

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

## CHRIST IN CHINA.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”—JESUS CHRIST.

JESUS Christ preached for three years in a small obscure corner of the world. The tongue he spoke was only understood by a handful of people. As a missionary—from heaven or elsewhere—he was not a very brilliant success. This indeed seems to have dawned upon him at the close of his career. He then told his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. That was a very large order, which of course was never executed, although the Christian romancers mapped out a surprising series of travels for each of the twelve. In imagination at least the greater part of the known world was covered by their industrious feet and illuminated by their industrious tongues; but the existence of America and Australia was not at that time suspected, and the faith that was capable of a thousand miracles was incapable of a single discovery. During recent ages, however, the latter apostles of Christianity have striven to complete the labors of their first predecessors. Missions to the heathen have been organized in most parts of the world, and would probably be extended to the moon if that interesting planet were only accessible. The vast majority of the missionaries engaged in converting the heathen are scarcely objects of compassion. They live snugly in comfort, and even in luxury. Generally speaking, the heathen fear them, on account of their white brethren who come along with guns and rifles. Now and then, of course, the heathen give way to their feelings and kill a few missionaries. And this ought to be welcome treatment, for it carries with it the express blessing of Jesus Christ (Matthew v. 11, 12). Every murdered missionary is a martyr, and great is his reward in heaven. But somehow or other the missionaries do not view it in this light. They want freedom to preach their gospel to the heathen, whether it is welcome or not; at the same time they want the protection of their Christian friends in Europe; and, as a matter of fact, many a quarrel between Christians and heathen has begun in a squabble over a missionary, and ended in the said heathen being robbed of the land of their birth, on which the said Christians squatted leisurely as the persons whose meekness entitled them to be inheritors of the earth.

Just such a squabble took place recently in China. Two missionaries made in Germany were killed by irate Chinese, who not only wished them to the Devil, but sent them there. This meant two fresh saints in heaven—merely this and nothing more. But it suited the game of Emperor William to make it a pretext for bullying China into handing over to him a Chinese harbor which he had evidently been coveting. Russia at the same time finds it opportune to borrow another Chinese port. France declares she will not be behind the rest in the scramble. And as for John Bull, he is just waiting to see what will exactly suit his interest before pouncing upon it with the vigor, tenacity, and unscrupulousness for which he has a world-wide reputation.

This is not the first time that China has learnt the beauty of Christianity as represented by the leading Christian powers. She has been wantonly attacked more than once, and the opium trade has been forced upon her in spite of the perpetual protests of her statesmen. Now she sees the Christian powers taking advantage of her late mis-

fortunes to plunder her territory. She even hears them, or their press organs, talking about her partition in the light and airy manner of practised old burglars who have a “soft job” in hand.

Just look at the map of Asia, and see China sprawling over it. Think of her vast population of four hundred millions—one quarter of the whole human race. Bear in mind the antiquity of her civilization, the industry of her people, the general integrity of her traders. Then consider the reckless insolence of those who contemplate breaking her up politically, and throwing all those millions into a state of social anarchy. It is one of those crimes at which humanity stands aghast. Yet it is talked of with the utmost levity by the very nations that send out missionaries to convert the heathen to the only true religion—the religion (as *they* say) of righteousness and love.

This Christian raid upon the land of Confucius comes right on the heels of a very pretty missionary farce. Not long ago the English Societies engaged in circulating the Bible in foreign parts presented a specially printed translation of the New Testament to the Emperor of China. It was piously hoped that this precious volume—for a lot of money was spent on it—would enable him to see that Christianity was really the one religion imported direct from heaven. Now, supposing the translation was accurate—that is to say, honest, and supposing the Emperor has taken the trouble to read it; supposing all this, how he must be smiling, or perhaps swearing, at the exquisite perfection of Christian hypocrisy. In the sermon on the Mount he would have seen that every Christian was bound to be poor and meek, and if possible to be an object of persecution and oppression; to give his property to everybody that asked for it, to suffer ill-treatment with pious submission, to give his cloak to anyone good enough to steal his coat, and to turn his right cheek to anyone kind enough to smite him on the left. Having read these extraordinary teachings of the incarnate God of Christendom, he must have said to himself: “Well, I have evidently misunderstood these Christians. There has been a great mistake somewhere. But now things will go smoothly. We shall be able to get along beautifully with these people. They are just the sort we want to do business with. We shall now be able to make up some of our bad losses in that quarrel with Japan. These Christians will lend us money without interest, and never ask for the principal. They will not resent any injury we may do them unwittingly; certainly they will never attack us; and we shall be able to save the money we thought of spending on new battleships.” Alas! all these beautiful conclusions were fallacious. The Christians laud their Holy Bible, but never think of obeying it, except at the expense of their neighbours. Having introduced him to the sublime doctrines of their “Savior,” they immediately proceed to show the Emperor of China the practical interpretation. They steal his ports, land troops on his territory, regulate his finances, force their goods upon his markets, and threaten him with ironclads and big guns if he shows the slightest lack of complaisance.

On the whole, it seems to us that the less Christ they have in China the better. Christ is a very “exalted” teacher, but nobody follows him save on Sunday. Every other day in the week they give it up as a sheer impossibility. The teachings of Confucius, however, are eminently practical, and good for every day in the year. We advise the Chinese to stick to Confucius—that is, if they want the advice.

G. W. FOOTE.



## GRANT ALLEN'S "IDEA OF GOD."\*

(Continued from page 18.)

IN his *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (chap. xi.) Mr. Lang laid it down that "the origin of a belief in God is beyond the ken of history and speculation." The last word is peculiarly infelicitous, as men have long speculated on the topic. The main theories of fetishism, animism, ghost-worship and polyzoönism, the belief in magic, the sense of mystery, etc., have long been before the world and known to Mr. Lang, so that I can only interpret his dictum as meaning that (to him) none of these views are satisfactory. To me, it appears that the necessity man is under of interpreting things outside himself in terms of his own consciousness is a sufficient explanation of the origin of all theistic beliefs. It is only by long experience that man can see the fallacy of this mode of interpretation.

The conception of God in our modern sense is comparatively quite late, for, as Spencer observes, "an invisible, intangible entity is a high abstraction, unthinkable by primitive man, and inexpressible by his vocabulary." Again, he tells us of early man: "He is commonly pictured as theorizing about surrounding appearances; whereas, in fact, the need for explanations of them does not occur to him." "It is unquestionably true," says our great evolutionary philosopher, "that the first trace of all conception of a supernatural being is the conception of a ghost." Since the publication of Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* and Dr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* this view has been gradually making way, and Mr. Grant Allen's work will do very much to systematize it and place it on a sound basis. In this respect it is, in my estimation, one of the most important works ever published, and I advise its perusal by all interested in the origins of religion.

Even Max Müller, who believes, without much evidence, in "a sense of the infinite," has recognised how important an influence a belief in worship of ancestors has exercised on the development of religious thought, and how among the ancient Aryans it pervaded not only their religious cult, but the whole of their social, civil, and political life. Sir John Lubbock allows it is certainly very widely distributed, though he points out that it is not specially characteristic of the lowest savages where descent is traced in the female line. Goblet d'Alviella holds that in China the worship of ancestors grafted itself upon a previous nature-worship, and adds: "Among the Polynesians it has been successfully established that the worship of the dead, native to the Eastern Archipelagos, sporadically overlaid the ancient mythological nature-worship, while it hardly penetrated into the most western islands of Micronesia." He allows, however, that in certain localities the worship of the dead manifested itself the first. But to get to the author with whom we have specially to do.

A conception of the life of the dead, Mr. Allen tells us, is the earliest thing to appear in religion, for there are savage tribes who have nothing worth calling gods, but have still a religion or cult of their dead relatives. It is also the latest thing to survive, for there are some spiritists who have ceased to believe in God, yet believe in the continued existence of the dead. I have read of an American medium who declared that spirits who had traversed every sphere up to the seventh heaven had said they discovered no signs of a personal god. One of the most suggestive pieces of writing in Mr. Allen's noteworthy book is that in which, towards the end of his volume, he describes how, at the break-down of faith in existing religions, there is always a recrudescence of primitive spiritism and consultations of the dead.

With regard to the life of the dead, Mr. Allen traces three main layers or strata of opinion. In the lowest the difference between life and death is but ill or inadequately perceived; the dead are thought of as yet bodily living. With this stage the preservation of the corpse, eventuating in mummification, is found. In the second stratum death is recognised as a physical fact, but is regarded as only temporary. At this stage men look forward to the Resurrection of the Body, and expect the Life of the World to come. This is associated with fear of the ghost and burial. The device of destroying the body by burning,

probably adopted as a means of preventing the return of the ghost, leads to the third stratum, where the soul is regarded as a distinct entity from the body, which it survives in a separate and somewhat shadowy form; so that the opinion as to the future, proper to this stage, is not a belief in the resurrection of the body, but a belief in the immortality of the soul. These three stages may be briefly summed up as corpse-worship, ghost-worship, and shade-worship.

The savage is unable to form the idea of death,\* and, therefore, believes that the buried man is still alive, in the sense of being able to interfere in the affairs of life. Food is offered for the corpse; but soon the particular spirit fades from memory. There is, however, much evidence of a world-wide yearly festival, at which offerings were made to the dead. Death is supposed to have come at the hand of an enemy—by magic or sorcery. Revenge must be had, if not on the spirits, whose claims have not been properly attended to, on the sorcerer, who brought about the death. The right of the dead to revenge is felt so keenly by the Australian blacks that even Christianity does not overcome it. Mr. Gideon Lang, in his work on *The Aborigines of Australia* (p. 15), tells of one noted for his Christian piety, whom he found reading the Sermon on the Mount:—

"I said: 'Jemmy, what is the meaning of your spears being stuck in a circle round you?' He looked me steadily in the eyes, and said solemnly and with suppressed fierceness: 'Mother's dead!' I said I was very sorry to hear it; 'but what had her death to do with the spears being stuck around so?' 'Bogan black fellow killed her!' was the fierce and gloomy reply. 'Killed by a Bogan black!' I exclaimed; 'why, your mother has been dying a fortnight, and Dr. Curtis did not expect her to live last night, which you know as well as I do. His only reply was the dogged repetition of the words: 'A Bogan black fellow killed her!' I appealed to him as a Christian—to the Sermon on the Mount that he had been just reading; but he absolutely refused to promise that he would not avenge his mother's death.....On the following Wednesday morning I found him sitting complacently in his gunyah, plaiting a rope of human hair, which I knew to be that of his victim."

No doubt Jemmy's conscience would have troubled him had he left this sacred duty unperformed. \* Our legislation still bears traces of notions arising from a belief in the right of the dead to vengeance. It is curious, too, that the very sacred word Redeemer comes from the blood avenger. When Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," the word might properly be translated Avenger, for it was the office of the *gual* both to avenge and redeem, and as this was the most important duty for the head of the tribe, so it was for the tribal god.

