy Sketch," the *Sydney Bulletin* has an amusing sketch of a very fat Salvationist Sal, who is bawling, "'E'olds me in the 'ollow of 'is 'and."

The same paper quotes the lines from Lawson:—

It would take a lot of preaching,
A lot of thumping on the drum,
To prepare our sinful, wicked,
Erring souls for kingdōm come.

A London clergyman says that the doctrine of endless punishment is a "notion of the past" with English Congregationalists. We fail to see how any part of the authorized creed of a church can be dismissed as a "notion" in the absence of official action, even if every Congregationalist in the world signs something in which he does not believe. Official declaration and private opinion are not one and the same, though most of the more liberal members of the orthodox Churches would make it appear so, were it within their power.—*Boston Investigator*.

Sheikh Quilliam says in the *Crescent*: "To call a follower of the Prophet a 'Mohammedan' is to offer him the same kind of insult that it is to call a devout Catholic a 'Papist.' 'Is it Mohammed?' cried Abu-Bekr, the most faithful of the Prophet's followers, to the fierce Omar, who, in the agony of his grief, swore that he would strike off the head of the first man who dared to say that the Prophet was dead—the Prophet could not be dead; 'Is it Mohammed, or the God of Mohammed, that he taught you to worship?' The creed is not 'Mohammedanism,' but 'Islam'; a verbal noun, derived from a root which means submission to, and faith in, God. And the believer who so submits himself calls himself not a Mohammedan, but a Muslim; a word derived from the same root, and also connected with *Salim* (peace) and *Salym* (healthy)."

A gentleman who is now staying in San Francisco writes of the horrible conditions which prevail in the Chinese quarter, and concludes with the following words: "You may perhaps wonder why the Chinese are so crowded; but when I tell you that one of those miserable cells in the Gibson House rents for ten dollars per month, the whole house bringing in an income of eighteen hundred dollars a month, you will cease to wonder that they crowd together. The landlords are nearly all of the absentee class, and are largely responsible for the condition of the Chinese; and it may be of further interest to know that Mr. Gibson, who built the den which I have tried to describe, was the first missionary who came among them. Such was his work; and that miserable, filthy lodging-house stands a monument to his memory."

They are again discussing the question, "Why go to Church?" One of the best answers we remember was that of a hard-working old Scotswoman, who said: "I aē gæd to th' kirk to sleepit."

Over the door of one of the many abandoned churches in the West is this inscription: "This is the gate to heaven"; and just below is the sign: "Closed by order of the American Loan Company."

The Puritans saw that Christmas was Pagan, and abolished it. In the *Flying Eagle*, a gazette of December 24, 1652, we read: "The House spent much time this day about the business of the navy, for settling the affairs at sea, and, before they rose, were presented with a terrible remonstrance against Christmas Day, grounded upon divine Scriptures—2 Cor. v. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17; and in honor of the Lord's Day, grounded upon these Scriptures—John xx. 1; Rev. i. 10; Psalm cxviii. 24; Lev. xxiii. 7, 11; Mark xvi. 8; Psalm lxxxiv. 10, in which Christmas is called Anti-Christ's masse, and those mass-mongers and Papists who observe it, etc. In consequence of which Parliament spent time in consultation about the abolition of Christmas Day, passed orders to that effect, and resolved to sit on the following day, which was commonly called Christmas Day."

After for over a year issuing a garbled version of Maspero's *Struggle of the Nations*, the Literature Committee of the S.P.C.K. has been tardily forced to insert a slip that they "think it right to state that certain passages in this version do not altogether represent Professor Maspero's views on Biblical history as represented in the French edition."

There is not a rite or ceremony yet practised and revered among us that is not the lineal descendant of barbaric thought and usage.—*Edward Clodd*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 2, Birmingham; 9, Manchester; 16, Liverpool; 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall.

February 6, Athenæum Hall; 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.

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Papers ever welcome. We wish you the compliments of the season.

C. WRIGHT.—The terms of Stephen Girard's will, endowing Philadelphia College, declared: "I enjoin and require that no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of any sect whatever, shall ever hold or exercise any station whatever in the said college; nor shall any such person ever be admitted for any purpose." Yet the will has been overridden, and that largely through the instrumentality of Daniel Webster.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Per R. Forder: A. Hurren, 10s. (p) (four quarterly, 2s. 6d.); W. Heath, 10s. (p); A. J. Larkin, 5s. (p).

J. DOBSON.—Received. Official receipt in due course.

J. R. WHITEELL.—(1) Strauss's *Life of Jesus* is out of print again, but copies are still obtainable for something like 10s. Mr. Forder might be able to get you a copy. (2) Colonel Ingersoll promised Messrs. Foote and Watts that he would come to England, but no time has been fixed for the visit. We hear indirectly that he may come next year. (3) Mr. Foote's letters from America have not been published in a separate form, though of course they could be if there were a general desire for their preservation. In that case he would add his impressions of Niagara, which he has never yet found time to write.