Mr. Allen shows that in the early stage of corpse-keeping particular stress is laid upon the head, which is preserved when the rest of the body is destroyed. This domestic worship, however, only gives rise to the cult of household gods. It is the worship of chiefs which leads to the evolution of tribal and national deities. Ancestors get forgotten as men, and remain in memory only as supernatural beings. Thus kingship rapidly reacts upon godship. If the living king himself is great, how much greater must be the ancestor, whom even the king fears and worships; and how infinitely greater still that yet earlier god, the ancestor's ancestor, whom the ancestor himself revered and propitiated! In some such ways a hierarchy of gods gradually grows up, among whom the eldest and least known is apt to be counted the greatest. That dead chiefs do become gods there is a well-known modern instance in the worship of General Nicholson, who fell at the storming of Delhi, and whose sect exists to this day. In Peru a dead king was immediately regarded as a god, and had his sacrifices, statues, etc. Many kings were regarded as gods in their lifetime. Indeed, some are born gods, some achieve godhood, and some have godhood thrust upon them. It was the custom of the natives of America to regard the first whites they saw as gods. The idea of god in some closely approximates to that of magician, as well as to that of king; for, indeed, most of the old kings were thought to be invested with magical functions.

\* *The Evolution of the Idea of God: An Inquiry into the Origins of Religion.* By Grant Allen. (Grant Richards, 9 Henrietta-street.)

\* Savages suppose even animals have an invisible existence after they have been killed. Ancestral spirits are usually embodied in animals by those in the Totemic stage. See the chapter on Totemism in *Footsteps of the Past*.



Mr. Allen says:—

"Throughout the earlier and ruder phases of human evolution this primitive conception of ancestors or dead relatives as the chief known objects of worship survives undiluted; and ancestor-worship remains to this day the principal religion of the Chinese, and of several other peoples."

But that this ancestor-worship does not strictly represent the primitive phase is, I think, evident from the Chinese themselves having traditions of a time when there was no marriage or paternal ancestry. Mr. Allen is undoubtedly right in remarking that "the rise of chieftainship and kingship has much to do with the growth of a higher conception of godhead." Man fears ghosts because he dreads the living; he is afraid of the supernatural because the natural terrifies him. As I have written elsewhere:—

"The recognition of elders and rulers on earth led to the homage paid to their spirits. From human rule was built up the hierarchy of heaven. When chieftains were established chieftain gods were created, and these gods were at first only tribal. With the federation of tribes under one ruler came subordinate gods under a chief deity. Not till large monarchies were established, the rulers of which claimed to be king and lord of lords, was any claim made for the sole rule of the sovereign of the skies. It was the large empires which paved the way for the so-called universal religions. Everywhere we see that the progress of religion followed that of society."\*

In tracing the growth of a cult in the temple, founded on the tomb, in the use of idols, founded on the sacred stake and tombstones, and in the rise of priesthoods, Mr. Allen makes a most important contribution to the history of religion, which I shall further notice next week.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

#### ORTHODOX PERPLEXITY.

It has long been a settled conviction with me that Christianity is based upon confusion of thought and entanglement of ideas, and that what are termed the most vital parts of the faith are its greatest perplexities. Take, for instance, the Christian doctrine of "freewill," and the popular theological teaching of personal salvation. Some of the ablest exponents of Christianity have found the defence of these doctrines so difficult that, to establish even a show of justification in their favor, the real perplexities of the subject have been ignored, and the gravest misconceptions have been indulged in. As Dr. Maudsley, in the new edition of his work, *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, writes: "There have been few (if any) more pregnant causes of errors in philosophy than the tendency to make words things by projecting named abstractions of the mind into nature as entities, and thereafter treating them as if they were active agents there" (p. 83).

The truth of the above remarks is forcibly illustrated in the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström's letter upon "Freewill" which appeared in this journal last week. Therein the rev. gentleman undertakes to reply to my criticisms of his statements upon the subjects of "freewill" and "responsibility." In doing so, however, he appears to have experienced the difficulty of his task; hence he omits to notice several perplexing points which I submitted to him, and he projects certain "abstractions of the mind into nature as entities, treating them as if they were active agents there." It may be well first to notice his omissions, as his failure to grapple with the main issues in dispute is an indication of the embarrassment which he probably felt in the endeavor to vindicate his statements. I am pleased to acknowledge the courteous manner in which my rev. opponent writes, and I most heartily join in his request that our readers "will well weigh both sides, reading and re-reading what each writer says."

In my criticism I alleged that Secularists admit man's responsibility—when that word is properly understood—and that he is free in a certain sense; that the doctrine of "freewill" assumed a cause which is not an effect; that man's motives govern the will, and that his desires arise independently of volition; that "will" is not an entity,

and that volition is a mental condition depending for its manifestations upon birth, climate, education, and general surroundings. I put the following case:—If a person has the power to call up a desire by the will, it is certain that some prior desire induced him to do so. What, therefore, caused that desire? Suppose one individual says he wills to do a thing, and he does it; he must have had an inclination, or he would not have thus willed and acted. Some inclination must, therefore, precede the "will," and, clearly, the "will" cannot be the cause of that which precedes itself in point of time, and to which, in fact, it owes its existence. Further, I asked what is the nature of the "will"; if it be an entity, where is it located, and what is its nature? If, as the New Testament and the Church of England teach, man cannot save himself, wherein lies his freedom? I also referred to the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, and that of predestination, intimating as my opinion that if these doctrines be true "freewill" is impossible; that "consciousness is infallible as to the fact of its testimony, but fallible as to its truth"; and, finally, that if it be immoral to reject the orthodox view of "freewill," then certain eminent professed Christians, including St. Paul and many prominent members of the Churches of England and Scotland, are open to the charge of immorality.

Now, surely these points were deserving of notice by my worthy opponent, inasmuch, as, to my mind, they involve the very pith of the subject under consideration. But they are all passed over in silence. It could not be for want of space, for much of the rev. gentleman's reply is taken up with anecdotes, and other matter that has no direct bearing upon the question in dispute. Until the items mentioned above are successfully dealt with my original position—namely, that the Christian doctrine of man's "freewill" and "responsibility" is a fallacy—remains intact. So much for the omissions; what my opponent has said shall now have my attention.

The rev. gentleman, refusing to discuss "whether man is responsible to God," endorses the statement of Wordsworth, that it is "God's will that every man should have freewill." It would be interesting to learn how "God's will" upon the subject is known. According to portions of the Bible, his "will" was quite the opposite. The question, however, is not what God "willed"; but does man possess a "freewill"? My opponent says: "I must believe in the fall of man, because I see the effects in myself and in others, and I think man quite incapable of saving himself." What are the said "effects," and how can they be connected with the alleged cause—the Fall—as narrated in the Bible? Is it just to inflict upon us the consequences of an act in which we took no part, and over which we had no control? Besides, if the story in Genesis be true, Adam and Eve had no choice; they were overpowered by the desires which God had implanted within them, by the fruit God had caused to grow, and by the serpent, for whose existence God was responsible. If man cannot save himself, upon whom does his salvation depend? Not upon Christ, for he is reported to have said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." If salvation could only be acquired through him, what was the fate of the millions who died before his advent, and what will be the fate of two-thirds of the human race now living who have never even heard of him? Moreover, we are told that men were "foreordained to everlasting death." Where was their freedom of salvation?

I fail to see the point of the supposed man at the bottom of the well, as bearing upon our present discussion. Of course, if he is able to get out and is too lazy to do so, he is responsible for remaining in. But what has that to do with "freewill" and Christian salvation? Those who cannot accept these doctrines are not necessarily "proud" or "lazy." With them it is impossible to believe. And the New Testament states that it is God which worketh in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and not of yourselves." "No man cometh unto the Father but by me [Christ]; and no man can come to me [Christ] except the Father draw him." If this be correct, there can be no freedom in the question.

I have not stated that "virtue and vice stand on exactly the same footing as the goodness and badness of any unconscious object"; but I have affirmed that virtue and vice are as much the consequence of the operation of natural laws as the falling of a stone or the growth of a flower. And

\* *Footsteps of the Past*, p. 134.



to this I adhere. Why does not the rev. gentleman grapple with the reasons I have given for holding such an opinion? I do *not* regard the influence of punishment over a man's mind as "the same sort of restraining influence" as that which arrests the falling of a stone, etc. Still, there are restraining "influences" in both cases, and each is governed by natural law. Will my opponent deny this?

What the rev. gentleman says about the "naughty child," and the little "daughter who broke a window," I answer by quoting the following pertinent and "deeply philosophical" words of Miss C. E. Plumtre, which are to be found on pages 17 and 18 of her work on *Natural Causation*: "The supporter of the doctrine of freewill may inquire, 'If the character of my child is solely the product of heredity and environment, if he have no power to amend his failings, why should I punish him?' 'According to your own doctrine,' Necessity might reply, 'you ought not to punish him, since you do not believe in the universal law of Cause and Effect. Neglect your child as you may, some happy chance will arrive, some miraculous answer to your prayer take place, and the little reprobate become a child of grace. I, on the contrary, who am a believer in rigid Law, who hold that nothing proceeds uncaused, punish my child, because I think punishment is a potent factor in the environment that is slowly modifying his character.' 'But has my child no power over himself?' Freewill may inquire; 'can he not love virtue for its own sake, and look upon the avoidance of vice as a more sacred thing than the avoidance of pain?' 'Doubtless he can, *subject to two conditions*. Either his own moral perceptions must be sufficiently exalted for him to be able to recognise the beauty of holiness—which exalted perception is a factor in the organism; or he must be under the charge of those who know how to train him judiciously while he is yet young and his character pliant, so that from early habit and association virtue will gradually grow pleasurable to him, and vice distasteful—which judicious training is a factor in his environment.'"

I am glad that my rev. opponent admits that "freewill" is "limited by heredity and environment." It would, however, have conduced to the clearness of our present discussion if he had shown how that which is limited could be free; also, if the "will" is only *partially* free, where does the determining power end and the freedom commence?

Yes, I believe that, if the "whole world" were governed by the principles to which I referred as having been in operation at New Lanark, society would be greatly improved thereby. I said nothing about the foolish notion of "the millennium."

I do *not* wish the sinner who repents on his death-bed to be punished, for such an act would be both useless and vindictive, not reformatory, which should be the object of all punishment. What I said upon this point was this: It is the freewill doctrine that is immoral, for it offers a premium to indifference and delay. If "will" can be exercised at any time, repentance for wrong-doing and the resolve to do right can be postponed to the death-bed, when it will be too late to compensate society for wrong done towards it. Further, I urged that, if I am "free" to act as I choose, is it not unjust to punish me for so acting? Besides, is not the very threat of punishment a factor tending to destroy freedom? To this the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström has made no reply. CHARLES WATTS.

## THANKSGIVING SERMON.

BY COLONEL INGERSOLL.

*Just delivered in Chicago to 5,000 people.*

(Continued from page 23.)

WHAT is the matter with this God? Well, sometimes he is foolish; sometimes he is cruel; and sometimes he is insane.

Does this God exist? Is there any intelligence back of nature? Is there any Being anywhere among the stars, in the ample distances of astronomy—is there any Being who pities the suffering children of men? We do not know. Let us be honest. Shall we thank him? We do not know that he exists.

Shall we thank nature? Does nature care for us any

more than for leaves or grass, or flies? All we know is that nature is going to kill us all.

Why should we thank nature? If we thank God or nature for the sunshine and rain, for health and happiness, whom shall we curse for famine and pestilence; whom shall we curse for earthquake and cyclone, for disease and death? Let us be honest, and let me give you my idea of thanksgiving.