BIRMINGHAM FREETHINKER.—Thanks for your amateur photographic group of the Branch members. It is excellent.

JOSEPH MAY.—There does not seem much difference between us. What more can we say?

EX-RITUALIST.—Shall have attention immediately after the Christmas holidays.

E. TRUELOVE (Reigate).—Many thanks for your sensible Christmas card. We have a pronounced taste for apples, probably inherited from Mother Eve, together with (as the Christians would say) a double dose of original sin.

A. B.—Shall appear.

V. PAGE.—Too late for this week, as we go to press early on account of the holidays.

F. CORBETT.—We know nothing of any Atheist called Jim Power converted to Wesleyanism. Let the Rev. Josiah Nix produce his convert.

BRADLAUGH CLUB.—Your notice arrived too late for insertion.

SOME lecture notices are omitted, as we go to press earlier this week. They should reach us on Monday or Tuesday morning at latest.

T. J. THURLOW.—We are not sure that the controversy is worth continuing on its present lines. However, the matter can stand over for a week.

J. GAIR.—Thanks for the report of Rev. W. Griffiths' lecture on the Foote-Lee debate. Will you kindly send us the concluding portion? We can then deal with it in its entirety.

BELZEBUB.—See paragraph.

E. GOTTHEIL.—Received. Thanks.

G. DIXON.—It is dangerous to meddle with Christians. Glad to hear you get the *Freethinker* all right.

OLD READER.—Sorry we cannot supply you with the information you desire.

W. McLACHLAN (Chicago).—Compliments of the season. [Pleased to hear from you.]

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Hawick News—Church Times—Wood Green Sentinel—Echo—L'Etoile Socialiste—People's Newspaper—Isle of Man Times—Two Worlds—New York Public Opinion—Mind—Sydney Bulletin—The Temple—Open Court—La Fronde—Boston Investigator—New York Times—Fria Tankar—Progressive Thinker—Glasgow Herald—Brooklyn Investigator—Little Freethinker—Torch of Reason.

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.

THERE was an excellent audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "God and His Mother; or, the Fairy Tale of the Birth of Christ." The subject, and its treatment, were calculated to excite laughter, and there was plenty of it. Mr. White occupied the chair.

The Athenæum Hall will be closed this evening (Dec. 26), owing to the holiday time. On the following Sunday evening it will be re-opened with a lecture by Mr. C. Cohen, who has been away from London for several months. He will be followed for two Sundays by Mr. Charles Watts. On Sunday evening, Jan. 23, the use of the Hall has been granted to the Finsbury Branch for a social gathering. The next Sunday is the anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death, and Mr. Foote will then deliver a memorial address.

Tickets (4/-) for the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner are now on sale, and can be obtained from Miss Vance at the N. S. S. Office, 376-7 Strand, W.C.; from Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.; or from any London Branch Secretary. Mr. Foote will preside as usual, and will be supported by a strong list of leading Freethinkers.

Some people will be pleased to hear that Voltaire's remains were *not* removed from the Pantheon, when Louis XVIII. returned from exile, and buried at night in the unconsecrated part of some unknown cemetery. Not that we care very much, for the dust and bones are not Voltaire. Still, it is just as well, perhaps, to have the matter settled, and this was done on Saturday, December 18, at the instigation of M. Ernest Hamel, the historian, and by the order of the Minister of Public Instruction. About 150 persons were present when Voltaire's coffin was opened. M. Berthelot took up the great man's skull and held it high for all to see. It was the exact shape of the head in Houdin's statue. Rousseau's skull was also found in another coffin. Pilgrims who are fond of real relics will henceforth know the actual remains of Voltaire and Rousseau do lie in those two coffins in the Pantheon.

Alphonse Daudet, the great French novelist, just deceased, was well known to the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, who records that, although he had an æsthetic admiration for the Catholic Church, he was himself a Freethinker. When the death-stroke fell upon him, swiftly and suddenly, his wife sent for a priest as well as a doctor; but that is a way the women have in France, as elsewhere. The same thing was done in the case of Littré, the great Positivist, and the Church had the impudence to pretend that he had recanted. Victor Hugo was more fortunate. His family respected his convictions, and kept the priests from his death-bed. Even the Archbishop of Paris, who proffered his ghostly services, was told politely, but firmly, that he was not wanted. In Daudet's case it is consoling to know that he was quite unconscious, and therefore ignorant of the priest's prayers and benedictions. He had lived a good and hard-working life, loving his wife, adoring his children, and making his own home a heaven on earth, besides charming the world with his beautiful writings. What more can be requisite? Surely such a man was ready for death whenever it came.

Mr. James Hales is a candidate for the Portsmouth School Board. His address to the electors is sensible and well-written. He is strongly in favor of absolute secular education. We hope he will be supported by every Freethinking voter in Portsmouth.