Once there was a Dervish, a very pious, holy man. He was a hermit; he lived in the woods; he had nothing to do with his fellow-men. He was familiar with God. He made up his mind to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, and so he started for the "Sacred Tomb." On his way he crossed the desert; lost his road; was about to die of hunger and thirst. All at once he saw in the far horizon the waving palm. With the little remaining strength he reached the grove. There was a spring, and the water with its murmured music coming from the earth. He slaked his thirst. He reached forth his hand and plucked dates from the tree. He satisfied his hunger; and then he said: "Oh, God, I thank thee for thy mercies; I thank thee for giving food and drink to thy children. Oh, God, my heart is thine." On the next day he passed by a little village that had been visited by the pestilence, and the single street was covered with the bodies of dead men, women, and children, and wolves were devouring the dead, and one old wolf had just finished gnawing the last bone of a babe, and it turned its nose towards heaven, and this old hermit was acquainted with the wolf language, and here is what the wolf said: "Oh, God, I thank thee for thy mercies; I thank thee that thou hast given food to the wolves and their children. Oh, God, my heart is thine."

All I wish to say is that the philosophy of the Dervish and that of the wolf were on an exact equality.

If we cannot thank the orthodox Churches; if we cannot thank the unknown, the incomprehensible, the supernatural; if we cannot thank nature; if we cannot kneel to a guess; or if we cannot prostrate ourselves before a Perhaps, whom shall we thank?

Let us see what the worldly have done; what has been accomplished by those not "called," not "set apart," not "inspired," not filled with the Holy Ghost not born twice; by those who were neglected by all the gods. Let us see what they have done.

Passing over the Hindus, the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans, their poets, philosophers, and metaphysicians, we will come to what may be called modern times.

In the tenth century after Christ the Saracens, governors of a vast empire, established colleges in Mongolia, in Tartary, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Morocco, Fez, and in Spain. The region owned by the Saracens was greater than the Roman Empire. In the day of their glory they not only had colleges, but they had observatories. The sciences were taught. They introduced the ten numerals by which the higher branches of mathematics became possible. They taught algebra and trigonometry; they understood cubic equations; they made catalogues and maps of the stars; gave to the great stars the names that they still bear; they ascertained the size of the earth; determined the obliquity of the ecliptic; fixed the length of the year. They calculated equinoxes, solstices, conjunctions, and eclipses; they constructed astronomical instruments; they made clocks; they were the inventors of the pendulum; they originated chemistry; they were the first to publish pharmacopœias and dispensaries.

In mechanics they determined the laws of falling bodies. They understood the mechanical powers, and the attraction of gravitation. They taught hydrostatics, and they determined the specific gravity of bodies; and in optics they discovered that a ray of light did not proceed from the eye to an object, but from the object to the eye.

They were manufacturers of cotton, of leather, of paper, of steel. They gave us the game of chess. They produced romances, novels, essays, and in their schools they taught the modern doctrine of evolution and development. They anticipated Darwin and Spencer.

These people were not Christians. They were the followers, for the most part, of an impostor, of a pretended prophet of a pretended God; and yet while the true Christians, the men selected by the true God, the men filled with the Holy Ghost, were tearing out the tongues of heretics, these wicked wretches were irreverently tracing the orbits



of the stars. While the true believers were flaying philosophers and extinguishing the eyes of thinkers, these godless followers of Mohammed were founding colleges, collecting manuscripts, investigating the facts of nature, and giving their attention to science. But it is only fair to say that afterwards superstition did its perfect work. The followers of Mohammed became the enemies of science and hated facts as intensely, as ignorantly, and as honestly as Christians. Whoever has a revelation from God will defend it, will abhor reason, will deny facts.

But it is well to know in this day of thankfulness that we are indebted to the Moors, to the Mohammedans, for having laid the foundations of science. It is well to know that we are not indebted to our Church, to our Christianity, for any useful fact.

It is well to know that the seeds of thought were sown in our minds by the Greeks and Romans, and that our literature came from those seeds. The great literature of our language is Pagan in its thought, Pagan in its beauty, Pagan in its perfection. It is well to know that Mohammedans were the friends of science when Christians were its enemies, and how consoling it is to think that the friends of science—the ones who educated their fellows—are now in hell, and that the men who persecuted and killed philosophers are now in heaven. Such is the justice of the Christian God.

The Christians of the Middle Ages, the men who were filled with the Holy Ghost, knew all about the worlds beyond the grave, but nothing about this world. They thought the earth was flat—a little dishing if anything; that it was about five thousand years old, and the stars were little sparks to beautify the night.

The fact is that Christianity was in existence for fifteen hundred years before there was an astronomer in Christendom, before there was a follower of Christ who knew the shape of the earth; and the earth was demonstrated to be a globe, not by a pope, not by a cardinal, not by a bishop, not by a collection of clergymen, not by the "called," not by the "set apart," but by a sailor.

Magellan left Seville, Spain, August 10, 1519; sailed west, and kept sailing west until the ship reached Seville, the port it left, on the 7th of September, 1522. The world had been circumnavigated. The earth was known to be round. There had been a dispute between the holy scriptures and a sailor, and the fact took the sailor's side.

In 1543 Copernicus published his book, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*. He had some idea of the vastness of the stars, of the astronomical spaces, of the insignificance of this world.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century Bruno, one of the greatest men this world has produced, gave his thoughts to his fellow-men. He taught the plurality of worlds. He was a Pantheist, an Atheist, an honest man. He called the Catholic Church the "Triumphant Beast." He was imprisoned for many years, tried, convicted, and on the 16th day of February, in the year of grace 1600, burned in Rome by men filled with the Holy Ghost; burned on the spot where now his monument stands. Bruno, the noblest, the greatest of all the martyrs; the only one who ever suffered death for what he believed to be simply the truth; the only martyr who had no heaven to gain, no hell to shun, no God to please. He was nobler than inspired men. Grandier than prophets, greater than apostles, above all the theologians of the world, above the makers of creeds, above the founders of religions, rose this serene, this unselfish, this intrepid man. He had no heaven to gain, no God to please. He thought death was the end, and yet, rather than stain the whiteness of his soul by denying what he believed to be true, he suffered death.

Christians, followers of Christ, murdered this incomparable man. These Christians were true to their creed. They believed that faith would be rewarded with eternal joy, and doubt punished with eternal pain. They were logical. They were pious and pitiless; they were devout and devilish; they were meek and malicious; they were religious and revengeful; they were Christ-like and cruel; loving with their mouths and hating with their hearts; and yet, honest victims of ignorance and fear.

What have the worldly done?

In 1608 Lippershay, a Hollander, arranged lenses so that objects were exaggerated. He invented the telescope. He gave countless worlds to our eyes, and made us citizens of a universe.

In 1610, on the night of January 7, Galileo demonstrated the truth of the Copernican system, and in 1632 published his work on *The System of the World*; and what did the Church do?

Galileo was arrested, imprisoned, forced to fall upon his knees, and with his hand upon the Bible recant. For ten years kept in prison—for ten years, until released by the pity of death; then the Church—men filled with the Holy Ghost—denied his body burial in consecrated ground. It was feared that his dust might corrupt the bodies of those who had persecuted him.

In 1609 Kepler published his book, *Motions of the Planet Mars*. He knew of the attraction of gravitation, and that it acted in proportion to mass and distance; and he announced his Three Laws, and found they mathematically expressed the relation of distance, mass, and motion. Nothing greater has been accomplished by the human mind. The third law of Kepler, I am inclined to think, is the greatest triumph of the human intellect.

Then came Newton, Herschel, and La Place; and the astronomy of Joshua and Elijah faded from the minds of intelligent men. Jehovah became an ignorant tribal god, astronomy became a science, and Christianity became a superstition.

Men began to see that the operations of nature were not subject to interference; that eclipses were not caused by the wrath of God; that comets had nothing to do with the destruction of empires or the death of kings; that the stars wheeled in their orbits without regard to the actions of men. In the sacred East the dawn of science appeared.

(To be concluded.)

## A GODLY RASCAL AND A RASCALLY GOD; OR, LIKE GOD, LIKE MAN.

KING DAVID was a rascal of a Bible godly type,  
A saint of theological rascality,  
Whose deeds, with years, grew blacker, till, at death, the rip  
was ripe  
For murderous, post-mortem criminality.

This vile, psalmedic scoundrel, like his God, grew worse with  
age  
Until, at last, his malice sought satiety  
By charging youthful Solomon, his son, the silly sage,  
To start his reign with murder mixed with piety.

This beast, who "battered" God with gore, had once a little  
lark—  
His heart, though hard, was not as hard as hickory—  
He doffed his togs, and jiggled before the god-coop, box, or ark,  
In honor of Jehovah-cum-Terpsichore.

Said he, when prudes were shocked to see God's image in "the  
buff":  
"My body's god's! I'm not ashamed of showing it!  
To blush to see what God ne'er blushed to make is simply  
stuff!  
You're vile blasphemers all, without your knowing it!"

This rascal lived consistently, in thought and word and deed;  
He flattered God by aping his rascality:  
We loathe and pity him; but hate and blame his cursed creed,  
The teeming dam of pious immorality.

This wretch, who murdered all his life, and even after death,  
Was God's ideal man, said God, say priestly folk;  
But, since he was as vile a beast as e'er on earth drew  
breath,  
These priestly folk are frauds, or fools, or beastly folk!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

## Death.

Who said that a God made us? It is easier to be good if we know that our own honor alone is there to help us to uprightness.

Who said that we live for ever? It is easier to be good if we know that death lies waiting to sweep away the tears and pangs that the good must suffer at the hands of men.

Oh miserably-conceited men! think you yourselves such grand things that it needed a god to make you? that it needs an eternity to show you off?

Thou shalt be my god, O death, and annihilation my eternity; and together ye twain shall cry out to me:—

The time for rotting shall surely come—  
Rot not before;  
The time to be nothing shall surely come—  
Be something while you may.

—WILLIAM PLATT, *Women, Love, and Life*.



## ACID DROPS.

"CREDO" writes to the *Birmingham Gazette* with reference to Mr. Foote's recent lectures in the Bristol-street Board School. He describes them as "bitter and virulent attacks upon the authority and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," and wants to know why the Birmingham School Board lets its halls for such wicked purposes. "Credo" concludes by saying that "the Bible can take care of itself." What, then, is the reason of his anxiety?

Prominence is given in the newspapers to the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury will preside at the annual meeting of the London United Temperance Council on January 31, when the platform will also be graced by the presence of Canon Barker, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and Mr. A. F. Hills—presumably the Christian Vegetarian bigot. Strong speeches, we are told, will be delivered in support of Sunday closing. Why, certainly; who could expect anything else? Since the people began to ease off going to church on Sundays a pretty quarrel has been brewing between the publicans and the soul-savers. The latter think that if they can close the public-houses a lot more people will visit the churches and chapels, if only to drop in out of the wet, or to relieve the monotony of idleness by going *somewhere*. Men of the world quite understand this trade dispute.

Of course there are a few *bonâ fide* fanatics on the clerical side in this struggle; men whose noses are shaped by nature for poking into other people's business. Such "reformers" are never happy unless they are engaged in stopping other people from doing something more or less agreeable; just as the Puritans, according to Macaulay, put down bear-baiting, not because it hurt the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.

How good it is to see that twopenny-halfpenny critic, Mr. Clement Scott, pouring out the vials of his pious wrath on the whole dramatic profession. Even the dramatic critics, he says, are mostly Freethinkers. Probably this is a hit at Mr. Bernard Shaw, who openly proclaims himself an Atheist, and has more wit in his little finger (so to speak) than Mr. Clement Scott has in his head. Not, indeed, that Mr. Shaw is the only strong heretic in the brotherhood. There are others in the very front rank, though it would not be fair to name them.