The December number of the *Freethought Magazine*, of Chicago, gives a portrait of Elmina Drake Slenker, of whom a pen-sketch is also given. In the leading article Selden S. Cooke discusses "Is Religion a Superstition?" We are pleased to note that Mr. George Jacob Holyoake will contribute an account of the work of Francis William Newman to the January number.

Open Court, of Chicago, gives in its December number a good portrait of the French mathematician, J. L. Lagrange. There is a readable article on "Animal Worship," and Dr. Cornill continues his rationalistic "History of the People of Israel." The editor's paper on "The Christian Conception of Death" has some good illustrations.

The *Torch of Reason* keeps the Freethought flag flying in Oregon. The last number to hand reprints Mr. Wheeler's article on "Christians and Heathens."

The *Independent Pulpit*, of Texas, from which we extract an article in this issue, is about to enter upon its fifteenth year. Mr. J. D. Shaw, the editor, has ably sustained the paper amid many trials. We regret to learn that he is unwell, and hope the American Liberals will rally to his support.

The *Sentinel*, of Wood Green, has a kindly word for the local Secularists, and mentions how Sunday's collection, badly needed to meet the hall expenses, was, with something added to it, assigned to meet the pressing need of a sick family. It adds: "A Christian church wouldn't have done more for the door-keeper; it might conceivably have done less."

Before 1897 is ended we beg once more to draw our readers' attention to the *Secular Almanack*, issued by the National Secular Society, and containing much interesting and useful matter. Secularists should support this publication. Every penny of profit on the sale will accrue to the N. S. S. exchequer, and be spent in Freethought propaganda. Those who have not already purchased a copy should order one from Mr. Forder at once.

OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CREED!

AN "INFIDEL" CHRISTMAS CAROL.

OH, what a creed is the creed of the Christians!
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Minds that would fathom it have to be misty 'uns,
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Heads must be duller than water of ditch is,
 Thicker by far than the thickest of pitch is;
 Sages it sickens, but boors it bewitches—
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!

Here, in a nutshell, I'll tell it you—listen;
 Oh, 'tis a beautiful creed!
 Where is there one that is equal to this 'un?
 Oh, 'tis a beautiful creed!
 Jahveh placed Adam and Eve in a garden;
 One of his apples he missed, worth a "farden";
 Swore that the stealers he would never pardon—
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!

Doomed Adam's race after death to be tortured;
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Hell and damnation for robbing an orchard;
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Gave them a chance of salvation—d'ye "cotton"?
 Chance of a cool place instead of a hot 'un,
 For he begat him an "Only Begotten"—
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!

Came down and courted a joiner's "intended";
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Basely deceived her and then re-ascended;
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Left the poor girl at the time of her danger,
 Failed to provide for the poor "little stranger,"
 Left him to lie in a publican's manger—
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!

Caused him to live all his life as a vagrant;
 Oh, what a fatherly deed!
 Where's there a case of desertion so flagrant?
 Oh, 'twas a dastardly deed!
 Then, that his realms might receive a few "trippers,"
 Murdered his meekest and mildest of "nippers,"
 Furnished a blood-bath for pre-ordained "dippers"—
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!

Jesus, when dead, took a journey to Hades;
 Oh, what a curious creed!
 Went to the place where Old Harry's Brigade is;
 Oh, what a curious creed!
 Came out alive and unsinged from the "crater,"
 Went up to heaven, without "elevator";
 There he now sits at the hand of his Pater—
 Oh, what a comical creed!

Swallow this creed, it will bring you salvation;
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 Daring to doubt leads to hell and damnation;
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!
 The Lord will return, when we've "snuffed it," to try
 us,
 To heaven to heave, or to Sheol to shy us,
 To give us a trumpet and harp, or to fry us—
 Oh, what a beautiful creed!

ESS JAY BEE.

THANKSGIVING SERMON.

BY COLONEL INGERSOLL.

Just delivered at Chicago to 5,000 people.

MANY ages ago our ancestors were savages; they were living in dens and caves. Their bodies, their low foreheads, were covered with hair. They were eating berries, roots, bark, nuts, and vermin. They were fond of raw fish and snakes. They had claws like wild beasts. They in some way discovered fire, and probably by accident; learned how to cause it by friction; found how to warm themselves, how to fight the frost and storm. In a little while they fashioned clubs and rude weapons of stone, with which they killed the larger animals, and now and then each other. Slowly, painfully, almost imperceptibly, they advanced. They crawled and stumbled and staggered towards the light. To them the world was unknown. On every hand was the mysterious, the sinister, the awful, the hurtful. The forests were filled with monsters, and the darkness was crowded with ghosts, devils, and fiendish gods.

These poor wretches were the slaves of fear, the sport of dreams.

Now and then one rose a little above his fellows, used the little reason that he had, found something new—some better way. Then the people killed him, and afterwards knelt at his grave. Then another thinker gave his thought; was murdered; another tomb became sacred, and another step had been taken in advance. And so through countless years of ignorance and cruelty, of thought and crime, of murder and worship, of heroism, suffering, and self-denial, the race has reached the heights where we now stand.