Mr. Clement Scott hates Ibsen, and calls *Ghosts* an "infamous play." Ibsen fails, in this critic's opinion, because he is an Atheist and "has not realized what the great backbone of religion means to the English race." *Backbone* is distinctly good. Fancy little Clement Scott with a backbone, and the great Ibsen without one! To realize it would tax the imagination of a Shakespeare.

"General" Booth has gone to America to look after the Lord's business and his own, which run well together. Before leaving England the Salvation Army boss held a grand reception at the Albert Hall. In the course of his speech he dealt with the charge brought against him of "sensationalism." "God deals in sensations," he said, and why not William Booth? "I would rival Barnum and Bailey at this moment," he added, "if I had the means, in a gigantic effort to secure the attention of the people of this great metropolis to the claims of Jehovah." "Secure the attention" is probably a euphemism for "secure the cash." And this use of the word Jehovah marks the Jew in William Booth's composition.

The Nonconformists of Rushton, near Blackburn, are much perturbed over the loss of their Gospel Mission Hall, erected by voluntary subscriptions a few years ago at a cost of nearly £600. As the hall was not successful, it was, in accordance with the trust deed, sold by auction, the purchaser being one of the trustees, who re-sold it at a profit to the working-men's club. The Free Church Council called a meeting to consider the trustee's action, and he explained that they bought the building to prevent it becoming a theatre.

What excuse can the working man have for staying from church? At St. Mary-at-Hill Monument the Rev. W. Carlile last Sunday treated his audience to a discourse on the Bethnal Green fire, illustrated by a series of limelight views. Two bishops were present, and one of them sang.

Among exhibits at the Pigeon Show at the Crystal Palace were "some archangels of very lustrous color." We do not know if Gabriel or Michael was among the number.

Canon Rogers, of Yarmouth, having said in a speech to the Missions to Seamen that he was proud of the title of sky-pilot, because pilots could be trusted, is asked by T. W.

de Caux in *Daylight* to answer two questions: In what part of infinite space is heaven located? and what is heaven like? Were similar questions put to any pilot "worthy of his name" in regard to any port to which he is accredited, he would answer them readily. Neither Canon Rogers nor any other sky-pilot can answer these simple questions, or produce any certificate that they are entitled to guide others to the region of kingdom-come.

Commissioner Kerr is a magistrate who distinguishes himself by uttering some common-sense truths from the bench. He recently said: "The less law we have in this world the better; men are more likely to be honest without it." In another case, a witness was emphasizing his evidence by saying he was on his oath. "Yes," said Mr. Commissioner Kerr, "everything you say is under your oath, although at the present day the general opinion is that there is very little use in oaths."

A famous legal dignitary once said: "Do anything sooner than go to law." He knew what he was talking about, and on the whole his advice was sound. Judges, magistrates, and lawyers, between them, have so arranged matters that honest people dread going into the witness-box owing to the infamous license of cross-examination. A witness may be asked any sort of question that has absolutely nothing to do with the case—such as "Did you ever have a dispute with your washerwoman?" or "Was your grandfather once sued for breach of promise?" This is called—in bad English as well as bad justice—testing the witness's reliability.

Down at Southport two lads were summoned for assaulting Miss Eliza Millard and Dr. Macloghlin by throwing things at them as they rode on bicycles. When the case was heard in the police-court there was no real dispute as to the facts, but the counsel for the defence asked the plaintiffs whether they lived together, and whether they were married. Of course these questions were quite in order if it is within the right of every larrikin to throw things at any cyclist who doesn't come up to his particular ideas of ethics and propriety; but on all other grounds the questions were grossly impertinent, and even impudent, and should never have been allowed by the presiding magistrate.

In the January number of the *Dawn of Day* the Rev. A. F. Winnington Ingram begins a reply to "an article," by Mr. Foote, on the Ascension. No reference is given to the date of this "article," nor is the *Freethinker* so much as mentioned, probably in order that Mr. Ingram's readers might not peruse the infidel's argument for themselves. Mr. Ingram refers to Professor Ramsay as "the latest and boldest critic of the day," which shows that he is grossly ignorant, or is presuming on his readers' ignorance. Instead of trying to answer Mr. Foote's criticism of the Ascension story, he says that the Resurrection is the real point of debate, and that this is evaded by sceptics. What a ridiculous statement! Mr. Foote has written a pamphlet on the Resurrection, and has often debated it on public platforms with Christian representatives.

"What became of Christ's body?" asks Mr. Ingram, and the question proves his hopeless illogicality. By the time the Resurrection story got into circulation the corpse would have been unrecognisable. Besides, the Jewish dignitaries only deemed him a man, and they cared no more about what became of his corpse—when he was out of the way—than they cared about what became of the corpse of any other Jew who had recently joined the majority.

Mr. Ingram tells his readers that the risen Jesus Christ was "seen by 500 people in broad daylight on a mountain." We ask him to give Scripture authority for this extraordinary allegation. Until he does so he is not worth another moment's consideration.

A select party at Madrid recently witnessed a got-up fight between a bull and a tiger. This is an illustration of the refining influence of Christianity on true believers.

In the New Year address sent by the Archbishop of York to his clergy he says: "The Church of Rome is making unprecedented efforts at the present time to gather in proselytes from other branches of the Catholic Church." After alluding to some perversions in fashionable society, he says: "The astounding statements which are sometimes made with regard to the numbers of these perverts can only proceed, it may be hoped, from those who are entirely misled as to the facts of the case. The statistics which bear upon this point are convincing as to the exaggeration of such statements, which, nevertheless, have their weight with a certain number of weaker minds. There is no fact of the kind more certain than that Romanism in the aggregate is making no real advance in this country."

We fancy the Archbishop is making an error, although his statement cannot be overthrown from the point of



numbers. We have ourselves given the figures showing that the number of Roman marriages is nearly stationary. But Rome does not make the mistake of going by numbers only. The shifting of population and mixed marriages have compelled it to suffer a serious leakage among the poor. It has recouped itself by gains from among the rich and influential.

There is no doubt this is a wise policy. To gain in the long run, Rome must make a great show, build magnificent churches and cathedrals, as it is doing, and attract by the gorgeousness of display as well as by the antiquity of establishment. It has accordingly concentrated its efforts upon converting the wealthy, the land proprietors, and the leaders of society. It has succeeded so well with them that, despite its leakage, we tell the Archbishop of York that it has made a very real advance, not in numbers, but in wealth, influence, and prestige.

Looking back historically, Rome has vastly improved its position in our own century. From the days of Elizabeth to those of the Pretender, it blundered by intrigues to forcibly establish itself on a reluctant nation, compelling the resort to penal acts and intolerance against a power avowedly intolerant. It changed its tactics, pretended submission, obtained emancipation, and set up its hierarchy in England less than fifty years ago, amid an outcry that threatened a return to the old days of persecution. But the forces of Liberalism spoke for its bitterest enemy, and John Bull soon got used to the new dignitaries, who have gradually entrenched themselves, till the question of a seat for Cardinal Vaughan in the House of Lords can be put out as a feeler as to how far public sentiment will go.

Rome can afford to play a waiting game. Some day its chance will come. The Anglican Church, divided into hopelessly sundered sections, may be disestablished and disendowed, when the large Romanizing party, now taking Church pay, will naturally go where their sacerdotal affinities lead them. Or the High Church may become so dominant that, through it, terms of re-union can be forced on the country. In any case, to have admitted the validity of Anglican orders would have been a mistake when no *quid pro quo* was offered. The more the question of orders is kept uncertain, the more likely some will be to go over direct to Rome.

In view of the facts, Freethinkers should be both wary and active. In point of wealth and organization the Catholics are immensely our superiors. They have well-endowed colleges, ably-equipped teachers, a large retinue of devoted Jesuits, priests, monks, and nuns, wealthy tract societies, and rich publishers. They have many writers on the daily and weekly and monthly press, and they always encourage their own. Writers like Marie Corelli and Mrs. Craigie have been boomed into notoriety by fellow Catholics. Freethinkers are still under a taboo, and Freethought advocates have to make their services for the cause largely a labor of love. Yet who is there that sees not that, when the struggle with Rome comes, it will rest with Freethinkers to maintain the world's progress.

At a meeting of the Vestry of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, it was proposed to refuse to levy the church-rate for the quarter. The rector, who is Bishop of Marlborough, was appointed against the wish of the parishioners. He then proceeded to engage Father Ignatius, and allowed his curate to hear confessions, equally against the wish of the congregation. There are many signs that the laity are ceasing to consider themselves as mere buckets into which the men of God can pump any slush they please.

Year by year the High Church clergy are pushing the practice of confession. They do not succeed with the men, but they succeed, where they desire to, with the women. They know they have a strong hold on the husband and family when the wife and mother go to confession. Yet the Bishop of Marlborough, when tackled by his parishioners, allowed that the practice is weakening to the character; he might have said of priest as well as penitent.

The Romanizing English Church Union has presented a report against the re-marriage of divorced persons. In the case of one of their members charged with this "offence" he produced the original special license dated November 19, 1897, from his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, signed by Sir John Haggard, Registrar of the Province. Nonetheless, the Rev. F. Willett has given notice of the following motion for the next meeting of the Council: "That to sanction, permit, assist at, or connive at any ceremony in a church connected with the legal union of a divorced person is conduct incompatible with membership in the E. C. U."

The point which is likeliest to lead to disestablishment is perhaps that of marriage. The dominant system of the Church voices itself in the *Church Times*, which declares that the Church cannot recognise the view that a valid

marriage can be dissolved by a court of law. Equally clear is it that the law cannot allow its decisions to be disputed by the Church. We are glad that the anti-divorce view is growing in the Church, for it is likely to lead to a smart conflict some day.

The Rev. C. Ivens, vicar of Boynton, raises a very nice theological question about a line in a well-known hymn, by Dr. Bright, in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. The line, addressed presumably to an Almighty Deity, runs: "O, do Thine utmost for their soul's true weal." The point is, if imploring God to do his utmost does not imply that his power is limited. But the advocates of man's "freewill" have always had a difficulty in reconciling it with omnipotence outside man.

A lady, whose letter is printed in the *Church Times*, says: "My grandfather, born in the parish of New Church, I.W., in 1796, used to tell me that when he was a boy all the old men on entering church would pull their forelocks, and the old women would curtsy; and he would add, 'That is the reason why church doors were made low, that all should bow when they enter the House of God.'" This well illustrates the servile spirit of the good old times that our sacerdotalists would like to restore.

The clergy are howling again at their poverty. It seems that £100 of tithe-rent charge will amount for the current year to £68 14s. 11d. They said nothing when the corn averages brought them more than the £100, but now it has sunk they appeal to the laity. We cannot say we are sorry. We fancy all sky-pilots get more than they are worth, and the sooner the Church is left in the hands of duffers the sooner the game will be up.

Two Methodist ministers of Syracuse, the Rev. Rockwell and the Rev. Day, are carrying on a newspaper war with each other. Day says Rockwell is trying to blackmail him, and Rockwell charges Day with robbing the widow of Bishop Peck for the benefit of the Syracuse University.

We cannot say worse of the sky-pilots than they say of each other. At the meeting of the Baptist Union of Victoria, held at Melbourne, the Rev. J. E. Walton said: "The weak spot in their independency was that any man with a specious manner and a few special sermons, technically called 'travellers'—(laughter)—might wheedle himself into the good graces of a church, and receive a call, which could not be so readily recalled as the deluded people would wish. (Hear, hear.) He thought the object set out by the paper could be accomplished by each colony agreeing to a common minimum standard of examination." Dr. T. W. Whitley (Victoria) said that the moral side of the question should be considered, as there were ministers not far from them in Victoria who were nothing more than assassins, who would be much safer if they were in jail, instead of holding a position in the Church. (Hear, hear.) We have often said they are dull or dishonest, but here is one who should know them better than we do.

"In his morning sermon on a recent Sunday the Rev. N. A. Forest, of Wright county, Iowa, preached on the subject of a dance that had been held on the previous evening, reflecting at the same time on the character of the young ladies who attended it. Two farmers' daughters felt themselves insulted, and horsewhipped the preacher so severely that the evening service was postponed.

"The Rev. David Finley, a minister just over from Scotland, was arraigned in court the other morning charged with intoxication and disturbing the peace of the Mills House. As he had been locked up over night for safe keeping, he was discharged. Mr. Finley expressed himself as somewhat astonished that a minister of the Gospel should be denied such liberty as he was enjoying at the moment of his arrest.—*Truthseeker*.

"Episcopal Bishop Henry Potter attended a dinner of the Presbyterian Union in New York a few days ago, and amused the brethren with stories. In speaking of the good times past he recalled how one John Robinson, a historical Churchman, was, 'in view of his approved orthodoxy,' allowed one hundred and twenty gallons of beer and ten gallons of wine per month. The thirst which this reminiscence provoked among the Presbyterian brethren at the dinner did not go unslaked."—*Ibid*.

A bishop writes to the press begging for money to rebuild churches "God" destroyed about a fortnight ago. That's just like a bishop. No parties oppose "God" more than they. "God" wanted the churches destroyed, and destroyed them. He did not hire others to do it, but came himself, in one of his own vehicles, and smashed right and left, and did "according to his will." Now the clergy are going to spite "God," and try to defeat his divine purpose by rebuilding the very places he demolished.—*Melbourne "Liberator"*.



The publication of the facts concerning disease among the soldiers in India has been felt as a reflection on this Christian country, and a special effort is being made to moralize the soldiers. The *Pioneer*, the organ of the Social Purity Alliance, prints a letter from an English corporal in the Indian Army, which shows that difficulties are found to arise in religious quarters.

The writer says: "I saw the Wesleyan chaplain personally, explained the order of the Society, and asked his help. His answer was to the effect that it was useless to teach 'through morality to Christ,' but rather should we preach 'Christ first; morality will follow.' Finally, I approached the Branch of the Soldiers' Christian Association (of which I am also a member), and invited them to join with me. They came to a meeting, but when I asked their opinion I received this—that moral reform without conversion was more a curse than a blessing, for it was harder to convince a moral man he was a sinner than it was to convince a man sunk low in the scale of human degradation; and so they said they could not join with me because the Society put moral reforms before Christianity." This is religion all over, ever putting its mumbo-jumbo nonsense over "mere cold morality."

We have looked over this *Pioneer* with some interest, for the subject it deals with is of great concern to the young and to coming generations. Its aims are evidently good, yet we regret to notice that some of the writers rather seek to base innocence on ignorance and religion than on knowledge and self-respect.

Commenting on the compulsory worship established in the jail of Jackson county, the *Kansas City Star* says: "The trouble about the scheme of religious services in the county jail is, that it is punitive without being reformatory." The same criticism, we believe, has been passed upon the orthodox hell.

A Victoria church deacon, as the result of certain slanderous reports, was recently "suspected" in connection with the financial management of a local institution. The matter was discussed by the chapel authorities, with the result that it was decided to permit him to continue carrying round the plate, which he accordingly does. But his enemies in the congregation indicate their opinion of the situation by enclosing their "threepences" and sixpences in a sealed envelope, so that by the time the collection is finished the plate is a pyramid of envelopes.

Speaking at Melbourne Presbyterian General Assembly, the Rev. J. Neilson maintained, as a missionary of thirty years' seasoning, that it isn't any good going to the expense of another holy craft like the Dayspring, deceased, because the work is getting easier. There are thirty thousand fewer heathen to work on than when he first went to the New Hebrides, and he doesn't believe there will be fifteen thousand left at the end of another thirty years. Which must be pleasant news for the godly, because it is clear that this rapid diminution of population is traceable to the circumstance that Providence whipped off the converts as fast as they were made. Lest they should backslide, maybe. Think of it! Seventy thousand heathens get hold of the "Terewth!" and it kills 'em off at the rate of a thousand a year; and the man who was there at the beginning of this great plague of glory supplies the very best argument for avoiding any further expense, because in fifty years or less the whole caboodle will be cracking cocoa-nuts in Paradise.—*Bulletin*.

For the rebuilding of a Buddhist temple at Kioto, Japan, a large number of Buddhists, who could not afford gold or silver, gave the hair from their heads. This being sacred and symbolical of life, it is a great sacrifice for a follower to part with his or her hair. Under the direction of the Buddhist priests these gifts of hair were made into ropes—ropes that could lift the heaviest timbers that were used in the restoration of the temple. So great was the aggregate quantity of hair contributed by the faithful that fifty-three long lines of ropes were made of it. These ropes, had they been placed end to end, would have measured 9,972 feet, and their combined weight was 23,517 pounds. Certainly devotion to religion is by no means confined to Christianity.

In a paper on *The Struggle of Religions and Races in Russia*, by Dr. E. J. Dillon, in the current number of the *Fortnightly Review*, he points out that the Jews, despite conditions which can hardly be termed favorable, yet increase more largely than any other sect in Russia. This superiority is traceable to two causes—the larger number of marriages which they contract, and their smaller death-rate. Their birth-rate, 4.67 to a marriage, is smaller than that of orthodox Christians, who have 5.77 children to each marriage. But the death-rate of Jewish infants is much smaller than that of orthodox Russian infants. The figures for the year 1888 are: Of every thousand orthodox children there died 407.1; Jewish children, 232.1; Protestants, 282.0; Mohammedans, 230.9; Roman Catholics, 216.6. Really these

figures should be lower in the case of the Jews, who conceal the births of their male offspring to free them from the conscription. All the Christian Churches, however, lose by marriages, which tend to absorb the population in the one common category of orthodoxy.

The "Prisoners of the Gods," by W. B. Yeats, in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, illustrates the surviving Pagan beliefs still rampant in Ireland. The old gods, it seems, are called out of fear by some vague words, such as "the gentry," "the royal gentry," "the spirits," or "the others," as the Greek peasant calls his Nereids. There are countless stories told of people who meet "the others," and see friends and neighbors among them. They are carried off to another world and made prisoners of the gods. The young women are especial victims. Transmigration, too, is believed in certain people having the power to change their shapes, and become birds and beasts when they will.

Mr. Yeats says: "Many women are taken, it is believed, on their marriage day, and many before their babies are born, that they may be born among 'the others.'.....Every woman who dies about her marriage day is believed to die, I think, because a man of 'the others' wants her for himself. Next, after a young child and a woman in childbirth, a young, handsome, and strong man is thought in most danger. When he dies about his marriage day he is believed to die, I think, because a woman of 'the others' wants him for herself." The "others," in fact, like all supernatural beings, are apt to be a confounded nuisance.

The rector of Castleford (Rev. R. Gardner Smith) has been preaching against Spiritualism. It is curious to find a man of God now-a-days citing the Old Testament injunctions against dealings with familiar spirits, and those of the New against seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. The communications, said Mr. Gardner Smith, must be from the Devil. If you happen to have a devil, you may as well put him to some use. If you believe he can transform himself into an angel, you may credit that he visited the Virgin Mary in that shape. The grievance with modern spiritism is that it does not endorse the orthodox notions of heaven and hell, and is rather a rival than a helpmeet of Christianity.

The Spiritist papers recently made much of the reported feat of a clairvoyante at Montpellier, who read a note in a sealed envelope. Two attempts were made to repeat the "miracle" under test conditions, and both utterly failed. Scepticism is always a great deterrent to miracles. Some time ago Mr. Labouchere offered a thousand-pound note to any clairvoyante who could read its number in his cashbox, but no one came forward to try and obtain the note.

How much real faith Christians have in the sacramental blood of their Savior may be perhaps gauged by the movement for individual communion cups as a means of warding off disease. All the wondrous efficacy of the blood is spoiled by the thought of its possibly containing the germs of bacteria.

The momentous question of candles upon the altar led to an assault by the vicar's churchwarden of Melbourne, Cambridgeshire, upon a lay reader, for which he was brought before the magistrates. The bench considered that, if there was an assault, it was a trivial one, and dismissed the case.

Dr. Schenk, Professor of the Vienna University and President of the Embryological Institute, claims to have discovered how to regulate the production of sex by difference of food supplied to the mother. In the case of plants and some lower animals, it has been found that a more abundant nutrition tends to the production of females—an argument against their alleged inferiority.

Theodore Durrant, the Sunday-school superintendent, who murdered two girls and hid their bodies in the library and belfry of Emanuel Baptist Church, San Francisco, has been hung at last. For two years the forms of law had been exhausted to save his neck from stretching, though nobody but his parents had any doubt as to his guilt. The wretch professed the Roman Catholic religion shortly before his execution, so we suppose he is now in heaven—in the Catholic department.

A firm of cigar manufacturers at Trichinopoly issue a circular containing the following delectable passage:—"As we hear that most of our Christians purchase cigars from heathens, so we are manufacturing these cigars only for the Christian community, and offer them at very moderate rates. A trial order is solicited." In order to accentuate the essentially religious character of the business, the circular is adorned with a sort of trade mark, in the shape of a cross surmounting a globe, with two angels worshipping before it. By an omission, which is rather surprising, none of the brands of cigars quoted have Biblical names.—*Truth*.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 16, Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool: at 11, "Man's Origin and Destiny"; at 3, "The Higher Criticism: Its Origin, Meaning, and Object"; at 7, "God and the Devil."

January 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall.

February 6, Athenæum Hall; 20, Glasgow.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 16, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road; 23 and 30, Birmingham; 25 and 26, debate at Birmingham; 31 and February 1, 2, and 3, Derby; 6, Sheffield; 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.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) Your feelings may be natural, but we decline to advertise the fellow. (2) The other matter you refer to is, to us, a new instance of superstition. We do not think it has any special connection with the Bible text you refer to.

C. E. SMITH desires to express the pleasure he has derived from the verses contributed to our columns by G. L. Mackenzie. He also hopes that Mr. Foote's letters from America will be reprinted in permanent form. We have not seen the articles in *Lucifer* to which this correspondent alludes.

JAS. CRAIG (Toronto).—Pleased to receive a reminder that you are still in the land of the living. Your marked letter is sensible and manly. Most Freethinkers over here would endorse it. We see *Secular Thought* is among our exchanges. It is a capital publication, reflecting credit on Mr. Ellis and the Canadian Freethinkers.

J. B. BARTRAM.—See "Sugar Plums." We wish Mr. Ward success at Newcastle.

DISCIPLE.—Thanks for your good wishes anyhow.