Looking back over the long and devious roads that lie between the barbarism of the past and the civilization of to-day, thinking of centuries that rolled like waves between these distant shores, we can form some idea of what our fathers suffered, of the mistakes they made; some idea of their ignorance, of their stupidity, of their cruelty, and some idea of their sense, of their goodness, their heroism.

It is a long, long road from the savage to the scientist, a long road from a den to a mansion, a good way from leaves to clothes, quite a distance from a flickering rush to the arc-light, from a hammer of stone to the modern mill; a long distance from the pipe of Pan to a violin, to an orchestra; a long distance from a floating log to a steamship, from a sickle to a reaper, from a flail to a threshing-machine, from a crooked stick to a plough, from a spinning-wheel to a jenny, from a hand-loom to a Jacquard—a Jacquard that weaves fair forms and wondrous flowers beyond an Arachne's utmost dream; a long way from a few hieroglyphics on the skins of beasts, on bricks of clay, to the printing-press, to the library; a long way from the cry of joy or pain to words; a long way from words to letters; a long way from letters to literature; a long way from the messenger, travelling on foot, to the electric spark, from knives of stone to those of steel; a long distance from a handful of sand to a telescope; a long way from echo to the phonograph—the phonograph that buries in indented lines and dots the sounds of living speech, and then gives back to life the very words and voices of the dead; a long way from the trumpet to the telephone—the telephone that transports speech as swift as thought and drops the words, perfect as minted coins, in listening cars; a long way from the face reflected in water to a photograph; a long way from a fallen tree to the suspension bridge; a long way from twisted bark, from grape-vine, from the dried sinews of beasts to the cables of steel; a long way from the oar to the propeller, from the sling to the rifle, from the catapult to the cannon; a long distance from revenge to law, from the club to the legislature; a long distance from slavery to freedom, from appearance to fact, from fear to reason, and from superstition to science!

And yet the distance has been travelled by a part of the human race. Countless obstructions have been overcome, numberless enemies have been conquered, thousands and thousands of victories have been won for the right, and millions and millions have died, labored, and lived for their fellow-men.

For the blessings we enjoy, for the happiness, for the freedom, for the prosperity that is ours, we ought to be grateful; our hearts should burst into the blossom of thankfulness.

Whom and what should we thank ?

No man can afford to be ungrateful. Ingratitude is one of the blackest of crimes.

Whom should we thank ? Let us be honest ; let us be generous. To whom should our hearts go out ? Should we thank the orthodox Church ? Let us be honest ; let us be generous.

Christianity has controlled Christendom for fifteen hundred years. During these centuries what have the orthodox Churches accomplished for the good of man ?

In this life man needs raiment and roof, food and fuel. He must be protected from heat and cold, from snow and storm. He must "take thought for the morrow." In the summer of youth he must prepare for the winter of age. He must know something of the causes of disease, of the conditions of health. If possible, he must conquer pain, increase and ennoble life ; he must lengthen his years. He must supply the wants of the body, and if possible he must feed the divine hunger of the mind. And so to-night I ask, What good has the Church done ?

Let us be generous ; let us be honest.

Has it taught man to cultivate the earth, to build homes, to weave cloth, to cure or prevent disease, to build ships, to navigate the seas, to conquer pain, to lengthen life ? Let us be honest.

Did Christ or any of his apostles add to the sum of useful knowledge ? Did they say one word in favor of any science, in favor of any art ? Did they teach men how to make a living, how to overcome one of the obstructions of nature, how to prevent sickness, how to protect themselves from pain, from famine, from misery and rags ? Did they add to the sum of useful knowledge ?

Did they explain any of the phenomena of nature, any fact that affects the life of man ? Did they say one word in favor of investigation, one word in favor of study, of thought, one word for education ? Did they teach the gospel of self-reliance, of industry, of honest effort ? Can any farmer, mechanic, or scientist find in the New Testament or the Old one useful fact ? Is there anything in the sacred book that can help the geologist, the astronomer, the biologist, the physician, the inventor, the manufacturer of any useful thing ? Let us be honest ; let us be generous. What has the Church done ? because, if I am under obligation to the Church, I am going to thank the Church.

From the very first the Church taught the vanity, the worthlessness of all earthly things. It taught the wickedness of wealth, the blessedness of poverty. It taught that the business of this life was to prepare for death. It insisted that a certain belief was necessary to salvation, and that all who failed to believe, or doubted in the least, would suffer eternal pain. According to the Church, the natural desires, ambitions, and passions of man were all wicked, all depraved.

To love God, to practise self-denial, to overcome desire, to despise wealth, to hate prosperity, to desert wife and children, to live on roots and berries, to repeat prayers, to wear rags, to live in filth, and to drive love from the heart—these, for centuries, were the highest and most perfect virtues, and those who practised them were called saints.