M. L. B.—Thanks and reciprocation.

G. BRADY, sending his monthly 10s. towards the N. S. S. Treasurer's Scheme, hopes there will be "a readier response to the appeal for support" in 1898.

ALETHEIA points out a printer's blunder in the poem that appeared over his signature. "Anti-carmen" should have been "Ante-carmen."

R. JOHNSON.—If you wish to pursue the subject under discussion by Mr. Watts and the Rev. Mr. Engström, you cannot do better than study the two works by Collins and Hume, advertised in this week's *Freethinker*. Collius's little volume is especially valuable. He was a deep and careful thinker, and he puts the whole case of the Determinists with great power and precision.

J. E.—Max Müller's recent utterance on "What I Believe" will be dealt with in our next.

J. G. THOMPSON.—Ingersoll's sermon began in our number for December 26. "Abracadabra's" series began on August 8. We have sent your note on to him.

TORY—but not our "Toby"—suggests that if the Redcomer has to be crucified on every star, the universe will have to witness the tragedy of some sixty-eight billion crucifixions.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Daylight—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Loods Mercury.—Dawn of Day—Torch of Reason—Southport Guardian—Southern Echo—Der Arme Toufel—Freidenker—De Dagoraad—Echo—Truthseeker—Castloford Express—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker—Secular Thought—Public Opinion—People's Newspaper—L'Etoile Socialiste—Vegetarian—Famouth Packet.

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.

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.

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- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiances around street-corner preachers.

### INGERSOLL IS COMING.

MR. CHARLES WATTS has just received a very pleasant letter from Colonel Ingersoll, dated December 29, in the course of which he states when he intends coming to England, as the following extract will show:—"Now about going to your country. I will go to England in 1899. I cannot go in '98. In 1899 I am going to the Mecca of Music, and will take England on the way. Now, that is the best I can do. My health is good and every member of the family is well. It is not long to 1899. The days have good wings." Our readers will be glad to have something definite to go by. Beggars cannot be choosers, so we must await Colonel Ingersoll's convenience. Barring accidents, he will be among us in 1899. That will be a golden year in our history. G. W. FOOTE.

### SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE delivers three lectures to-day (Jan. 16) in the Oddfellows' Hall, St. Ann-street, Liverpool. The subjects are attractive, and as the meetings are well advertised, large audiences are expected.

Mr. Foote had good audiences at Manchester on Sunday, though they were not quite up to his usual level. This was partly due to the proximity of the holidays, but still more to the engineering dispute, which has thrown so many out of work, and emptied so many pockets in Cottonopolis and its vicinity. There were questions and some discussion after each lecture.

Notwithstanding the heavy fog we had in London on Sunday last, Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience in the evening, at the Athenæum Hall, when he lectured upon "The Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity." The audience was most enthusiastic, and at the conclusion of the address the applause was repeated again and again. Mr. Harry Brown presided in his usual able manner. There were many questions asked, and some opposition offered. One Christian gentleman regretted that no report was given in the London papers of what he termed "the excellent lectures given by Secular exponents in that hall."

Mr. Watts again occupies the Athenæum platform this evening, Sunday, January 16, taking for his subject "Morality versus Superstition."

Mr. Cohen pays another visit to Chester to-day (Jan. 16), lecturing in the Corn Exchange morning, afternoon, and evening. No doubt there will be good meetings.

Mr. Forder gives "An Hour with the Devil and a Few Minutes in Hell" at the Camberwell Hall this evening. As the clergyman wrote in advertising his discourse on "Eternal Torments," all are welcome.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner took place on Monday evening at the Holborn Restaurant, and was a striking success. The large and handsome Caledonian Saloon was filled to overflowing. In point of numbers this year's gathering beat the record. It was pleasant to see so many ladies in the assembly, their bright dresses relieving the monotony of male costume. Of course the dinner itself was excellent; that goes without saying at the Holborn Restaurant. After the dinner, too, there were some excellent songs, recitations, and sketches, including a very laughable stage-struck tyro's rendering of one of Claude Melnotte's speeches by Mrs. Charles Watts. Miss Vance, meanwhile, perambulated the room, gathering in the diners' cards with promises of subscriptions during the new year; these being handed over to Mr. Hartmann, the treasurer, who beamed with satisfaction.

The toast-speeches were all good, brief, and pointed. Mr. Watts spoke with his usual force and effect, and Messrs. Forder, Moss, and Heaford did not disgrace their reputations. Mr. Wheeler said a few appropriate and well-chosen words on the international character of the Freethought movement. Two new speakers were Messrs. C. Cohen and Chilperic Edwards. The former was self-possessed, smooth, and witty; the latter was very dry-humored in his remarks on Palestine and Egyptian explorations, some of his points being extremely mirth-provoking. Mr. Foote delivered an address as chairman, in the course of which he announced, amid great applause, that Colonel Ingersoll had definitely decided to visit England next year.

On Sunday last the Birmingham Branch made collections



on behalf of the N. S. S. Benevolent Fund. Mr Armfield lectured in the morning, and in the evening Mr. A. Scrimshire, who is well known in Birmingham as a Shakespearean reader, gave a capital recital of *Julius Cæsar*. Mr. Scrimshire very kindly volunteered his services in the good cause. The strong dramatic power exhibited by him, and his lucid explanations of the play, were keenly enjoyed by a large audience. He was accorded a hearty vote of thanks. Mr. W. T. Pitt, the local treasurer, has forwarded to Miss Vance a cheque for £2 2s. 2d., the total amount of the collections.

A letter from Captain Otto Thomson assures us that Freethought is progressing in Sweden as well as elsewhere, and that times have much altered since Victor Lennstrand was imprisoned for blasphemy. He gives an illustration of a man named A. Anderson, who was sentenced to make an oath of purgation. Brought before the priest, he bluntly denied the existence of God, and, of course, did not take the oath. The local court sentenced him to two months' imprisonment for his behavior before the priest; but the High Court has fined the magistrate for acting unwisely in pronouncing the above sentence.

The three volumes of *Supernatural Religion* are now on the shelves of the Public Library at Gateshead. These trenchant and exhaustive volumes on the New Testament will be of service to our friends in that industrial district.

A Limited Liability Company is to be started to carry on the publication of *Secular Thought* and the work of the Canadian Secular Union. The capital is to be 5,000 dollars, in shares of 5 dollars each. We wish the scheme every success.

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, has suspended publication. Future numbers will appear "when funds permit." Editor Moore is a bright, incisive writer, but editing a paper and writing for it are not exactly the same thing. When the *Blue Grass Blade* reappears, we hope it will be conducted with a view to this journalistic truism.

Newcastle friends will be interested to learn that a suitable meeting room, capable of holding over a hundred people, has been secured in the east-end of the city, being situated at the corner of Raby-street and Parker-street, Byker, and only one minute's walk from the Shields-road. It can be readily reached by the tram from any part of the city. As there have never been any Freethought lectures in this neighborhood, it has been arranged for Mr. H. Percy Ward to give a course of six lectures, commencing on Monday, January 17, the chair to be taken at 7.30 each evening. On Sunday, January 23, Mr. Ward will give three lectures in the Northumberland Hall, High Friars-street. Friends wishing to attend the Byker lectures should remember the limited size of the room and be in good time, as admission will be free, with a collection.

"Anon" contributes a telling letter to the *Glamorgan Free Press* on the Rev. W. Griffiths' review of the Footo-Lee debate at Pontypridd, with special reference to the unhistorical character of the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ.

*Daylight*, of Norwich, announces a preliminary meeting of Freethinkers at Yarmouth, particulars of which can be obtained of Mr. J. M. Headly, 21, North Howard-street.

Mr. J. M. Wheeler's article on "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil" has been reprinted from the *Freethinker* as a tract for general distribution. Mr. Forder is the publisher. We hope it will have the wide circulation it deserves.

So since, with all my passion and my skill,  
The world's mysterious meaning mocks me still,  
Shall I not piously believe that I  
Am kept in darkness by the heavenly will?  
This is no way my learned life to use?  
Tell me a better, then, that I may choose.  
Shall I, for some remote, imagined gain,  
My precious little hour of living lose?  
So I be written in the Book of Love,  
I have no care about that book above;  
Erase my name or write it, as you please,  
So I be written in the Book of Love.  
— Omar Khayyam (Le Gallienne's rendering).

Talmage says that Atheism leads to suicide, and that nothing but religion keeps men from self-slaughter in times of trouble. We suppose this is the reason why the Rev. Theophilus Robert Bruce, a retired clergyman, formerly vicar of Bramhope, poisoned himself at Holbeach with a bottle of carbolic acid.

## THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

### XIX.—THE CRUCIFIXION (*continued*).

6. We are told in all four Gospels that certain friends of Jesus were present at the crucifixion. Thus Matthew says (xxvii. 55):—

"And many women were there beholding *from afar*, which had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him."

Mark, copying from the same document, says the same (xv. 40):—

"And there were also women, beholding from afar."

Luke, also, follows the original account, though, from force of habit, he cannot help adding something. He says (xxiii. 49):—

"And *all his acquaintance*, and the women that followed with him from Galilee, stood *afar off*, seeing these things."

That all Christ's "acquaintance" were present may much be doubted; but upon one point the Synoptists are agreed—that the women stood "afar off"—and from the first two accounts we find that among them were "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses," and Salome, "the mother of the sons of Zebedee." Turning now to the Fourth Gospel, it is stated (xix. 25-26):—

"But there were *standing by the cross* of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, *and the disciple standing by, whom he loved*, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son," etc.

According to this account, the women were not "beholding from afar," but were standing near the cross, and the apostle John was there with them. This was scarcely the place for any women, much less for Christ's mother. We may reject the statement that one of the disciples was present; for, besides the fact that the three Synoptists knew nothing of it, the author of the Gospel of Peter, who follows an independent primitive account, says that the apostles were "being sought for as evil-doers" by the authorities. There cannot be a doubt that the Fourth evangelist placed the women and the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross in order that Jesus might make some provision for his mother—a matter which he never troubled his head about during his ministry, and which, besides, was unnecessary, for that lady had four other sons to support her—"James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon" (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3). The first two evangelists, it will be noticed, speak of Christ's mother as "Mary, the mother of James and Joses"—a title which, though somewhat peculiar, appears, according to the foregoing passages, to be correct. But Christ's mother, Mary, we are told, was present with her *sister* Mary. We are, then, to suppose that the parents of these sisters, for some mysterious reason, named *two* of their daughters "Mary"—a fact which is very improbable indeed.

7. The next matter deserving of notice are the sayings ascribed to Jesus on the Cross. The first two evangelists are in perfect agreement upon this point. Mark, for example, says:—

xv. 34. "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice.....My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

xv. 37. "And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."

This is all, and Matthew says the same in nearly the same words. If Christ said anything else, neither of these two evangelists appears to have known anything of it. We now turn to Luke. That writer says:—

xxiii. 34. "And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

xxiii. 43. "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

xxiii. 46. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said: *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this he gave up the ghost.*"

Here we have three new sayings, all unknown to the first two evangelists, who adhere the most closely to the primitive account. The first of these we may reject at once; for the saying is not found in two of the oldest MSS.—the Sinaitic and the Vatican. The second we may also set aside; for the other two Synoptists say, or imply, that



both malefactors reviled Christ, consequently Jesus made no such promise. With regard to the third saying, there can be little doubt that Luke has himself piously inserted the words printed in italics. Strike these out, and we have the identical statements of Matthew and Mark, that "Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." This is what Luke calls writing an accurate account (i. 3-4).