The saints did not assist their fellow-men ; their fellow-men assisted them. They did not labor ; they were beggars ; they lived on the labor of others. They were parasites ; they were holy vermin. They were beyond reason. They followed the teachings of Christ. They took no thought for the morrow. They mutilated their bodies, scarred their flesh, destroyed their minds for the sake of happiness in another world. During the journey of life they kept their eyes on the grave. They gathered no flowers by the way ; they walked in the dust of the road ; they avoided the green fields. Their moans and groans made all the music they wished to hear. The babble of brooks, the songs of birds, the laughter of children, were nothing to them. Pleasure was the child of sin ; the happy needed a change of heart. The saints were sinless, and miserable ; but they had faith. They were pious, and wretched ; but they were limping towards the New Jerusalem.

What has the Church done ?

It has denounced pride and luxury ; all things that adorn and enrich life ; all the pleasures of sense, the ecstasies of love, the happiness of the hearts, of the fire-side, the clasp and kiss of wife and child ; and the Church has done this because it regarded this life as a period of

probation, a time to prepare to be spiritual, to overcome the natural, to fix the affections on the invisible, to become passionless, to subdue the flesh, to congeal the blood, to fold the wings of fancy, to become dead to the world, so that when you appeared before God you would be the exact opposite of what he made you.

What has the Church done ?

It pretended to have a revelation from God. It knew the road to eternal joy, the way to death. It preached salvation by faith, and declared that only orthodox believers could become angels, and all thinkers would be damned. It knew this, and so knowing it became the enemy of discussion, of investigation, of thought. Why investigate, why discuss, if you know ? Why think, if you are certain ? It sought to enslave the world. It appealed to force. It unsheathed the sword, lighted the fagot, forged the chain, built the dungeon, erected the scaffold, invented and used the instruments of torture. It branded, maimed, and mutilated ; it imprisoned and tortured ; it blinded and burned, hanged and crucified, and utterly destroyed millions and millions of men and women. It touched every nerve of the body, produced every pain that can be felt, every agony that can be endured ; and it did this to preserve what is called the truth of God, to destroy heresy and doubt, and to save, if possible, a few shrivelled souls.

It was honest ; it was honest. I admit it. But it was necessary to prevent the development of the brain, to arrest all progress ; and to do this the Church used all its power. If men were allowed to think and to express their thoughts, they would fill their minds and the minds of others with doubt. If they were allowed to think, they would investigate ; they might contradict the creed ; they might dispute the words of priests, and they might defy the Church. The priests cried to the people : "It is for us to talk. It is for you to hear. Our duty is to preach ; yours is to believe, believe ; you are not asked to think."

(To be continued.)

GOD, OR SANTA CLAUS.

"DON'T you believe in God ?" asked a pious lady of a bright boy of fourteen years of age, of my acquaintance. "No," he answered, "I have seen no evidence that there is any God—nothing to prove that there is any such being ; nor do I see any use that he could be to us, or to the world at large." "But," said the lady, "you cannot prove that he doesn't exist." "No," said the boy ; "but that doesn't seem to me to be any reason for believing that there is one. Do you believe in Santa Claus ?" "No," said the lady ; "Santa Claus is a childish fiction that we outgrow as we grow up." "But," said the boy, "you cannot prove that Santa Claus does not exist." "No," said the lady, "I frankly confess that you have got me there." And this ended the discussion. The lady saw the force of the illustration, and was silent.

Now, can anybody give me any good reason for believing in the existence of God that is not equally good for the existence of Santa Claus ? We are told in our childhood that it is Santa Claus who brings our Christmas presents, but as we grow up we watch to see him come, and detect our parents or friends in the fraud they have practised upon us, and our faith is gone. So, in the infancy of the race, we were told that it was God who gave us everything, and made the rain and sunshine, the thunder and the lightning ; who made the trees and grass to grow, and the wind to blow, etc. And to prevent us from detecting the fraud as we did that of Santa Claus, they told us that any attempt to do so would be wicked, and would call down upon our heads the vengeance of God, who would strike us dead, and then revive us and make us suffer forever the most excruciating torture that their imagination could conceive of. And if, notwithstanding all these threats of what God would do if any person should dare to question the truth of these stories, any should have sense and courage enough to detect the fraud, they put him to death by the most painful process they could invent ; and threatened the same death to anyone who should listen to what he said, or read anything that he wrote. All this has been done to perpetuate the myth of the childhood of the race. Who can doubt that, if the same means

had been used to prevent the detection of the fraud of our individual childhood, the great majority would still be believing in Santa Claus, and would be shocked at any expression of unbelief in that myth.