Coming now to the Fourth Gospel, we find that the three Synoptists knew nothing of the sayings of Christ. The only genuine ones are the following:—

- xix. 26. To his mother: "Woman, behold thy son!"
- xix. 27. To the apostle John: "Behold thy mother!"
- xix. 28. "Jesus.....that the scripture might be accomplished, saith I thirst."
- xix. 30. "He said, It is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit."

The first two of these sayings—in which Jesus is represented as committing his mother to the care of the apostle John—have already been dealt with; they are, of course, fictitious. The other two sayings are of the same character, and were obviously inserted in order to make Jesus fulfil alleged prophecies. This leaves but one saying out of the whole lot which might possibly be considered genuine—viz., that recorded by Matthew and Mark; but even this must be rejected on the same grounds as the last, as will be shown in the next and concluding paper. The fictitious character of these sayings will be seen when it is attempted to ascertain the last words uttered by Jesus. According to Matthew and Mark, there was but one saying—"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" According to the Gospel of Peter, this was also both the only one and the last; for that writer says: "And *having said this he was taken up*" (i.e., his spirit departed). According to Luke, Christ's last words were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," that evangelist adding: "And *having said this he gave up the ghost.*" But, according to the author of the Fourth Gospel, the last words of Jesus were "It is finished," after which utterance "he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit." Were we dealing with the narratives of eye-witnesses, it might perhaps be conceded that Christ uttered all the sayings attributed to him, and that each evangelist recorded those which he remembered himself; but this, we have overwhelming proof, was not the case. Besides, it is stated that the Holy Ghost with which the apostles were filled would bring to their remembrance everything that Jesus had said (John xiv. 26). Hence, no reconciliation is possible.

8. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us that from the sixth to the ninth hour (i.e., from twelve o'clock noon to three p.m.) "there was darkness over the whole earth," to which Luke adds: "the sun's light failing." The Gospel of Peter does not go quite so far as this. It says: "Now it was noon, and darkness covered the whole of Judea..... and many went about with torches, thinking it was night, and fell down." Speaking of this darkness, Gibbon says: "It happened in the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe." In other words, no one, except the three Synoptical writers, ever heard of this phenomenon, and they only knew of it from finding it recorded in an old document, whose author is unknown.

To this darkness Matthew adds fresh wonders, of which no known writer—not even the other three evangelists—appears to have heard. He says (xxvii. 51-53):—

"And the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs.....they entered into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

All these marvels are said to have occurred because Christ allowed himself to be crucified; but what connection there can be between an earthquake and the crucifixion of a man I defy anyone outside a lunatic asylum to point out. It is certainly not surprising that nobody, except the great falsifiers of facts, Matthew, records such marvels.

9. After relating the foregoing wonderful occurrences Matthew says (xxvii. 54):—

"Now the centurion, and they that were with him

watching Jesus, when *they* saw the earthquake and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."

According to this statement, all the people who, during the three hours of darkness, stood watching Jesus on the Cross declared, when they saw all Matthew's fictitious occurrences, that Christ was "the Son of God." Bearing this fact in mind, we turn to Mark, who says (xv. 37, 39):—

"And Jesus uttered a loud voice and gave up the ghost.....And when the centurion.....saw that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God."

Here it was the centurion only who declared Christ to be "the Son of God," and not because of any wonders he had beheld, but because "Jesus uttered a loud voice and gave up the ghost." Truly must this centurion have been "fearfully and wonderfully made," especially in the upper story. According to Luke, the centurion, when he saw the darkness and the veil of the temple rent (and, it must be borne in mind, the Cross was not within view of the temple veil, even had there been no darkness), said: "Certainly this was a righteous man" (xxiii. 47).

In recording this saying of the centurion, the evangelists appear to have forgotten that *three* men are stated to have been crucified, and that the alleged supernatural occurrences might as reasonably be placed to the account of either of the robbers as to Jesus, there being nothing to indicate one more than another. Also, the centurion makes his declaration to the winds. This account is evidently not the original. If we turn now to the Gospel of Peter, we find that the opinion respecting Christ was expressed to Pilate, and that it was delivered, not on the evening of the crucifixion, but on the morning of the alleged resurrection. According to this Gospel, the soldiers and the centurion, when watching at the sepulchre where lay the body of Christ, "saw three men stepping forth from the tomb, and two of them supported the third, and a cross followed them, and the head of the two reached to heaven, but the head of the one that was led by them overtowered above the heavens." This was Christ's resurrection. After witnessing this wondrous sight, the centurion and his men hastened to Pilate; and, after relating what they had seen, they one and all declared: "In truth, he was the Son of God."

Here we have a better reason for the opinion expressed respecting Christ than any given in the canonical Gospels, and one that could apply only to Jesus. We now see why, in the Synoptics, one editor says that it was "the centurion," and another that it was "they that were with him watching," who exclaimed: "Truly this man was the Son of God." The "watching" in the story is retained; but it was evidently at the sepulchre, not at the Cross. We see, also, how clumsily Mark has re-edited the story to make the centurion declare that Christ was "the Son of God" because he "uttered a loud voice and gave up the ghost." In short, one matter is placed beyond all doubt—viz., that in all the Gospel accounts of the alleged crucifixion of Christ, canonical as well as apocryphal, we have nothing but the silliest fiction. ABRACADABRA.

### The Birth of a Hero God.

One day, when Coatlan Tonan was sweeping the Snake hill, a little bunch of feathers fell upon her, and she hid it under her robe. It was the descent of the divine humming bird. When the sages saw the virgin mother was pregnant, they sought to kill her. But the unborn babe spake from her womb and provided for her safety, till in due time he came forth with his left leg covered with the plumage of the humming bird. Hence, the name was given to him of Huitzilopochtli.—"Sahagun," *Historia de Nueva Espna*, iii.

### On Not Going to Church.

The dervish whined to Said:  
 "Thou didst not tarry while I prayed:  
 Beware the fire which Eblis burned."  
 But Saadi coldly thus returned:  
 "Once, with man-like love and fear,  
 I gave thee, for an hour, my ear.  
 I kept the sun and stars at bay,  
 And bore, for words thy tongue could say,  
 I cannot sell my heaven again,  
 For all that rattles in thy brain."  
 —R. W. Emerson.



## THE CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER.

"Thy will be done."—JESUS.

DEAR Lord, unto thy throne I flee,  
Where angel-voices ever trill :  
If I'm a sinner, don't blame me—  
It is thy will.

A sinner I, yet, though I be,  
This peace into my mind instil :  
If I sin to infinity,  
It is thy will.

Lord, all our words and deeds are wrought  
By thee alone ; *our* power is *nil* ;  
We cannot do but what we ought—  
It is thy will.

'Tis foreordained what is to hap  
The end of everything until :  
We cannot alter things a scrap—  
It is thy will.

If I pray not, or pray all day,  
Thou'lt send the same, or good, or ill ;  
Thou hast decided ere I pray—  
It is thy will.

Yet, as thou did'st, Lord, let me pray  
Till prayerful drops my eyes distil  
Here, there, and everywhere alway—  
It is thy will.

Let want and misery and woe  
Their mission, unopposed, fulfil ;  
We dare not seek their overthrow—  
It is thy will.

Through pestilence and sword and flame,  
Both innocent and guilty kill ;  
Still, let me bless thy holy name—  
It is thy will.

Dear Lord, let me no murderer stay,  
Intending human blood to spill ;  
Thy spirit moves him—let him slay—  
It is thy will.

Should others sink beneath the wave,  
Though I to rescue have the skill,  
Let me not impiously save—  
It is thy will.

If thou, O Lord, my children smite,  
For them I'll pay no doctor's bill ;  
If prayers and oil won't do, all right—  
It is thy will.

Of goodly wealth I have a hoard,  
Yet let me grasp and garner still ;  
What though I grind the poor, O Lord ?—  
It is thy will.

For Jesus sake, both now and when  
Thou bringst me to thy holy hill,  
Let me pray thus, O God. Amen.  
It is thy will.

EX-RITUALIST.

## Obituary.

WE regret to notice in the *Truthseeker*, of New York, an account of the death of Henry Morehouse Taber, a well-known American Freethinker, and author of a big volume entitled *Faith and Fact*, to which his friend, Colonel Ingersoll, contributed a preface. Mr. Taber was seventy-two years of age, and died on Friday, December 24, after a brief illness. He was a supporter of the Freethought cause by purse as well as by pen.

ONE of the oldest Freethinkers of Derby has departed in the person of Mr. Thomas O'Neale, who died last week at the age of seventy-seven. The *Derby Daily Telegraph* says: "The deceased gentleman, who for many years was in business in this town, died, as he had lived, an avowed Atheist. Notwithstanding his age, he took a prominent part in all advanced movements, and his cheerful bearing and great enthusiasm made him appear much younger than he really was. A devoted admirer of the late Charles Bradlaugh, he supported him energetically throughout his historic struggle, and to the last was a member of the local Freethought Society. The ceremony, which was of an unostentatious nature, was a purely Secular one, the eloquent Freethought Burial Service by Austin Holyoake being impressively read by Mr. H. McGuinness to those assembled, who included many of the members of the Derby Branch of the National Secular Society."

## BOOK CHAT.

IT is proposed in Italy to form at Florence a collection of all the books put on the Roman *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. It has been pointed out that the nucleus for such a library already exists in a room in the National Library of Florence. It consists of a collection of nine thousand, chiefly connected with the history of the Reformation in Italy. Most of these are on the Index, and around them may be gathered the rest of the prohibited books that are accessible, for some are entirely suppressed, and others only to be found in out-of-the-way places. This would certainly form one of the most curious libraries in the world.

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The *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* gives a list of over a thousand names of persons, from Abaelardus to Zwinglius, whose works must be avoided by the faithful. Among them are some of the most eminent in literature. Our historians are represented by such men as Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Hallam, and even Oliver Goldsmith. Strange to say, Froude is not included. Among foreign historians, Macchiavelli, Guicciardini, Raynal, Sismondi, Botta, Mosheim, and Ranke are interdicted. Nearly all the eminent names in philosophy are on the Index. Occam, Bruno, Bacon, Campanella, Pomponatius, Hobbes, Descartes, Bayle, Pascal, Leibnitz, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Comte, Hegel, Kant, Fichte, and even Victor Cousin. All Hume's works are forbidden, Addison is down for his *Tours in Italy*, Swift for his *Tale of a Tub*, and Lord Chesterfield for his *Letters to His Son*. Among novelists are George Sand, Balzac, Murger, Flaubert, and Zola. Poets are represented by Dante, Ariosto, Petrarch, Milton, La Fontaine, Lessing, Béranger, Lamartine, Heine, Hugo, and Carducci. Of course all well-known Continental Freethinkers are on the list, though there are not many English ones, possibly because it is understood that all works coming from heretics are forbidden. Among the names inserted, in addition to those already given, are Dupuis, Volney, Pigault le Brun, Constant, Strauss, Peyrat, Soury, Baissac, Larroque, Jacolliot, Büchner, and Draper.

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We often hear of the service of the Church to literature, but against the preservation of some manuscripts by the monks must be set their wholesale destruction of others, and the attempted suppression of all literature other than that endorsed by the Church. This included the Bible. Pope Innocent III. prohibited the reading of the Scriptures in any save the Latin tongue. The Council of Toulouse forbade the reading of the Bible in any vernacular tongue, and decreed that no layman should have in his possession any of the books of the Old or New Testament. The famous Council of Trent affirmed that no Bible should be held or read except by priests, and this canon remains unrepealed.