In such a case we should, no doubt, have a large reform association working for a constitutional amendment that should recognise the existence of Santa Claus, and his infinite benevolence in giving us all our Christmas presents and his miraculous power by which he drives a team of reindeers all over the world in a single night, running down every chimney and up again, though it was only a three-inch stove pipe and red hot; the more difficult the feat, the more it would display his wonderful and infinite power. And if any sceptic should question such a performance, it would be considered a sufficient answer to his objections to say: Santa Claus's ways are not as our ways. Some pious superintendent of the mint would stamp all the dollars and half dollars of our daddies with "In Santa Claus we Trust," and all our schools would be opened with an invocation to the same mythical individual. Revival preachers would supplement their whining "Come to Jesus" with a whining "Come to Santa Claus and save your soul," though Jesus and Santa Claus were both equally *non est inventus*.

To come right down to brass tacks, is there any more reason for believing in God than there is in Santa Claus? I asked a pious Christian to give me the evidence upon which he believed in God; and he said he believed because the Bible told him about God. But how do you know that the Bible tells the truth about him? Because, he said, the Bible is the word of God, and therefore must be true. Thus the argument runs in a circle. Two unproved assertions mutually prove each other. And this is the sum of all the evidence upon which hangs the whole fabric of the Christian religion. The man who has sense enough to see the total lack of evidence, but is determined to believe anyhow, owns up like Kant, the German metaphysician, that there is no way to prove the existence of God, but we must believe in him by faith; and faith is the last resort of those who would believe or teach a lie.

By faith we may prove or believe in Santa Claus, as well as in God, or in any other spook whose existence is asserted by any self-constituted agent for him. Faith is all right provided we know enough about the person in whom we place it to inspire faith in him. Faith in God is an impossibility, because we know nothing about him. But, say the priests, we tell you all about him, and the Bible tells you about him; and you must believe what we and the Bible tell you. Then it is not God, nor is it the Bible, upon which we are to place our faith, but upon the priests. If the character of the priests is such as to inspire us with confidence in their word, and in their knowledge of the subject which they pretend to tell us about, then we may have faith enough in them to believe what they say. But, unfortunately, we find upon examination that they know no more about God than we do, and that they are asking us to take their word about a matter of which they know nothing. Besides, the character of priests, as shown by all history and observation, is not such as to induce us to give up our own judgment for theirs in matters upon which we know as much as they do. Again, the stories they tell us are incredible and absurd, inasmuch as they relate to beings that have no existence so far as all reliable evidence goes, and whose existence is contradicted by all human observation and experience. Once more, these priests have a personal motive for trying to make us believe their remarkable and absurd stories, because they hope to win power, wealth, and influence if they succeed.

That priests will lie under the influence of such motives is only to say that they are human, and that they are subject to temptations such as the average human being is likely to yield to. Faith in such men is out of the question, and if we cannot have faith in them, then faith in the God they tell us about is equally out of the question.

It is the same with the Bible. When priests tell us that we must have faith that the Bible is true, it means that we must have faith in the priests who wrote the more or less marvellous stories contained in the Bible. Of course, no man who had average common sense would believe such stories on the strength of the stories themselves; they must be believed—if at all—through faith in the truthfulness of the persons who tell them, and we have seen that such persons are entirely untrustworthy and unbelievable.

Faith is not a quality that comes to a man at his will, nor is it the outgrowth of his hopes or fears, excited by religious frenzy at a revival meeting. It is a plant of slow growth, and comes after a thorough knowledge of the person in which we place our faith; from a conviction derived from evidence, that the person can be relied upon as not only truthful himself, but too intelligent to be imposed upon, and too honest to wish to impose upon anybody else.

If there was any evidence tending to prove the existence of God, we should never have heard of the necessity for faith. Priests would gladly make use of evidence if they had it, but, in the entire absence of evidence, they can only rely upon the credulity of the foolish people to believe in signs and wonders which they do not understand, and so they make credulity the first and highest of virtues, and soften the absurdity of it by calling it faith. And this is why they teach that we must all become like little children—that is, as credulous as children in order to save our souls. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings comes such wisdom as religion inculcates, and to these only has God revealed himself; but to the wise and prudent he makes no attempt to make himself known, knowing well how ridiculous such an attempt would be. If there were any God, would he not show himself to the wise and prudent as the best way to convince the world, including all the fools who would follow the wise if the priests would let them alone, and thus all should know him, from the greatest down to the least? But no; evidently he does not want to be known; the priests pretend to have him behind their curtain, and call upon us to believe that they have got him there, and that he will break loose and damn us all to the everlasting frying-pan if we do not take their word for it.

According to their logic, God conceals himself so that the priests may do a profitable business in telling us all about him. If he was really there, and could hear the nonsense they tell about him, he would hurry up the final crack of doom and proceed to pass judgment upon these pretended agents of his, that they should at once test the reality of the fiery pit that they have invented to scare the ignorant multitude. But no; poor old God! there he must sit away up beyond the clouds, out of sight and hearing, while he is being slandered and maligned by his pretended friends; and he knows no more about it than the fossil man who was dug up on the bank of the Rio Brazos the other day.

How long, O common sense, is it going to take for full-grown men and women to reach the intellectual level of the fourteen-year-old boy who did not believe in any God?

—*Independent Pulpit*.

J. P. RICHARDSON.

BOOK CHAT.

IN Mark Twain's *More Tramps Abroad* there is a little bit illustrating the faith of an Indian servant with a limited stock of English words: "How did you get your English? Is it an acquirement, or just a gift of God?" After some hesitation, piously: "Yes. He is very good. Christian God very good. Hindoo God very good too. Two million Hindoo god, one Christian God—make two million and one. All mine—two million and one God. I got a plenty. Sometimes I pray all time at those; keep it up; go all time every day; give something at shrine. All good for me; make me better man; good for me, good for my family—dam good."

* * *

Mr. Clemens is a real good Freethinker, and will enjoy reading in the *Atlantic Monthly* the statement by Colonel Higginson, that Darwin heartily enjoyed Mark Twain, and kept *The Jumping Frog* by his bedside for midnight amusement.

* * *

From America we receive the *Exodus*, a monthly journal of a Christian-Theosophic character. From its Bible lessons it seems doubtful if the editress has yet made what Carlyle called "the Exodus from Houndsditch." She is, however, able to spin voluminous cobwebs out of her inner intuitions, into which we shall not venture, lest we get entangled.

* * *

Carlyle called political economy "the dismal science." Theology may certainly be called the dull and deadly non-science, for the science of God is verily the knowledge of nothing. The worst stock for any bookseller's shelves is the theological department. Every year thousands on thousands

of dull sermons are preached, and a lot of them, through vanity, get printed; but who, outside the preacher and his friends, thinks of reading them, and what publisher would think of issuing them if the preacher did not pay the printer?

* * *

The Face of the Poor, by Robert Williams (Reeves, Fleet-street; 2d.), is an eloquent pamphlet exposing the crowding of laborers in London, where some 400,000 of the population are one-room dwellers. The author says the pamphlet was sent to a clergyman, who reported: "There is nothing in the pamphlet which I could put into a sermon, and therefore I do not recommend it." We do.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BIBLE IN BOARD SCHOOLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In one of your notes you ask for a statement of "the real difference between established religion in State churches and established religion in State schools."

The subject is one of real importance. May I say, briefly, how the difference presents itself to me?

Chiefly, it is in the "content" of the religion established. For the word "religion" is a word of wide and various significance. Sometimes it covers acts perfectly just, and really obligatory on the part of the State towards its members; but at other times it embraces functions which, being discharged by the State, would make it obtrusive upon the rights of individuals, partizan and exclusive in its gifts and advantages.

For example, the State ought to "establish and endow" and carry out that part of "religion" which embraces (1) care for the physical needs and comforts of the disabled, of the unfortunate, and of the honest poor; (2) restorative treatment of those who have fallen into crime; (3) removal of injustices in the world of labor; (4) and the training of its younger citizens in the recognition of civic obligation, in the discharge of all duties towards parents, reverence for the aged, pity for the weak, help to the needy, and other duties of practical and every-day religion.

But, I hold, the State should not "establish" or "endow," control or support, any particular privately-managed society of men and women, such as the brotherhood at Westbourne Park Chapel, which has elected me as one of its teachers, or the society of Freethinkers to which you minister; for the word "religion," in both these cases, has for its "content" a theological or an anti-theological, a credal or non-credal element, about which each individual must be left to form his own conclusions, and to apply them in his own way.

Now, the "religion" of the State school should be exclusively of the former kind; nothing credal or theological should be introduced, but only that which is distinctively ethical. I need not say that the State has gone far beyond this in "establishing" Anglicanism, which is one of the various methods of interpreting the "theological" content of religion.

I have not time to give my reasons for these conclusions; but if any of your readers are curious about them, they will be found stated at some length in the *Contemporary Review*—vol. 67, "Religion and the State," page 433; vol. 66, "The Destruction of Board Schools," page 626; vol. 63, "Primary Education and the State," page 441.—I am, yours truly,

JOHN CLIFFORD.

[Dr. Clifford's letter displays more ingenuity than ingenuousness. Without so much as mentioning Christianity or the Bible, he tries to justify the introduction of both in State schools by means of a loose and ambiguous employment of the word "religion." No doubt this is a word of "wide and various significance," but it always connotes something supernatural, and the supernatural is a matter of opinion. Anglicanism is indeed a sect of Christianity, but Christianity is a sect of universal religion. Nor is the Church of England a "privately-managed society." It was created, and is controlled, by English law, quite as much as the Board school system. A parson is a public functionary as much as an elementary school teacher. The analogy is close enough for the purpose of our argument, and we repeat that they are illogical who denounce State religion in State churches and uphold State religion in State schools. With regard to the moral duties enumerated by Dr. Clifford, we beg to say that they have no necessary connection with religion, and can be taught and practised without it. The Bible is not really used in our schools as a text-book of ethics, but as the sacred Scriptures of the Christian religion. Dr. Clifford does not notice our careful criticism of the London School Board syllabus of Bible instruction, in which we showed (as we think) the absurdity of the "ethical" plea in favor of retaining that volume.—EDITOR, *Freethinker*.]

SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I do not know whether it is desirable to burden your Correspondence Columns with a letter on the above in reference to the communications in your last issue by "Auria" and "J. G. F." I am glad, however, to find that the former thinks, as indeed do I, that the question of to whom the sonnets were addressed is an unimportant one. They were addressed, I am convinced, to one who aroused Shakespeare's ardent imagination to the topmost heights of poignant beatitude, and by one who, in Shakespeare's opinion, was worthy of all, and more than all, the love of his (Shakespeare's) opulently endowed nature.

If Shakespeare, who *knew* to whom he addressed his sonnets, was satisfied with his idol, why should we trouble? At most we could now but learn the name of the one to whom Shakespeare penned the marvellous outpourings of his deepest love; we could never have his knowledge, and without that we cannot, except stupidly and gratuitously, impugn Shakespeare's wisdom in his love. As for "J. G. F.'s" suggestion that the sonnets may be "the interpretation of other people's moods, thoughts, and desires, and not Shakespeare's own," I must say that of the first 126 sonnets it would hardly be possible to select half a score which could be said at all to answer the description of "J. G. F." At any rate, I would invite "J. G. F." to give us, or refer us to, some sonnet examples written by other poets which he may consider as representing the moods, thoughts, and desires of others, and not those of the writers themselves. We know what Alfred the Little's contract-poetry was—his birthday odes and other like rinsings of his intellect; and we know too well what the contract-verses of all our Laureates have been from the time of our first Court Rhymers to our present Alfred the Less! So that where "J. G. F." will look for any examples which shall at all help to persuade us that the intense affection which fills these sonnets of Shakespeare's could have been anything less than the deepest self-expression of which he was capable, I confess I cannot guess. Thomson's lines—

I do not hate a single man alive,
Some few I must disdain;
I have loved heartily some four or five,
And of these there remain
Just two for whom I would outface
Death, for the one death, and disgrace—

seem to me to be written in the very spirit of the sonnets. Either my reading of verse is altogether bad, or such poetry can never be a vicarious expression—the personal note pulses through every line, and if in such verse the poet has failed to express himself, then is his hope of ever expressing himself quite extinguished. Further, I let "J. G. F." take the sonnet I quoted, commencing—

Against my love shall be as I am now,
With Time's injurious hand crushed and overworn;

and explain it in the light of his suggestion that therein is Shakespeare expressing feelings not his own towards some person not dear to, and, perhaps, not even known to, him.

Indeed, as I see things now, these sonnets, with a very few exceptions, were they proved to be other than autobiographical, would be a most uncanny example of the prostitution of all those most intimate thoughts and emotions, which are about the last things any ordinary man or woman can prostitute, and certainly are the very things that the poet never consents to make a commerce of. To conclude, then, I wish to say that it would have interested me very much if some Christian reader had given us his view of the validity of the conclusions I have drawn from the sonnets as to Shakespeare's religion; and, if he differed from these conclusions, his reasons for so differing. Freethinkers are pretty well agreed as to Shakespeare's religion, I fancy.

D. M.

PROFANE JOKES.

"It is only the body that they bury, you know," said the Sabbath-school teacher, endeavoring to make clear the idea of the immortality of the soul. "Is that so, ma'am?" asked Johnny Thickhead, with lively interest. "What do they do with the head?"

An old peasant woman in Buckinghamshire, praising her favorite curate to the rector, exclaimed: "Ah, sir, Mr. Drone is quite an angel in sheep's clothing."

Miss Helen Hunt picked up a small Bible lying in the aisle of the church one Sunday morning as she was hurrying out from service. As there was nothing in the book to indicate to whom it belonged, she spoke to the pastor and suggested that he announce the fact of her find on the following Sunday. He did it in this way: "The person who dropped a small Bible, in flexible cover, in the main aisle at last Sunday's service can go to Helen Hunt for it." Then he wondered why everybody smiled.

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.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, E. Pack; 7.30, W. Heaford, "Christmas Comments on Christianity."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Sunday-school; 7, Children's Festival

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

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

COUNTRY

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; 6.30, Social Meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Musical and Literary evening.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed till January 9, when Mr. Foote will lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Attractive Miscellaneous Entertainment in Music, Recitation, etc. December 29, Soirée and Ball. Tea at 5.30.

Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—January 8 to 12, Mission to Stanley; 23 and 30, Manchester. March 6 to 11, Mission at Derby; 13, Birmingham.

POSITIVISM.

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

SUNDERLAND.—Church of Humanity, 23 Blandford-street. Service and discourse every Sunday afternoon at 2.45.

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

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

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