\* \* \*

How often it happens that an idealist, evidently actuated by praiseworthy motives and full of enthusiasm for humanity, is yet so far from practical that his influence on his own age is very slight. Here is A. Gottschling, the author of *Logos: Christ the Ideals, not Christianity*, who at the very outset of his book recommends "establishing free maintenance for every woman, so that she be independent of the doles or pittance from perfidious men." We fancy Mr. Gottschling is a Swiss, and that may account for his readiness to cure all our ills by parish communism and the referendum.

\* \* \*

We would not have it thought that, because the author of *Logos* strikes us as being unpractical, therefore his book is useless. Far from it. We think there are few who would not be benefited by reading it. By placing side by side the old theological ideals and the new humanitarian ones, he makes it very plain how incompatible the two are. He shows us plainly what we must get away from, if not so plainly what we are going to. His book is evidently an intensely sincere one, and few can come into contact with a thorough and sincere character without benefit. Mr. Gottschling's ideals are largely those of every enlightened and humane person. He would substitute peace and goodwill to all beings for strife and dogmatism. The main question is how to bring about such a state of affairs, and certainly *Logos* gives some hints towards this. It should be mentioned that Mr. Gottschling, who proposes to issue a quarterly magazine entitled *Home Links*, is himself the author, printer, and publisher of this pamphlet (43 Girdlestone-road, Highgate Hill ; 1s.).

\* \* \*

F. A. Cooper, B.Sc., in a pamphlet on *The Origin of Zymotic Diseases* (Birmingham : G. Jones, 87 Edward-street ; 3d.), contends that the germs which cause these diseases are reversion to primeval larval forms of insects: thus he connects cholera with the house fly, typhoid with the aphid, and diphtheria with the louse. All we can say is that Mr. Cooper has evidently given microscopic attention to the subject



The book of Joel, which used to be put among the earliest of the prophets, is by Dr. Driver, in his Cambridge Bible, assigned as shortly after Haggai and Zechariah 18 or about 500 B.C. At the same time, the possibility is admitted that it may be later, and that it dates in reality from the century after Malachi.

\* \* \*

An important book on ethics, by W. Wundt, the German physiologist, has been translated into English by Julia Gulliver and E. B. Titchener, with the title *The Facts of the Moral Life*. It is published by Sonnenschein. A second volume, entitled *Ethical Systems*, is translated by Margaret Floy Washburn.

\* \* \*

An American Professor, Dr. McGiffert, has put forward a book on *The History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, in which he denies the Lukan authorship of the jumble of bogus stories entitled "The Acts of the Apostles." He goes through the book passage by passage, showing, after Zeller by the way, such a series of erroneous statements in the book as are utterly inconsistent with the idea that the writer was an intimate friend of Paul or of other actors, or himself an actor, in the events described. The book is purely a concoction to reconcile the Pauline and Petrine schools, and belongs probably, as Zeller suggested, to the latter half of the second century.

\* \* \*

The latest publication of the Humanitarian League is *The Truth about the Game Laws*, by J. Connell (Reeves and Co., 185, Fleet-street; 61.). It has a preface by Robert Buchanan, who professes himself a converted sportsman. The hunting and killing of animals, he now holds, is "a relapse from civilization to barbarism." The Game Laws, he says, are "the tribute paid by the overworked and over-taxed people of England to the lords of the bread—to the predatory classes who have appropriated the land, and depopulated the hills and valleys, to increase their own selfish pleasures." If this is mere denunciation, Mr. Connell's pamphlet supplies plentiful facts. It is indeed a trenchant "record of cruelty, selfishness, and oppression," and its wide circulation should tend powerfully towards the abolition of the Game Laws.

\* \* \*

There are some light touches in Mr. Connell's statement; for instance, the evidence of a chaplain that "a poacher declared to me not long since that he had read and studied the word of God most carefully, but could find no commandment forbidding poaching; and how are chaplains of jails to wrestle with arguments of this sort?" Another story is told of a priest who, every morning, had a hare brought him by a girl from a poor family; on venturing the opinion that the hares might be wanted at home, the girl replied: "Oh, your reverence, you need not mind that at all; we always have plenty of them; my father is poacher to Lord Mountmorris."

\* \* \*

A Welsh booklet of a decidedly iconoclastic tone, and reminding one of Paine's *Age of Reason*, has just been issued from the Quixote Press, 9 Burghley-road, Hornsey, N. It satirizes the Welsh churches in London most unsparingly, and the *Daily Chronicle* says: "It is certain to create a lively interest in Welsh religious circles, and probably evoke sharp criticism from the Welsh press." The writer is evidently a Freethinker of the right sort.

\* \* \*

*Open Court* for January gives a good portrait of Pierre Simon de Laplace, the great French mathematician, who, when it was remarked by Napoleon that his *Mécanique Céleste* made no mention of God, replied: "Sire, I had no necessity for that hypothesis." M. D. Conway writes on the alleged "Solomonic Literature," and Professor Cornill continues his "History of the People of Israel." Dr. Paul Carus has a paper on "The Dances of Death," illustrated by many quaint pictures from late mediæval and modern Christian art.

### Helping the Pastor.

The Duke of Cambridge, father of the present Duke, was remarkable for his habit of making loud responses of his own invention to the service in church.

"Let us pray," said the clergyman.

"By all means," said the Duke.

The clergyman began the prayer for rain.

"No good so long as the wind is in the east."

"Zaccheus stood forth and said, Beho'd, Lord, the half of my lands I give to the poor."

"Too much, too much; don't mind subscribing, but can't stand that."

While to two of the Commandments, which need not be indicated, the responses were: "Quite right, quite right—but very difficult sometimes"; and, "No, no! It was my brother Ernest did that."

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### MORAL INSTRUCTION LEAGUE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—May I once more draw the attention of your readers to the Moral Instruction League, which was founded on December 7, 1897? Its object is to replace the present religious teaching in State schools by systematic non-theological moral instruction, and to make character the chief aim of school life. The members' first annual meeting will be held at St. Martin's Town Hall on January 26, at 8 p.m. Sympathizers are invited to fill in and send to me the cards of membership before January 24, in order that they may receive Agenda papers and a copy of the proposed Rules for the League. I shall be happy to give further information, and to forward the membership cards to all Secularists.

ZONA VALLANCE.  
(Hon. Sec. pro. tem.)

The Deanery, Stratford, E.

## FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

It is the weak only who, at each epoch, believe mankind arrive at the culminant point of their progressive march. They forget that, by an intimate concatenation of all truths, knowledge, the field to be run over, becomes more vast the more we advance, bordered as it is by an horizon that continually recedes before us.—*Humboldt*.

The Golden Rule, charity, kindness, and love did not originate with Jesus. He found them in the world when He came, and Christians have no moral right to put the brand of their leader's name upon them, as if they were personal property. They belong to Humanity.—*Lucian*.

You will never accomplish anything worth accomplishing till your mind is anchored fast in some noble undertaking; and no undertaking can be truly noble whose object is not of great permanent utility.—*James Gillespie*.

As all error is meanness, it is incumbent on every man, who consults his own dignity, to retract it as soon as he discovers it, without fearing any censure so much as that of his own mind.—*Dr. S. Johnson*.

My life may be one round of sin;  
A kindly act need ne'er creep in;  
If I'm predestined to believe,  
God's purpos'd grace I shall receive.  
For heav'nly thrones 'twill make me fit,  
Whatever crimes I may commit.  
'Tis faith that saves, not deeds, I know,  
Because the Bible tells me so.

So I'll believe and I'll obey  
What God's conflicting Scriptures say.  
For sceptics wise in their own eyes  
Will feed the worm that never dies,  
Burning, writhing, down in hell,  
Where almost all mankind must dwell;  
Since God saves very few, I know,  
Because the Bible tells me so.

—*W. P. Ball*.

## PROFANE JOKES.

OVERHEARD at the hall of the Y. M. C. A. during the delivery of a lecture by the famous Rev. X. Y. Z.—"How full he is of his subject!" said one of the hearers. "Yes; but how slow he is in emptying himself," was the reply.

"Huh!" snorted the husband, who had been inveigled into attending the rendition of a sermon. "Call him a boy preacher! He is forty if he is a day." "He does look that way," said the wife, "but," she continued, in her anxiety to plead, "don't you think he has the mind of a boy?"

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

Sky-pilot—"I hope you've turned over a new leaf with the New Year?" Laborer—"Same to you, Sir."

A Plymouthian dreamt he was in heaven, and, while walking through a golden street with a friend, espied a man with his face buried in his hands. "Who is that?" says he. "Oh," replied his friend, "that's the Paraclete. But don't speak to him; everybody has given him the cold shoulder since that little affair with the carpenter's spouse."



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "Morality versus Superstition."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, Touzeau Parris, "Mrs. Besant's Theosophy: A Reply."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, A lecture; 7.30, R. Forder, "An Hour with the Devil and a Few Minutes in Hell."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road, E.): 8, H. Silverstein, "The Nature of Secularism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion, "Ethical Motives for Right Conduct" —opener, Miss E. J. Troup; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Kant, the Ethical Philosopher."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Professor W. Hewins, "The Relations between Ethics and Economics."

WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, Stanley Jones, "Christianity and Other Religions."

### COUNTY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 11, A. B. Moss, "Darwin, the Shakespeare of Science"; 7, "A New Age of Reason."

CHESTER (Corn Exchange): O. Cohen—10.45, "Christianity and Slavery"; 2.45, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?" 7.30, "What is the Use of Religion?"

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Chilperic Edwards, "The Book of Jonah in the Light of the Higher Criticism."

DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7, Mr. Whitwell, A reading.

GLASGOW (Blythswood Assembly Rooms, Bath-street): 12, Class, business meeting; 6.30, A. Holm, M.A., "Rationalism and Politics."

HULL (Oobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, G. E. Conrad Naewiger, "Sunday: Is it the Sabbath Day?"

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Miss Mary H. Kingsley, "West African Trade," with limelight illustrations.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): G. W. Foote—11, "Man's Origin and Destiny"; 3, "The Higher Criticism: Its Origin, Meaning, and Object"; 7, "God and the Devil."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rushome-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. Harvey Simpson, "Cremation," with lantern views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' annual and quarterly meeting; 7, Lantern exhibition of Scottish Lochs and Scenery, with descriptive reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, Discussion.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London—January 16, Chester; 23, Sheffield; 30, Manchester. February 6, Manchester; 13 and 14, Birmingham; 20 and 27, Liverpool. March 6, Liverpool.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—January 16, Birmingham; 23, North Camberwell Club and Institute.

H. PERCY WARD, 6 Wawne Grove, Alexandra-road, Hull.—January 23, Newcastle. February 20 to 27, Manchester. March 6 to 11, Mission at Derby; 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield. April 17, Glasgow.

## 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.

Information and literature on Positivism may be obtained free from Mr. Malcolm Quin, Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

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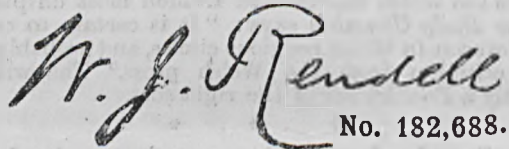
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